GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION

1941

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

TO THE ETERNAL MEMORY
OF THOSE SOVIET PEOPLE
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM

INSTITUTE OF MARXISM-LENINISM, CC CPSU

GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION

1941-1945

A General Outline

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A nation in which the majority
of the workers and peasants realise,
feel and see that they are fighting
for their own Soviet power,
for the rule of the working people,
for the cause whose victory will ensure
them and their children
all the benefits of culture, of all that
has been created by human labour—such
a nation can never be vanquished.

V. I. LENIN

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ВЕЛИКАЯ ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННАЯ ВОЙНА СОВЕТСКОГО СОЮЗА 1941—1945

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Part I

EVE OF THE WAR

Chapter One

IMPERIALISTS START THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1. WAR DANGER GROWS. USSR FIGHTS FOR PEACE

In the first half of the twentieth century the world experienced two destructive wars, the responsibility for which devolves on the imperialist system. The first war, 1914-18, ended in victory for the Entente (Britain, France and the United States), but yielded no lasting peace. The Versailles Treaty of 1919 did not eradicate the contradictions that had caused the war; the scramble for markets, sources of raw material and spheres of investment, coupled with the struggle for power, remained the main elements guiding the foreign policy of the capitalist states. The uneven development of the capitalist countries, particularly pronounced in the period between the two world wars, broke the balance of forces that had taken shape in the capitalist world as a result of the First World War and been recorded in the treaties of Versailles and Washington.

The deepening of the general crisis of capitalism, sparked by the First World War and the Great October Socialist Revolution, still further aggravated all the imperialist contradictions. Imperialism was no longer an all-embracing system. The socialist revolution in Russia had shaken the entire edifice of world capitalism. The world split into two opposite systems, and the Soviet Union began exercising considerable influence on international affairs.

The imperialist contradictions became particularly pronounced during the world-wide crisis of 1929-33, the most far-reaching and most destructive economic convulsion in the history of capitalism. It began in the United States of America, then spread to other capitalist countries, the 1933 industrial output dropping to 64 per cent of the 1929 level in the United States, 88 per cent in Britain, 65 per cent in Germany and 81 per cent in France. World trade shrank by 65 per cent. There was mass unemployment. The number of jobless totalled 13,700,000 in the United States, nearly 5,000,000 in Germany and 2,600,000 in Britain, aggregating 30,000,000 in the capitalist world.

The fight for markets and spheres of influence, and for a redistribution of colonies, became more acute. In 1931 Japan embarked on armed conquest, invading Northeast China and seeking to oust British, French and United States interests from Asia, especially China, and thereby creating a flashpoint in the Far East.

Of the European countries Germany was afflicted most of all. Wholesale unemployment and the steep slide of the living standard saw the economic depression there grow into a political crisis. Most of the bourgeois parties found their position undermined. The attempts of the bourgeoisie to find

a way out of the crisis by intensifying the already ruthless exploitation of the proletariat and other working people evoked popular unrest and resistance. The parliamentary forms of the bourgeois dictatorship were no longer able to keep the exploited people in check. Under these conditions various groups of German monopoly capital, who had long been planning to set up a government that would rule with a "firm hand" and prepare for another war with world domination as the objective, turned to the National-Socialists. They regarded the nazi clique as their strongest weapon for crushing the peace-loving, democratic forces of the German people and, through unbridled nationalistic and chauvinistic propaganda, diverting the people from the revolutionary struggle and leading them to the road of revenge. The German monopolies installed the nazis in power in January 1933, with the result that the leadership of the state passed into the hands of the most aggressive and reactionary circles.

The nazi ideology as expounded by Adolf Hitler, the nazi chief, in *Mein Kampf,* was rabidly chauvinist, preaching "superiority of the German race" and contending that the nation lacked "living space" (Lebensraum). The nazis exploited the anti-Versailles sentiment and the discontent generated by the growing exploitation and the lack of political rights to aver that nothing but war could remedy the situation. They nursed plans of European conquest and world power, making the Soviet Union their main target. "Speaking today of more land in Europe," Hitler declared, "we should think first and foremost of Russia and her subject border countries. Providence appears to point that way." Acting on the desires of the German monopolies, the nazis began preparing a new war of aggrandizement, creating the second flashpoint for it—in the heart of Europe.

With antagonism growing more acute, two opposite alignments emerged. The first was a bloc of fascist powers—Germany, Italy and Japan. In October 1936, Germany and Italy formed the Berlin-Rome Axis, and in the following month Germany and Japan signed an Anti-Comintern Pact with the avowed purpose of co-operating against the Communist International. In fact, however, the Pact, joined by Italy in 1937, was an aggressive alliance contesting world power. It was spearheaded at the Soviet Union, testimony of this being the secret protocol appended to the Anti-Comintern Pact. This protocol stated in part that "the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is seeking to achieve the purposes of the Communist International and intends to use its Armed Forces to this end". The allegation that the USSR was trying to achieve the aims of the Communist International by military means was so wild that Germany and Japan did not venture, for the time being, to state it openly in the Anti-Comintern Pact, for it would have sounded like a direct challenge to the Soviet Union.

The other alignment, consisting of Britain, France and the United States, emerged more gradually, delayed by acute contradictions between the United States and Britain, each of which was trying to come to terms with Germany and thereby strengthen its hand against the other. As a result this alignment was finally shaped somewhat later, already after the war began.

That the two capitalist groupings came into being did not mitigate the struggle in each of them. But the main contradictions were those between the groupings. The imperialists of the leading powers, chiefly of Germany and Japan, were out to secure a fundamental redivision of the world. A military clash between the imperialist vultures was looming. In their bid

for supremacy the fascist states were pushing the world into another global war.

In the late thirties fascist aggression spread rapidly. Italy overran Ethiopia in 1935, and in 1936 Germany and Italy organised an armed intervention in Spain. Japan was still on the rampage in the Far East, resuming her war against China in 1937. The flames spread and the shadow of fascism hung ominously over Europe, Asia and Africa.

The Soviet Union, its policy consistently one of peace, called for a system of collective security to bridle the aggressors. If war broke out in any part of the globe, the USSR showed, it would inevitably engulf the world; all peace-loving countries consequently had an equal stake in collective action.

Democrats all over the world favoured the Soviet proposals. Some of the more far-sighted Western politicians also called for joint action.

The Soviet proposals for a system of European security were embodied in the draft of an Eastern Pact suggested by the USSR in talks with France. This draft envisaged a multilateral treaty of mutual assistance to be signed by a large number of European states. The Pact did not materialise on account of the negative stand adopted by Germany and Poland and also, in effect, by Britain. Nonetheless, thanks to its perseverance, the Soviet Union signed treaties of mutual assistance with France and Czechoslovakia in 1935. As an interrelated system, these treaties might have provided a sound foundation for uniting the efforts of peace-loving states to curb fascist aggression.

Further developments showed that while the British Government and, from the close of 1935, the Government of France spoke of a desire for peace, they were actually nullifying the efforts to set up a system of European security. The ruling circles of these countries knew the extent of the fascist peril to their imperialist interests. Having seized important strategic points in the Far East, the Red Sea area and in Spain, the Tokyo-Berlin-Rome alignment directly threatened the Western powers, but for the British and French capitalists the Soviet socialist state and the revolutionary movement at home were still the bigger enemy. For that reason the British and French governments refused to act with the Soviet Union against the aggressors. They hoped to head off the fascist states and direct them against the Soviet Union to achieve their two fondest objectives: the destruction or weakening of the USSR by forces other than themselves and, at the same time, the weakening of Germany, Italy and Japan, their imperialist rivals. Accordingly, the Western powers encouraged the fascist countries, seeking to channel their aggressiveness eastward against the USSR, and in so doing were willing to sacrifice Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and other East and Southeast European states.

US policy, too, had a fatal influence on the cause of peace. It will be recalled that after the First World War, along with the British and French, the US monopolies extended enormous financial assistance in order to enable Germany to restore and expand her heavy industry. This was one of the key factors unleashing nazi aggression. In the mid-thirties, however, with Germany outstripping Britain and France in economic growth and competing in world markets with the United States, US-German economic relations deteriorated. Matters began to move towards an open clash between the USA and Germany. In this situation, instead of opposing the expansionist ambitions of the nazis, the USA, like Britain and France, pursued a policy of encouraging fascist aggression, helping the British and French ruling classes in their attempts to come to terms with the fascist

states in the hope of resolving the contradictions of the capitalist world at the expense of the Soviet Union.

Naturally, the Western governments could not pursue their dangerous policy in the open. Their encouragement of aggression was camouflaged. Shortly before Italy's attack on Ethiopia, for example, the US Government proclaimed its "neutrality". Countering the proposal for collective security, British diplomats advocated appeasement, that is, concessions to the aggressor which, they claimed, would ensure peace. During the Italo-German intervention in Spain, Britain and France proclaimed "non-intervention".

Obviously, "neutrality", "appeasement" and "non-intervention" stood for a rejection of collective security, reassuring the aggressors, as it were, that no aid would be forthcoming for their victims. This encouraged the fascist states to extend their seizures, and they made adroit use of the Anglo-French anti-Soviet sentiment to prepare for war in the West.

In the autumn of 1937 the nazis began drawing up operational plans for new conquests. The behaviour of the Western powers gave them reason to hope that they could avoid simultaneous operations on more than one front and crush France and Britain first. Victory over those two countries, they thought, would be won at a cheaper price, and, as an essential preliminary, they set out to strengthen Germany's strategic and economic positions, aiming their thrust at a number of Central and East European countries, with Austria as the first victim.

On March 11, 1938, Berlin broadcast faked reports of a "bloody Communist uprising" in Austria, actually a fascist-instigated coup, and on the pretext of restoring order nazi troops invaded the country on the same day. Two days later, Austria was incorporated in the German Reich.

The Western powers looked on impassively. The only power to come out for Austrian independence was the Soviet Union. Once again it called on the peace-loving states to organise collective action and stay the hand of the aggressor. "Tomorrow," a Soviet Government Statement said, "it may be too late, while today there is still a chance if all countries, especially the Great Powers, adopt a firm and unambiguous stand." But the Soviet appeal fell on deaf ears. The Western governments kept egging Germany on against the East and Southeast, with Czechoslovakia next on Hitler's list.

Taking advantage of the fact that a large percentage of the population in Western Czechoslovakia—the Sudeten Region—were Germans, the nazis built up a fifth column there of pro-fascist elements. On Berlin's orders, Konrad Henlein, leader of the Sudeten nazis, demanded autonomy, while Berlin used the pretext of "protecting" Germans in the Sudeten to launch a strident campaign. To create a pretext for intervention, the Henlein gang provoked clashes with the Czechoslovak authorities. In mid-May 1938 reports of German troop concentrations along the Czech border compelled the Czechoslovak Government to strengthen the country's defences. Tension increased. An armed collision was possible at any moment, bringing with it the threat of a war in Europe.

The world followed the events anxiously. Public opinion demanded action to halt fascist aggression. The Soviet Union, France and Czechoslovakia had mutual aid agreements and could have forced the nazis to abandon their plans.

The Soviet Union repeatedly demonstrated its readiness to honour its commitments under the Soviet-Czechoslovak and Soviet-French mutual aid treaties. In face of French wavering, the Soviet Union considered that it was its duty to support Czechoslovakia even if France procrastinated

with the fulfilment of her pact pledges.* On April 26, 1938, M. I. Kalinin publicly stated: "...There is nothing in the pact to prevent one of the sides giving its assistance without waiting for France to act." J. V. Stalin asked Klement Gottwald, leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, to tell Eduard Beneš, then President of Czechoslovakia, that if for purposes of self-defence Czechoslovakia started hostilities against nazi Germany, the USSR was prepared to render her military assistance even if France did not go to her aid.

The USSR backed up these foreign policy acts with the necessary military steps, one of which was the massing in districts abutting the western frontiers of 30 infantry and 10 cavalry divisions, one tank corps, three tank brigades and 12 air brigades. Another 30 infantry and six cavalry divisions, two tank corps and 15 tank brigades were alerted. Other mobilisation measures were carried out simultaneously: 328,000 men were called up from the reserve, and tens of thousands of privates and non-commissioned officers whose term of conscription had expired were retained in the Armed Forces.

All the steps taken by the Soviet Union, as is stated in the Theses of the CC CPSU on the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, "came up against the resistance of the 'Munichmen', who sought to direct nazi aggression against the USSR and enter into an alliance with Hitler". Meanwhile, in line with their policy of encouraging aggression, the Western powers had decided to sacrifice Czechoslovakia in the hope of obtaining from Hitler a pledge that Germany would not attack them. British and French diplomats began energetically to prepare the ground for this sordid bargain, with the British Government assuming the initiative inasmuch as France had a treaty with Czechoslovakia.

In the autumn of 1938, the Western powers struck a bargain with Hitler. This happened at a conference in Munich on September 29 and 30. It was attended by Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Czechoslovakia, whose fate was at stake, was not admitted to the talks, her delegates waiting for the outcome outside the conference room. The Soviet Union was likewise not invited, because it would have blocked this "appeasement" on the part of Britain and France.

At Munich, Neville Chamberlain and Édouard Daladier, the British and French Prime Ministers, consented to Germany's annexing the Sudetenland. Thus, Czechoslovakia lost her fortifications along the border with Germany and she was placed at Hitler's mercy.

When the Czechoslovak delegation, informed of this deal, raised objections, the British spokesman replied:

"If you do not accept, you will have to settle your affairs with the Germans by yourself. Perhaps the French will put it more amiably, but I assure you that they share our views. They will disinterest themselves."

The following assessment of the Munich deal appeared in the August 1968 issue of the journal *Kommunist*, organ of the CC CPSU: "The heads of government of Britain, France, Italy and Germany signed Czechoslovakia's death sentence in Munich on September 29, 1938. The Munich agreement, on whose legality the Bonn Government insists to this day, has entered history as a betrayal of a nation and an illicit bargain with a robber."

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* On the insistence of the Czechoslovak Government, the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of May 16, 1935, contained the reservation that the Soviet Union would be obligated to go to Czechoslovakia's assistance only if France extended similar assistance.

Even in the situation obtaining at the time Czechoslovakia might have been saved had her Government accepted the hand of friendship that was stretched out to her by the Soviet Union. In reply to an inquiry from Beneš, the Soviet Government stated on September 20 that it was prepared, in accordance with the operating treaty, to render Czechoslovakia immediate and effective assistance. In the event France proved to be disloyal to Czechoslovakia, which would annul the Soviet Union's treaty commitments, the USSR could go to Czechoslovakia's assistance as a member of the League of Nations in accordance with Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant. For this the Czechoslovak Government had to request the League to invoke the above-mentioned Articles. Two days later, on September 22, V. P. Potyomkin, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, replied in the affirmative to a question from the Czechoslovak Minister as to whether "in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia the Government of the USSR would go to the latter's assistance without waiting for a decision by the League of Nations". The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia insistently demanded that the Government respond to the nation's firm determination to resist invasion and, accepting Soviet aid, reject the imperialist *diktat*. But the Prague rulers chose to capitulate.

Abandoning areas of Czechoslovakia to Germany in payment for the latter's undertaking to attack the Soviet Union, London and Paris thought they had ensured themselves against nazi aggression. At Munich, Chamberlain suggested a joint statement, and the Anglo-German declaration that followed, dated September 30, 1938, was, in effect, a non-aggression treaty. Its signatories proclaimed their wish "never to go to war with one another again" and to settle all issues by consultation. A similar Franco-German declaration was made public somewhat later (December 6, 1938).

The United States was obviously involved in preparing the Munich deal. While disavowing complicity in the sell-out of Czechoslovakia, US diplomats covertly aided the Anglo-French scheme. In a conversation with Herbert von Dirksen, German Ambassador to Britain, his US counterpart, Joseph Kennedy, declared on June 13, 1938, that in economic matters Germany had to have a free hand in the East as well as in the Southeast, the implications of this being patently clear. The USA bears the full responsibility for the Munich decisions along with Britain and France.

The parties to the Munich deal described it as the beginning of a new European order. They maintained that Munich would assure peace in the lifetime of the "present generation". In fact, however, Munich had tragic repercussions, bringing the world to the threshold of another war.

The Soviet Union, backed by advanced sections of the working class in the capitalist countries, opposed the plans for igniting a new imperialist conflagration. The Communist Parties of Europe headed by staunch leaders of the world working-class movement, Marcel Cachin, Maurice Thorez, Palmiro Togliatti (Ercoli), Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Kolarov, Ernst Thaelmann, Wilhelm Pieck, José Diaz, Dolores Ibárruri, Klement Gottwald, William Gallacher, Harry Pollitt and many others, sought to unite the forces of peace, explaining the implications of "appeasement" and "non-intervention" and stressing that the only way fascism could be blocked was for the world proletariat to act against it in concert. The inexorable course of events bore them out. The danger that beset Europe was gradually being understood. The idea of collective action against fascism and war won currency among the workers. Long before the Czechoslovak events, the facts proved that whenever the working class acted in unison, it won the day. This was so in, say, February 1934 in France, when the people of Paris led by the Communist Party firmly opposed fascism, blocking a

reactionary fascist coup. It was, therefore, essential to unite the masses for the fight against fascism, and this the Communist Parties proceeded to do.

The Seventh Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow in the summer of 1935, was an important milestone in the struggle for unity. It told the world of the true nature of fascism, describing it as a "barefaced terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital"; it called attention to the fact that resort to fascist methods by the bourgeoisie was associated directly with war preparations, and appealed to the peoples of all countries to range themselves alongside the working class in a broad anti-fascist front supporting the Soviet Union. The decisions of that Congress opened people's eyes and intensified the fight against war.

But war could not be prevented, for the Soviet Union was then the only country pursuing an active peace policy, while in the capitalist countries the working-class movement was split on account of the treacherous policies of the Right-wing Social-Democratic leaders.

The sinister clouds gathered rapidly. On March 15, 1939, German troops entered Prague, putting an end to Czechoslovakia's independence.* A week later the nazis seized the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda on the Baltic coast. An unequal agreement was imposed on Rumania, pressing her economy into the service of the nazi war machine. The German demands on Poland contained threatening undertones. The nazis wanted possession of Danzig (Gdansk) and German communication lines across the so-called Polish corridor that gave Poland an outlet to the sea. German-Polish relations grew more and more tense by the hour. On April 11, Hitler endorsed Operation Weiss, an operational plan for the conquest of Poland.

Envying the "successes" of her partner in aggression and the impunity with which Hitler was accomplishing his objectives, Italy invaded Albania on April 7, 1939. On May 22 Germany and Italy concluded the so-called Steel Pact, a predatory military alliance containing not even a hint of "defensive" or "anti-communist" pretexts.

War was only a few months away. The time was one of uneasy anticipation. The Soviet Union repeatedly called for joint efforts by the USSR, Britain and France, and all peace-loving nations. The 18th Congress of the CPSU(B) was held in Moscow in March 1939. It called attention to the designs of the war architects and urged caution in order to prevent them from dragging the USSR into the conflict. It also stated the opinion that German fascism was the most likely adversary of the Soviet Union in any coming war.

Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 laid bare the viciousness of the policy pursued by the Western powers. After Munich, Chamberlain and Daladier had been acclaimed as peacemakers by the bourgeoisie and the Social-Democrats in Britain and France. Now, almost everybody realised that "appeasement" was a mortal danger to the Western powers. Voicing discontent, the public demanded firm action in unison with the

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* The Soviet Government was deprived of the possibility of going to Czechoslovakia's assistance at the time: one of the terms of the Munich deal was Czechoslovakia's renunciation of her treaties of mutual assistance with France and the Soviet Union and the replacement of these treaties by an "international guarantee". On October 9, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs inquired if Prague wished the future boundaries and the country's independence to be guaranteed also by the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry replied that this question could only be decided by the partners in the Munich Conference, thereby again rejecting the Soviet offer of assistance.

Soviet Union. The rulers of Britain and France, too, were troubled by Hitler's ambitions. They feared he might head against the West instead of driving on eastward.

The British and French decided on a new diplomatic manoeuvre. They were eager to allay public opinion, on the one hand, and disturb Hitler's peace of mind with the prospect of a military alliance with the Soviet Union, on the other. They hoped Germany would then come to terms with them. To create the appearance of a united front against Germany, the British and French governments gave guarantees to Poland, Rumania, Greece and a few other countries and began diplomatic talks with the Soviet Government in the spring and summer of 1939.

The USSR wanted an agreement ensuring effective Soviet, British and French co-operation against aggression. The objective foundation for this was available, for the peoples of all three countries wanted peace.

The Soviet proposals were based on equal rights and equal commitments. Britain and France, on the other hand, endeavoured to impose unilateral commitments on the USSR, demanding that the Soviet Union aid them if Germany marched westward, while evading reciprocal undertakings. What they wanted was to goad the Soviet Union into a war against Germany with themselves looking on. It was really a policy of provocation. After drawn-out negotiations the Western powers finally agreed to sign a mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union, but to make the pact an effective instrument against aggression it was necessary to define the form, volume and time of mutual military assistance. The Soviet Government, therefore, suggested initiating talks between the military missions of the three countries. The talks opened in Moscow in mid-August 1939 and the Soviet military mission submitted a concrete plan of joint operations by the Armed Forces of the USSR, Britain and France, making provision against all the possible patterns of aggression in Europe. Having no common frontier with Germany, the Soviet Union could not help its prospective allies unless its troops were allowed passage across Poland. The Western spokesmen evaded an earnest discussion. They had no provisional plan of joint operations, and subsequent publication of relevant documents indicated that neither Britain nor France were seriously envisaging military co-operation with the USSR. A secret directive to the British mission, for example, said that "the British Government is unwilling to enter into any detailed commitments" which were likely to "tie our hands". The mission was ordered to "go very slowly", and this at a time when the German-Polish crisis was certain to come to a head at any moment.

The reason for the British tactics of procrastination was that London was conducting clandestine talks with Germany, to which it attached far greater importance. British diplomats offered the nazis a non-aggression pact and suggested coming to terms on world spheres of influence. H. Wohltat, the German negotiator, was told by R. Hudson, his British counterpart, that "three big regions offered the two nations an immense field for economic activity: the English Empire, China and Russia. Here agreement was possible, as also in other regions; England had no economic ambitions in the Balkans". Thus, in reply to the nazi demands for the return of the former German colonies that had fallen into British hands after the First World War, British diplomacy openly sought to direct German aggression eastward, against the USSR. The proposals and blandishments were many. Dirksen, German Ambassador in London, pointed out in his reports to Berlin that if his country accepted Britain's proposals, "England would renounce the guarantees she

had given to certain states in the German sphere of interest. Further, Great Britain would bring influence to bear on France to get her to give up her alliance with the Soviet Union and her commitments in Southeast Europe. She would also drop her treaty negotiations with the Soviet Union". This shows beyond all doubt that the British Government used the Moscow talks to pressure Germany into signing an agreement aimed against the Soviet Union.

In the summer of 1939 the Soviet Union faced the prospect of a possible war on two fronts in total political isolation from the rest of the world. The threat of a German aggression from the West was complemented by that of a Japanese attack from the East. In May Japanese troops crossed the border into the Mongolian People's Republic at Khalkhin-Gol. Under its mutual aid treaty, the USSR joined Mongolia in repelling the invaders. In the circumstances, the Soviet Government had no choice but to thwart the efforts of international reaction to destroy the world's first socialist state. This was a question of life and death for the Soviet people and was also in the interest of working people the world over. That was why the USSR consented to a non-aggression pact offered by Germany and signed in Moscow on August 23, 1939.

The talks between the military missions in Moscow ceased as a result of the stand adopted by the British and French representatives. In an interview published in *Pravda* on August 27, 1939, K. Y. Voroshilov, who led the Soviet delegation at these talks, stated: "The talks with Britain and France were suspended not because the USSR had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. On the contrary, the USSR signed that pact because, in fact, the military talks with France and Britain had entered a deadlock." Afraid as yet to go to war against the Soviet Union, the nazi Government suggested the treaty to gain a free hand in Western Europe and then, on seizing Europe's vast resources, to attack the USSR.

When it signed the treaty, the Soviet Government was aware that Germany would sooner or later march eastward. But the treaty precluded a united anti-Soviet front of imperialist powers and, moreover, gave the Soviet Union time to strengthen her defences and thereby prevent the imperialists from resolving their contradictions at her expense.*

To this day our enemies and ill-wishers seek to blame the Soviet Union for the suspension of the military talks with Britain and France and accuse it of having deliberately sought to provoke war between Germany and the Western powers. These attacks on Soviet foreign policy are so unfounded and absurd that even some bourgeois historians are compelled to reject them. For example, in a book entitled *Disputed Problems of Latest History* Jacques F. de Launey writes: "...the Russians hoped to come to terms with the French and British.... There is no evidence to

* Post-war publications show that the ruling circles of the imperialist states had never relinquished these attempts. Moreover they redoubled their efforts in this direction even after the Second World War had broken out. The following two facts are noteworthy. In April 1941, in forwarding a message from Churchill to Stalin through the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the British Ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps found it necessary to state: "...unless the Soviet Government decided on immediate co-operation with the countries still opposing the Axis in the Balkans, the Russians would miss the last chance of defending their frontier with others." Meanwhile, the British Intelligence Centre in New York, then headed by the Canadian millionaire William Stephenson who was closely linked with Churchill, leaked the information to the German Embassy in the USA that "the USSR intends to launch further military aggression the instant Germany is embroiled in major operations". The British Government went to all ends to ignite a clash between the USSR and Germany as soon as possible.

support the accusation that the Russians had played a double game." Any researcher who is at all unbiassed will, upon studying the international situation of those days and the documents pertaining to the military talks, inevitably draw the conclusion that a double game was played precisely by the British and French governments, who were out to engineer a military clash between the USSR and Germany and use it in their own imperialist interests.

2. OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On September 1, 1939, Germany attacked Poland. Britain and France replied to this by declaring war on Germany on September 3. Officially this was done to "save" Poland, but in fact the British and French ruling circles were coldly indifferent to the destiny of the Polish people. It was only their fear that Germany would become an excessively strong imperialist rival that made them go to the war against her. In spite of the Munichmen's calculation to unleash war between the capitalist camp and the isolated socialist state, war broke out within the capitalist world.

The Wehrmacht High Command planned to crush Poland in a lightning campaign by a sudden massive assault involving large forces, particularly armour and aircraft. Five armies overran Poland from three directions—from East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia. These consisted of 65 divisions and brigades, including 41 infantry and 11 panzer and motorised divisions. The invading force had 2,800 tanks, nearly 2,000 aircraft and over 100 warships. Poland's strength was: 36 infantry divisions, two motorised brigades and 11 cavalry brigades. The troops were supported by 860 light tanks, 420 aircraft and 12 warships.

Hitler was certain that neither Britain nor France would go to Poland's aid. He was right. Although the two countries declared war on Germany, they sent no help to Poland.

The mobilisation announced in Poland on August 31 was, in effect, stillborn. The rapid advance of the German troops, marching from west, north and south, was facilitated by the absence of strong fortifications. Expecting to fight the Soviet Union some day, Poland's rulers had built their fortifications along the eastern frontier. Within a week the nazis drove deep into the country. Rolling back after the initial assault, the Polish armies were soon in full retreat. Confusion reigned at the headquarters of the Polish High Command. On September 4-6 the rulers abandoned Warsaw, fleeing to Lublin and Brest. On September 17 they crossed the Rumanian frontier, leaving the people and the country to their fate. But patriots stood firm. The fighting units showed unexampled tenacity. Volunteers, many of them Communists, fought bravely at their side. The defenders of Warsaw displayed indomitable courage. Defying air-raids and the ferocious onslaught, Warsaw held the nazis at bay for three long weeks. But the strength of the adversaries was unequal. The German armies gradually locked the Poles into a huge pocket.

The September catastrophe spelled total defeat for bourgeois-landowner Poland and the loss of her state independence. One of the main causes was the adventurist, anti-Soviet policy of the ruling clique, which counted on utilising the contradictions between Germany and the USSR. By turning down Soviet assistance, the Polish Government opened the door to the aggressors and doomed its people to suffering and national humiliation.

Betrayal by the Anglo-French rulers was another cause. The Western powers had given "guarantees" merely to use Poland as a pawn in their diplomatic game with the nazi Reich. In the hour of peril, Britain and France abandoned their ally. A strong thrust from the West might have changed the entire course of the war. Alfred Jodl, Hitler's Chief of Operations, told the Nuremberg Tribunal that Germany escaped defeat in 1939 because the approximately 110 French and British divisions facing 23 German divisions in the West while Poland was being strangled were totally inactive.

Bourgeois historians attribute this inactivity to the unpreparedness of the Western powers. But actually London and Paris hoped the nazi armies sweeping eastward would not stop on reaching the Soviet border. They were reluctant to aid Poland for this reason and gave Hitler to understand that he could attack the USSR with no peril to himself. In effect, this was a continuation of the Munich policy.

Nor did Britain and France change their policy after Poland's defeat. A strange calm prevailed on the Western front: huge armies faced each other, but no battles were fought, no bombs were dropped on German soil; instead, Allied planes dropped anti-Soviet leaflets on nazi troop positions, reproaching Hitler for "reconciling himself with Moscow" and refusing to combat communism. The soldiers were bored. People referred to the war as "sitting", "funny" and "phoney". Many thought no shooting war would develop, with matters ending in an "honourable peace".

The Anglo-French rulers held that Hitler would not risk an offensive in the West. "I don't think the Germans have any intention of attacking us," Neville Chamberlain said to General Bernard Montgomery in December 1939. Similar illusions were entertained by members of the French Government, as de Gaulle attested in his war memoirs. French and British monopolists continued to supply Germany with strategic materials via neutral countries.

The French bourgeoisie rendered Hitler an inestimable service by attacking the democratic forces in France. The main blow was aimed at the Communists, who were the staunchest anti-fascists. The Communist Party was outlawed on September 26, 1939. Thousands of Communists were thrown into prisons and concentration camps. Democratic organisations and their press were smashed.

Reluctant to come to grips with Germany, the Western Allies sought to come to terms with her. They let the nazis know through their embassies in Luxembourg, Spain and Italy that war against Germany was "unpopular" in the West and that a peace settlement could be reached on certain terms.

To urge the nazis eastward against the USSR, the Anglo-French rulers exploited the Soviet-Finnish war. A virulent anti-Soviet campaign was started in France, Britain, the USA and other bourgeois countries. "An indescribable rage gripped the bourgeoisie," wrote French journalist Henri de Kerillis, "obsessed by the idea of a crusade.... All we heard was: 'War on Russia!'... The anti-communist delirium reached its peak and assumed epileptic forms."

On the pretext of helping Finland, Britain and France were busy hammering out an anti-Soviet front, calling on Germany to join. They collaborated with the fascist powers, shipping arms and ammunition to Finland, hastily mustered an expeditionary force for an attack on Murmansk and Leningrad and planned the invasion of the Soviet Union from the south. Thus, instead of fighting Germany, Britain and France concentrated on fomenting war against the USSR.

The anti-Soviet preoccupation of the British and French governments and the total inactivity of the Anglo-French forces on the Western front enabled the nazis to prepare thoroughly for continued aggression in Europe. The Wehrmacht Command felt that the time had come to crush France and turn Northwestern Europe into a springboard against Britain. The next stage was to be the invasion of the Soviet Union. The balance of strength had changed. In the autumn of 1939 the German Armed Forces could not risk a contest with the West; they still lacked the potential. But by the spring of 1940 the situation changed. Arms production had climbed 54 per cent, and the Armed Forces consisted of 156 divisions as against the 105 divisions in November 1939. One hundred and thirty-five divisions, 42 of them in the Wehrmacht High Command reserve, were marked out for action in the West; the Air Force had grown to over 3,500 planes, and the armoured divisions had nearly 2,600 tanks.

The Western powers had 143 divisions in France, Belgium and Holland, (99 French, 10 British, 22 Belgian, 10 Dutch and two Polish) equipped with more than 3,000 tanks and more than 2,700 planes. One hundred and two divisions were designated for operations against Germany, and 16 were in the reserve of the French Command.

The Allied Command drew up its so-called Plan D, applicable if the Germans struck via Holland and Belgium. Under this plan the Anglo-French troops would respond to a German invasion by entering Belgium and taking up positions along the Antwerp-Sedan line together with the Belgian forces.

Having information that the Allies were concentrating in the north, the nazi Command envisaged the main blow somewhat to the south, in the Ardennes, where a strong armoured group would break through the Sedan sector in the general direction of Abbeville to the Atlantic seaboard, emerging in the rear of the Allied armies in the north.

The German Armed Forces were deployed in strict accordance with their plan. But before invading France, nazi Germany overran Denmark and Norway early in April 1940. On May 10 German troops crossed into Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The German offensive in the West gained momentum. The Allied Command set Plan D into motion, dispatching its armies to Belgium.

In the meantime, German armour crossed Luxembourg and drove over the Ardennes. The panzer columns stretched out along the narrow mountain roads were an excellent target for Allied bombers. But no Allied planes appeared, and the nazis reached the Maas unmolested.

The French Command, which thought the sector unimportant, had manned it with two of its weakest armies. The advancing German force had a 7:1 superiority in tanks and a 20:1 superiority in aircraft, with a 25:1 and 50:1 superiority respectively in the breakthrough area. This assured the nazis of success. On May 14 the German troops crossed the Maas at Dinan, Monthermé and Sedan and drove deep into the French positions.

After this easy victory the Germans expected the Allies to commit their strategic reserve, mount a counter-attack and try to close the breach. Nothing of the kind was done. So on May 18 the Germans renewed their drive to the mouth of the Somme. On the following day they captured Amiens, their forward units reaching the shore southwest of Dunkirk on May 21. Forty British, French and Belgian divisions were cut off from the main Allied forces. Believing that the fate of the enemy group was sealed, the German Command stopped the panzer columns and on May 24 ordered infantry and air to advance alone. The objective was to annihilate the enveloped troops and prevent a British withdrawal across the Channel by

occupying the shore. The order of May 24 indicates that the tanks were halted because they were wanted for the main drive—a thrust south into France in order to force her to surrender. Besides, Hitler had made his final decision to prepare intensively for war against the Soviet Union, for which he would need a large number of tanks. But the German Command underestimated enemy strength and overrated the nazi infantry and, especially, the Luftwaffe. The British Command managed to evacuate the bulk of its forces to the British Isles. True, all heavy weapons and equipment fell to the enemy.

The Allied setback was not a total disaster. France still had fresh reserves and stocks of arms. The patriotic forces rose to the occasion. On June 6 the French Communist Party pleaded with the Government to distribute arms to the people and make the war a people's cause for freedom and independence. However, dreading its own people more than the nazis, the capitalist Government refused. On June 22, Pétain signed a surrender at Compiègne. Two days later, France concluded an armistice with Italy, which had declared war on June 10, when the outcome of the hostilities was a foregone conclusion.

Having captured France, the nazis divested her of her freedom. A larger section of the country was occupied by nazi troops. The Pétain Government chose to collaborate with the invaders, placing the nation's economy at the disposal of the Third Reich. A fascist regime was established in the unoccupied zone. Hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen were shipped off forcibly for hard labour in Germany.

But despite the defeat and the fascist reign of terror, the French power of resistance was not broken. The Communist Party called on the people to overthrow the Pétain regime and fight the invader. "Never will a great nation like ours become a nation of slaves," the Party Manifesto, issued on July 10, 1940, read. "France with her glorious past will not kneel." The Manifesto called for a broad front to fight for freedom, independence and regeneration. Combat groups were organised under Communist leadership, marking the start of the French Resistance movement.

In the first months of the war nazi Germany overran nearly the whole of Western Europe. Stimulated by the succession of easy victories, the nazis raved about a "new order". This was to end the independence of the conquered countries, supplanted by ruthless social and national oppression. Occupation troops comported themselves with particular brutality in the Slav countries, where millions of people were exterminated. This was meant to cow nations into total submission. But it produced the reverse effect. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, and in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway, the people would not bend. Patriots resisted the invaders.

The Resistance movement which rose to a new stage in the occupied countries after Germany's attack on the USSR was part of the mammoth battle between the democratic forces and the forces of reaction and fascism. Historically, the Resistance was natural. It was a protest against the fascist "new order" and, with part of the capitalists and landowners collaborating with the nazis, was also aimed against the home-grown reactionaries.

The fight for national liberation was inspired and organised by Communist and Workers' Parties. They stirred the masses to a holy war against fascism, for national independence and freedom. The movement was democratic and embraced the workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals and much of the bourgeoisie, that is, the absolute majority. Communist Parties worked hand-in-hand with non-proletarian organisations. United antifascist fronts were forged in most of the occupied states. Communists

interlaced the fight against fascism with the fight for social emancipation.

The Second World War was initially an imperialist war. The guilt for it lies with the imperialists of all countries, with the capitalist system, the direct responsibility for starting it falling squarely on nazi Germany.

The war was a complex convulsion. Unlike the First World War, it erupted in the midst of the general crisis of capitalism. A powerful socialist state, the Soviet Union, already existed. The first war had been an expression of the contradictions between rival imperialist powers, while the second expressed two sets of contradictions—those between the two capitalist coalitions, and those between the capitalist world as a whole and the Soviet socialist state.

Lenin's teaching helps us define the nature of the Second World War. War is a continuation of politics by violent means. "All wars," he stressed, "are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within that state, pursued for a long time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone being changed."

The fascist bloc—Germany, Italy and Japan—had predatory imperialist war aims: to enslave other states and peoples, eradicate socialism and democracy, suppress the revolutionary and national liberation movements, crush imperialist rivals and gain world supremacy. As far as the fascist states were concerned, it was an imperialist war.

Britain and France, which entered the war against Germany in 1939, also pursued imperialist aims: to preserve and strengthen their status as colonial powers and weaken their rivals—Germany, Italy and Japan. It was not their aim to destroy fascism. On the contrary, it was in their plans that the fascist states would come to grips with the Soviet Union, help crush the revolutionary and democratic movements in Europe and block the national liberation movement in the East. The war between Germany, on the one hand, and Britain and France, on the other, was therefore imperialist during the first stage, though attributes of a just war of liberation were also in evidence. The Polish people, for example, deserted by their reactionary Government from the very outset of the war, rose to the struggle for national independence. Heroic resistance was put up against the nazi invaders by the Greek and Yugoslav peoples as well. In other occupied countries, too, the peoples fought an anti-fascist war of liberation. True, at first this tendency did not substantially influence either the nature of the war or its fortunes. But the liberative trend became more pronounced in the latter half of 1940, gradually turning the war against nazi Germany into a just war for freedom.

After the initial setbacks of the Western powers, Britain faced the frightening prospect of invasion. Her people were determined to repel fascism, compelling the rulers to alter their bankrupt policy and fight the aggressor in earnest. The Soviet Union's entry into the war after Hitler's sneak attack was, however, what changed the nature of the war entirely. The USSR's just war aims and tenacious resistance multiplied the strength of the Resistance movement in the occupied countries, and public pressure on the governments of the bourgeois-democratic states redoubled. Though still in many ways hostile to the USSR, the rulers of Britain and the United States had no choice but to range themselves beside it in a united front, at least in the main issue: the prosecution of the war against nazi Germany, Italy and their allies. Thus, for the forces opposing Germany, the Second World War became a just, anti-fascist war.

3. GERMAN PREPARATIONS FOR WAR AGAINST THE USSR

After conquering France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands, the nazis turned their eyes eastward. They knew that for them the Soviet Union was the main barrier to world supremacy. On March 30, 1941, Hitler referred to the coming war against the Soviet Union in the following terms: a war of annihilation, a war strikingly different from that in the West; in the East cruelty would be a boon for the future.

At the end of July 1940, top German military leaders had a conference in Berghof and set the date for the attack on the USSR: Spring 1941. On December 18, 1940, Hitler endorsed the plan for war against the Soviet Union, code-named Operation Barbarossa. The nazi corps of generals approved it. After nazi Germany was defeated, it was claimed that Rundstedt, Halder and Brauchitsch had counselled Hitler against a war in the East. That is untrue. Fearing a war on two fronts, they were only somewhat dubious about attacking the Soviet Union before Britain had been put out of action.

The main politico-military aim of Operation Barbarossa was to crush the USSR. Strategically, it was based on the Blitzkrieg doctrine. A powerful strike was envisaged to destroy the main forces of the Red Army in the country's western areas, followed by a rapid advance deep into Soviet territory and the seizure of key political and economic centres. The capture of Moscow figured as a prime objective. Moscow's fall, the planners thought, would mean final political, military and economic defeat for the USSR. The ultimate objective of the operation, the plan emphasised, was to "erect a barrier against Asiatic Russia on the general line Arkhangelsk-Volga". Three strike groups were to pursue the offensive in three strategic directions: from East Prussia against Pskov and Leningrad, from east of Warsaw against Minsk and Smolensk, and from the Lublin area against Zhitomir and Kiev. Auxiliary attacks were envisaged from Finland and Rumania, then Germany's allies.

Ground operations were assured air and naval support. The Luftwaffe was cast in an important role: its aim was to paralyse and crush Soviet air resistance and support the main ground operations. After suppressing the Soviet Air Force, with German troops advancing deep into the land, the Luftwaffe was to hit industrial and administrative centres in the Soviet East, chiefly the Urals. The Navy was to prevent the escape of Soviet naval vessels from the Baltic, for the nazis thought that after the fall of Leningrad the Soviet Baltic Fleet would be cornered.

The design behind Operation Barbarossa was a serious menace to the Soviet Union because its practical implementation would have meant the ultimate destruction of the socialist state. But this design was unrealistic. Hitler predicted that the Soviet Army would suffer a greater defeat than the French Army in 1940. He underrated the solidity of the Soviet social and political system, and the strength of the Red Army.

The nazis drew up a programme of extermination in occupied Soviet territory. It was a product of the fascist ideology and part of the general plan of war against the USSR approved by the German Government. The crimes planned against the Soviet people acquired the force of law, formalised in pertinent directives, disproving the reactionary historians in the FRG who claim that the brutalities were a retaliation for Soviet resistance behind the German lines.

On March 13, 1941, months before the attack on the USSR, the Wehrmacht High Command issued a "directive on special regions", laying

down strident occupational regulations in occupied territories. Commanders were vested with extraordinary powers. They had unlimited authority with regard to the civilian population. Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and police, ordered to design the political administration in occupied areas, was told to proceed from the idea of "the determined struggle of two opposed political systems". On May 13, 1941, the German Government endorsed a new directive on military jurisdiction in what it called "region Barbarossa", spurning the very idea of mercy and demanding death for all partisans and partisan sympathisers. All who showed the least resistance to Germans, it said, should be shot without trial. Punitive operations against the civilian population, coupled with mass repressions, were also envisaged. In advance, men and officers were absolved of responsibility for any crimes they might commit on Soviet soil.

The extermination of Red Army prisoners of war was planned as well. The directive dated May 12, 1941, requiring instant killing of all captured political workers, is one of the most disgraceful documents issued by the German High Command.

Operation East, framed by the SS and police administration, called for the suppression by fire and sword of the Slav peoples, primarily the peoples of the Soviet Union. Eighty to eighty-five per cent of all Poles, 65 per cent of the West Ukrainians and 75 per cent of the Byelorussians were to be driven off their land. The Russian population was to be enfeebled. Special commandos equipped with appropriate "technology" were formed for the mass execution of civilians. Blithely, Hitler told his subordinates: "We are obliged to depopulate as part of our mission of preserving the German population. We shall have to develop a technique of depopulation.... I have the right to remove millions of an inferior race that breeds like vermin!"

It was part of the nazi scheme to divest the Soviet Union of all its riches. A few days before the perfidious attack, Hermann Göring, vested with unlimited power to plunder occupied areas, endorsed special "directives" to that effect. Occupied areas must be instantly and fully used in the interest of Germany, he said, to obtain food and oil in maximum quantities. That was the main economic objective of the campaign.

Preparing for the new act of aggression, nazi Germany extended contacts with her allies, eager to involve more countries in the aggressive bloc and use their territories, manpower and other resources against the USSR. A triple alliance was concluded in Berlin between Germany, Japan and Italy on September 27, 1940, representing an undisguised anti-Soviet military pact.

Bridgeheads were prepared in countries bordering on the Soviet Union in the southwest and northwest. The nazis went out of their way to consolidate relations with Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and Finland. The ruling element in those countries sided wholeheartedly with the predatory nazi plan. Confirmed enemies of the Soviet Union, they were happy to join "the crusade" in the hope of acquiring new territory.

On November 20, 1940, Hungary acceded to the Tripartite Pact, having been promised annexations in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union (the old Duchy of Galich and the Carpathian foothills up to the Dniester) for taking part in the war against the USSR, and Rumania followed suit on November 23. Rumanian dictator Ion Antonescu put his country at Hitler's disposal. German troops were brought to man all important strategic points. The Rumanian Government promised to furnish the desired number of troops, and to increase shipments of oil and farm

products for the Wehrmacht. In the early half of 1941 Hitler and Antonescu concluded an agreement for a joint attack against the Soviet Union. The Rumanian fascist clique was out to conquer Soviet Moldavia and gain possession of the southern part of the Ukraine.

In the autumn of 1940, the Tripartite Pact was joined by Finland and the puppet regime of Slovakia. Finland was promised Soviet Karelia (minus the Kola Peninsula) and Leningrad Region.

The royal Government of Bulgaria announced its accession to the Pact on March 1, 1941. German troops entered the country on the same day. The people, who had deep feelings of friendship for Russia, received the news with anger.

Nazi diplomacy endeavoured to lure Yugoslavia into the aggressive alliance. On March 25, 1941, the Tsvetkovitch Government signed a protocol on Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact, but thereby created a political crisis. The people revolted against the treacherous policy of their rulers. A coup on the night of March 26-27, 1941, put General Simovitch in power, and a delegation was sent to Moscow, where it signed a treaty of friendship and non-aggression on April 5, 1941. The Soviet Union's intention was to prevent fascist aggression from spreading to the Balkan Peninsula. For this it was essential to preserve the independence of Yugoslavia and Greece, and deny to the fascists the use of the Balkans as a springboard for war against the USSR.

On failing to press Yugoslavia into their aggressive bloc, the nazi leaders decided to resort to violence. They could ill afford an unconquered Yugoslavia and Greece in the rear of their troops. Early in the morning of April 6, 1941, nazi armies attacked Yugoslavia with Italian and Hungarian support. The main cities, including Belgrade, were raided by the Luftwaffe. The Yugoslav troops resisted heroically. But the enemy surpassed them in strength, making a tragic outcome unavoidable. A surrender was signed at Sarajevo on April 18, 1941, delivering the country into the hands of the German invaders. But the peoples of Yugoslavia would not submit. Under communist guidance they waged an uncompromising struggle against the invaders.

In the meantime, German and Italian troops began the invasion of Greece. As in the autumn of 1940,* the Greeks resisted bravely. For a number of days the nazi troops were stalled on the Greek-Bulgarian frontier, with the Italians bogged down at Florina. A British expeditionary corps of 50,000 men landed to assist Greece. But the scales tilted against the gallant Greek people. Treason by their generals, particularly George Tsolakoglu who surrendered the Epirus army, enabled the enemy to overrun the country and also occupy the numerous Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. At the end of May German troops took possession of Crete.

The capture of the Balkan Peninsula greatly strengthened the aggressive bloc, now consisting of Germany, Japan, Italy, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia and Finland.

Germany was a major industrial country, and prior to the outbreak of the war in Europe she had highly developed engineering, electrical engineering, chemical, steel and other industries vital to her war economy, and considerable power resources. The subjugation of many European countries put a still greater industrial potential into the hands of the nazi rulers. In 1941 the coal and lignite output grew to 422,700,000 tons,

* On October 28, 1940, Italian troops invaded Greece from occupied Albania. Despite initial setbacks the Greek Army drove them out of the country.

equivalent to 257,400,000 tons of grade coal, and the aggregate output, i.e., including that of the occupied countries and the nazi satellites, was 439 million tons.

Germany's steel resources, too, increased considerably. In 1939 output was 22,500,000 tons. In 1941, with steel production in occupied Poland, Belgium, Northern France, Holland, Austria, Bohemia and Moravia added, the figure rose to 31,800,000 tons. When she attacked the Soviet Union, Germany had, in addition, large stocks of copper, zinc, lead, aluminium and other non-ferrous metals.

Oil was an immensely important element of the preparations for war against the USSR. Besides her own resources, Germany had access to Rumanian, Austrian, Hungarian and Polish oil reserves. Production of synthetic fuels was stepped up. In 1941 Germany had at her disposal 8,000,000 tons of oil products. In addition, the nazis captured 8,800,000 tons of liquid fuel and lubricants in France, Belgium and Holland.

Its greatly augmented war-economic resources enabled German industry to boost production of arms and other war equipment in 1939-41. For example, Germany produced 10,250 aircraft in 1940 and 11,030 a year later. The output of armoured cars and light tanks rose from 800 to 2,300, and of medium tanks from 1,400 to 2,900. Manufacture of guns increased. Five thousand 75-mm and bigger cannon were produced in 1940, and 7,000 in 1941. In those two years German industry put out 8,000 mortars and over 2,700,000 rifles and carbines. Output of submachine-guns totalled 325,000 in 1941. Besides, Germany had a large automobile industry, ensuring the Wehrmacht with a high degree of mobility.

In the occupied European countries the Germans came into possession of the armaments and vehicles of 12 British, 22 Belgian, 18 Dutch, six Norwegian, 92 French and 30 Czechoslovak divisions, and also the stockpiles of arms that had been built up in these countries. Moreover, they had the free use of the current output of these countries' defence industries.

Preparing for the war against the Soviet Union, the German High Command enlarged the Armed Forces. By June 1941 their strength totalled nearly 8,500,000 men.

The German High Command assigned 152 divisions (including 19 panzer and 14 motorised divisions) and two separate brigades to Operation Barbarossa. These had 3,300,000 effectives, and, in addition, there were 1,200,000 men in the Luftwaffe and 100,000 in the Navy, amounting to 77 per cent of the Wehrmacht's total active strength. The satellite countries sent to the Eastern front 29 divisions (16 Finnish and 13 Rumanian) and 16 brigades (three Finnish, nine Rumanian and four Hungarian) totalling 900,000 officers and men. All in all, 181 divisions and 18 brigades were massed along the Soviet frontier. In the East, Germany and her satellites committed 5,500,000 effectives, of whom 4,600,000 were German troops. They had 47,260 field guns and mortars, nearly 2,800 tanks (excluding light tanks), and 4,950 aircraft.

In accordance with Operation Barbarossa, the German Command created army groups.

Army Group Norway was deployed in the Extreme North, with orders to capture Murmansk. It had six divisions, two of which were Finnish divisions. Two Finnish armies, consisting of 15 infantry divisions (of which one was German), and three brigades were poised for action in Southeast Finland. Their task was to co-operate with Army Group North in the planned assault on Leningrad. These forces were supported by hundreds

of aircraft of the 5th German Air Fleet and 500 planes of the Air Force of Finland.

Army Group North was deployed in East Prussia along a line stretching from Klaipeda to Goldap. It consisted of the 16th and 18th armies and the 4th Panzer Group (altogether 29 divisions, six of which were panzer and motorised divisions). Its mission was to crush the Soviet forces in the Baltic area and co-operate with part of Army Group Centre in capturing Leningrad and Kronstadt. The offensive was to be supported by the 1st Air Fleet (1,070 aircraft).

The most powerful force, Army Group Centre, was massed along a line running from Goldap to Vlodava. It consisted of the 4th and 9th armies and the 2nd and 3rd Panzer groups, totalling 50 divisions (including 15 panzer and motorised divisions) and two motorised brigades. Its objective was to encircle and destroy the Red Army forces in Byelorussia and capture Polotsk, Vitebsk, Minsk, Smolensk and Gomel. This was to open the way for further operations in the direction of Moscow and help Army Groups North and South. Army Group Centre was supported by the 2nd Air Fleet, which had 1,680 planes.

Army Group South was drawn up in the southern sector, stretching from Lublin to the mouth of the Danube. It was composed of the 6th, 17th and 11th armies and the 1st Panzer Group, the Rumanian 3rd and 4th armies and a Hungarian mobile corps (a total of 57 divisions, including nine panzer and motorised divisions, and 13 brigades). Its objective was to wipe out the Soviet forces in the Ukraine up to the Dnieper and capture crossings at and south of Kiev, setting the stage for subsequent operations eastward. Air support consisted of some 1,300 German and Rumanian aircraft.

The Army Command had a reserve of 24 divisions, including three panzer and motorised divisions.

Conditioning the nation and the army for war was part of the preparations. The powerful nazi propaganda machine worked on German minds day after day with the venom of anti-communism, racism and chauvinism. Goebbels made every possible use of the press, radio and other media to tell Germans they were a superior race "with the Heaven-sent mission of ruling other nations". Nazi propaganda extolled the "successes" of the German Army in the West, and praised its "unsurpassed might" and "invincibility."

The reign of terror against progressives continued. Hundreds of thousands of anti-fascists were thrown into prisons and concentration camps, among them Ernst Thaelmann, leader of the Communist Party of Germany. Many Party leaders were assassinated. Part of the Communists left the country. The leadership of the Social-Democratic Party was smashed, with many Party members imprisoned.

Chauvinist sentiment coupled with nazi brutality fettered the efforts of the anti-fascists. The Communist Party stood staunchly at the head of the progressive forces. Working underground since 1933, it was the only political force in the country that methodically branded the aggressive policy of the German imperialists and came out in behalf of the nation's vital interests.

But in the circumstances, the Left could not produce a broad national front or secure unity of the working class. The disruptive activities of the Right-wing leaders of the Social-Democratic Party constituted a grave obstacle. It had largely been due to them that the nazis came to power, and during the war they continued their old anti-Communist line, rejecting all proposals for a united front. Their policy impaired the nation's interest and objectively benefited the nazis.

The Communist Party of Germany called for solidarity with the peoples attacked by Hitler, for resistance to national oppression. In so doing, it acted on Karl Marx's well-known postulate: no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations. Leaflets described nazi crimes in occupied countries and exposed the reactionary substance of nazism, and of the war. Anti-fascists worked perseveringly for a united front with foreign workers and war prisoners shipped into Germany.

The Communist Party warned the nation of the danger implicit in aggression against the Soviet Union. But despite the selfless anti-fascist struggle in Germany, the nazi war against the USSR could not be averted, the split of the working-class movement being the main reason.

* * *

By the summer of 1941 the war had spread to the borders of the Soviet Union. Dozens of countries were ablaze. Armies were locked in battle in Europe, Asia and Africa, with the fascist bloc attaining signal victories. Nearly all the European countries were overrun, their economic and military resources falling into the hands of the invaders. Meeting no properly organised resistance, German nazism was openly driving for world power.

Chapter Two

THE SOVIET UNION BEFORE THE WAR

1. STRENGTHENING THE DEFENCES

The thirties are recorded in the history of the Soviet Union as the period when socialism triumphed. Having healed the wounds inflicted by the First World War, the foreign armed intervention and the Civil War, and having rapidly restored industry and transport, the Soviet people led by the Communist Party tackled Lenin's industrialisation plan, carrying out two imposing five-year economic development plans in 1928-37.

The advance made under the first five-year plan was tremendous. Industry registered a spectacular growth by 1933. Tractor plants were built in Kharkov and Stalingrad (Volgograd), automobile plants in Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod (Gorky), and blast furnaces were started up in Magnitogorsk and Novokuznetsk in the country's east, inaugurating a new coal-and-steel complex second to that of the Donets Basin. This was the foundation for the Soviet Union's defence potential. The Lenin Hydropower Station on the Dnieper, pride of the Soviet people, was put into operation, with dozens of other large power plants built throughout the country. Electrification gave impetus to new industries, unknown in tsarist Russia, such as the chemical, aircraft, automobile, tractor and machine-tool, providing a dependable industrial foundation for socialism.

Big changes were also wrought in agriculture, for socialism was inconceivable without a radical reconstruction of farming as outlined in the programme of the Communist Party along principles spelled out by Lenin. Acting on the programme and suiting its guidelines to the situation in the countryside, the 15th Party Congress proclaimed collectivisation in 1927. By the end of the first five-year plan the collective-farm system had become dominant in the countryside.

From then on agriculture, as well as industry, developed along socialist lines. From a backward agrarian country the Soviet Union grew into a powerful industrial and collective-farm state by virtue of the dedicated labour of workers and collective farmers, who followed the path charted by the Party with enthusiasm.

In 1934 the 17th Party Congress launched a second economic development plan (for 1933-37), which was completed in the main by the spring of 1937. Industrial growth continued on an unprecedented scale. The gross industrial product in 1937 was 2.2-fold over 1932, nearly four times that of 1929 and six times that of pre-revolution 1913. No capitalist country had ever registered such high growth rates. For industrial output the Soviet Union forged into first place in Europe and second (to the USA) in the world. The technical reconstruction of all branches of the economy had been essentially completed.

As many as 93 per cent of the peasant households were integrated in collective farms. Between 1933 and 1937 farming was supplied with more than 500,000 tractors (in terms of 15 hp units), 123,500 harvester combines and more than 142,000 lorries. A total of 5,818 machine-and-tractor stations were established to serve the collective farms. Agriculture was collectivised, and thereby firmly placed on the road of socialist development.

As a result of the two pre-war five-year plans, the building of socialism was essentially completed. The country changed beyond recognition, and so did its people. No exploiting classes existed any more. Soviet society consisted of the working class, the collective-farm peasants and the intelligentsia, rallied round the Communist Party, loyal to Soviet power and united. A new Constitution was adopted, formalising the triumph of socialism.

But the victory was not final. The capitalist countries surrounding the Soviet Union surpassed it considerably in economic and military terms. The socialist state was not therefore entirely invulnerable to an armed intervention and attempts forcibly to restore capitalism.

The danger of an imperialist intervention compelled the Soviet Union to strengthen its defences, for which industrialisation provided the essential material and technical base.

In 1930-31 the aircraft industry produced an annual 860 aircraft, the yearly average rising to 3,578 in 1935-37. Seven hundred and forty tanks a year were produced in 1930 and 1931, and 3,139 a year in 1935-37. The annual output of field guns climbed from 1,911 to 5,020. In 1938 1,174,000 rifles were produced.

This made the Soviet Union militarily self-sufficient, enabling the Red Army to rearm and grow from a technically backward (in 1928) into a modern force. Trained soldiers, many of them former factory workers, tractor drivers or operators of harvester combines, were armed with modern weapons. All of them, sons of a politically and spiritually united nation, were brought up in the midst of socialist construction.

The 18th Party Congress was a fresh token of the nation's unshakable loyalty to Lenin's teaching. Its decisions became an action programme for the Party in the immediate pre-war period, centring attention on the third five-year economic development plan. As it entered the new stage—the stage of completing the building of socialism and of gradually passing from socialism to communism—the Soviet Union overtook most of the capitalist countries in many economic fields. But the biggest capitalist states were still ahead of the USSR in per capita production. The aim of overtaking and surpassing the main capitalist countries in production per head of population, which Lenin set with amazing foresight before the October Revolution, was proclaimed by the 18th Party Congress as the basic economic target.

The third five-year plan was a programme of further economic and cultural growth, of raising the standard of living. It set targets for a precipitous growth of all branches of the economy, with the accent on the heavy and defence industries. Industrial output was to be nearly doubled as compared with the final year of the second five-year plan. In view of the threat of war, special emphasis was laid on building up reserves of food, fuel, electric power, armaments, and so on. This called for larger budget allocations for defence. Suffice it to say, that in 1940 these allocations totalled 56,900 million rubles as against 17,500 million rubles in 1937. In 1928-29 they amounted to only 10 per cent of the budget, rising to 32 per cent in 1940.

Special measures were taken to increase industrial output and enhance the country's defence capability. In 1940 factory and office workers were switched to an eight-hour working day and a seven-day working week. They were forbidden to quit their jobs without good reason and were made more responsible for the quality of the output. A new state network of vocational schools was set up. The people's commissariats for heavy industry, heavy engineering and defence industry were made independent branch commissariats. All this played an important part in preparing the country for defence.

At the 18th Party Conference in February 1941 attention was focussed on the ways and means of stepping up industrial production. The Conference considered the plan of economic development for 1941, and its decisions called for a more rapid development of industries essential to defence, the abolition of the disproportions still in evidence in industry, the creation of the necessary state reserves and the mobilisation of stocks.

Though the plan was interrupted by the war, immense headway was made in the three pre-war years. The economy grew rapidly, and the defence potential was considerably boosted. Gross industrial output grew by 45 per cent, with the output of the engineering industry increasing 76 per cent. Means of production accounted for 61.2 per cent of the 1940 total product, and consumer goods for 38.8. Coal output, which in 1937 amounted to 128 million tons, rose to 165,900,000 tons in 1940. From Russia's sixth place for coal in 1913 the Soviet Union moved up to fourth place in the world and third in Europe. New coal areas were developed in the eastern regions, and shortly before the war these accounted for more than one third of the country's coal output.

Oil production, too, was 45 per cent higher than in 1932, totalling 31,100,000 tons. New oilfields in the Volga area, the Urals, the Soviet Far East, Central Asia and Kazakhstan had raised their output and figured prominently in the oil balance. Steel output aggregated 18,300,000 tons and pig iron 14,900,000 tons, surpassing the top figures for 1913 by 300 per cent.

Under the pre-war five-year plans special attention was accorded to the production of high-grade steels and rolled stock. The report to the 18th Party Congress stated that in 1937 the Soviet iron and steel industry had produced 860,000 tons of electrical steel as against 87,000 tons in 1932. In the same period the output of quality and high-grade rolled stock had risen from 5,900 to 140,000 tons.

Some 3,000 new industrial enterprises began operating in 1938-40. The total built in the 13 years of the pre-war five-year plans approached 9,000, with many located in the country's east. This provided a vast production potential, enabling the Soviet Union to meet its needs in the war.

The Soviet engineering industry, eminently important for defence, ranked first in Europe and was second only to that of the United States. It produced machines and tools for factories that made more machines, including war machines.

During the first three years of the third five-year plan the annual growth rate of the defence industry was 39 per cent, while industry as a whole registered an annual increment of 13 per cent. This was achieved by huge investments in the defence industry, which amounted to 15,600 million rubles during three and a half years of the third five-year plan. This added up to one-fourth of the total investments in industry. In the first half of 1941 war output increased fourfold over the 1937 level.

The aircraft industry was in the midst of reconstruction. The programme adopted by the Party Central Committee in June 1939 for this industry

envisaged a considerable increase of its capacity. Forty per cent of the 1940 budget allocations for military purposes went into the development of the aircraft industry. The production capacities of aircraft factories were greatly enhanced. A total of 17,745 combat aircraft were produced in the period from January 1, 1939, to July 1, 1941. Production was started of the improved MiG-3s, Yak-1s, LaGG-3s, Pe-2s and Il-2s. In 1940 the Army received 86 of these aircraft, while in the first half of 1941 their number rose to 2,653. The rearmament of the Air Force was only at its initial stages. On June 22, 1941, only 19 per cent of the aircraft in the western frontier districts were new machines. The old aircraft were technically inferior to the German planes. The measures taken by the Party and the Government in the period 1939-41 created the conditions enabling the aircraft industry in the course of the war to attain rapid superiority over the enemy as regards both quantity and quality.

New types of tanks, the medium T-34 and heavy KV, much superior to similar fighting machines abroad, had been developed before the war. In 1940 a total of 358 of these combat machines were put out. The production of new types of tanks increased during the first half of 1941, the output including 1,110 T-34s and 393 KVs. But this was not enough. Besides, the troops in the frontier districts began receiving the new tanks only in the second half of 1940, as a consequence of which they did not have time in which to master them. The far-reaching result of the reorganisation of the tank industry undertaken on the eve of the war was that during the very first war years it brought about a sharp increase of the output of new types of tanks and allowed winning superiority over the enemy.

The Red Army's artillery had been improved. In the course of only five years (1934-39), the quantity of artillery at the disposal of the Red Army had increased 225 per cent, new types of field, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns had been developed, and the designing of the first types of rocket launchers had been completed. For a number of indices Soviet ordnance was superior to the corresponding types of German artillery. But it was only on the very eve of the war that the Army began to receive 82- and 120-mm mortars in sufficient numbers. They were to prove an excellent weapon during the war. The High Command's Reserve, which consisted of eight per cent of all available artillery, was found to be inadequate. Besides, this Reserve did not include anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery. The first anti-tank artillery brigades were formed only in April 1941 but by June they were still understrength in equipment and traction. In fact, even the regular Army artillery units were short of mechanical traction.

The Navy had been supplied with a large amount of up-to-date equipment during the pre-war years. The surface vessels and submarines received by it in the period from the beginning of 1939 to 1941 totalled 108,000 and 50,000 tons respectively. During 11 months of 1940 the Navy received 100 fighting ships of different types: destroyers, submarines, mine-sweepers and torpedo-boats. At the close of the year another 269 vessels of various classes were under construction. In October 1940 the Party Central Committee and the Soviet Government reoriented shipbuilding on the output of light surface vessels and submarines. The Navy's air arm and the coastal defence were strengthened. The building of naval bases was stepped up. The further development of the armoured and air forces was the main problem in the Soviet defence build-up in face of the mounting threat of a German attack.

In view of the certain lag in the output of ammunition, the Party Central Committee and the Government approved a special plan for the production of ammunition during the second half of 1941 and during 1942. This plan

called for a substantial growth of output. The preceding development of the Soviet industry, in which the possibility of war had been taken into account, played a vital role in ensuring the production of modern aircraft and tanks and also of artillery, ammunition and military equipment.

On the whole, the defence industry built during the preceding years ensured the Armed Forces with an adequate supply of modern war equipment. Soviet people did not stint their strength, consciously accepting privation and displaying unexampled courage and dedication in order to turn their country into a mighty socialist power. However, there proved to be too little time to fully equip the Army and Navy with the latest weapons, and the outbreak of the war found the Armed Forces at the stage of rearmament.

Agriculture advanced swiftly during the years of the third five-year plan, taking further steps towards large-scale, mechanised socialist farming. By January 1, 1941, there were 236,900 collective farms, 4,159 state farms and 7,069 machine-and-tractor stations with a fleet of 684,000 tractors (in terms of 15 hp units), 182,000 harvester combines, 228,000 lorries and large numbers of other farm machines. In 1940 the man-to-power ratio at the collective and state farms and the machine-and-tractor stations was treble that of the peasant farms in 1913-17.

This made it possible to enlarge the crop area to 150,400,000 hectares in 1940 as compared with 118,200,000 hectares in 1913. In the same period farm output grew by 41 per cent, with grain production rising from 76,500,000 to 95,600,000 tons. Production of cotton, sugar-beet and other industrial crops likewise increased.

These achievements in agriculture were of tremendous importance for the defence might of the Soviet Union. On January 1, 1941, the reserves of rye, wheat, oats, flour and cereals amounted to 6,162,000 tons. This allowed the state to create a four-six months' stock of food and fodder for the Armed Forces. The hundreds of thousands of lorry-drivers, tractor-drivers and harvester-combine operators constituted a huge reserve for the tank and motorised forces of the Red Army.

A cultural revolution was accomplished. Here the Party was guided by Lenin's teaching that socialist culture can only be built up by mastering and critically analysing the cultural legacy of the past embracing all the values of world culture, resolutely uprooting the reactionary ideology of the exploiting classes and educating the people in the spirit of the ideas of communism.

In the course of this revolution the cultural level of the people rose steeply and illiteracy, that blight of pre-revolutionary Russia, was wiped out. Universal secondary education was introduced in the towns, and seven-year education, in rural localities. Higher education made swift progress. In 1940-41 the institutions of higher learning had 812,000 students as against 127,000 in 1914-15. In the Soviet Union there were over five times more students at industrial and agricultural institutions of higher learning than in Britain, Italy, Germany and Japan combined. The number of scientific workers increased from 11,600 in 1914 to 98,300 in 1940.

Numerous cultural establishments were built, the number of clubs increasing from 237 in 1914 to 118,000 in 1941, of public libraries rising more than fivefold and of operating film projectors twentyfold. Book production grew fivefold and newspaper circulation increased more than twelvefold. The cultural revolution ensured the rising generation's education in the spirit of socialism.

The purpose of the extensive ideological work undertaken by the Party was to bring the people up as patriots of their socialist motherland devoted

to the Communist Party and the cause of socialism. "During this tense period," M. I. Kalinin said in 1940, "our people must be more vigilant than ever before so that our socialist state might be ready for any contingency. This must be accentuated by all our mass organisations, by literature, art, films, the theatre and so on."

The Komsomol (10 million members) and the Osoaviakhim Society* (13 million members) were extremely active, helping the Party in the military training and patriotic education of the people. By the beginning of 1941 the Osoaviakhim Society had trained thousands of people in military specialties. This gave the Armed Forces a ready reserve.

Many patriotic works were written before the war, among them *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov and *The Ordeal*, a trilogy by Alexei Tolstoi. *Sevastopol Fatigue* by S. Sergeyev-Tsensky and *Tsushima* by A. Novikov-Priboi are two of many war novels. Permeated with profound patriotism, Soviet literature educated people in the spirit of the Communist Party's ideals, instilling in them love and devotion to their socialist homeland. The same patriotic cause was served by many films, plays and paintings. This period also saw the appearance of harmful books and paintings showing probable adversaries in a primitive light and underrating their strength. An opinion fairly widespread at the time was that if war broke out hostilities would affect only enemy territory and that the enemy would be swiftly destroyed. These shortcomings could not, naturally, eclipse the extensive ideological work which the Party was conducting. It bolstered the morale and political consciousness of the Soviet people, and during the war that broke out soon afterwards their courage, staunchness and heroism commanded the admiration of the world.

The strides made in economic development, culture and other aspects of social life were nothing short of impressive. However, it must be noted that this progress might have been greater still but for the Stalin personality cult. In the Armed Forces it manifested itself chiefly in unfounded repressions on slanderous charges of a large number of experienced commanders and political workers. However, more than one-fourth of the cadres dismissed from the Armed Forces were reinstated on the eve and during the first months of the war and they took an active part in the war.

The personality cult harmed socialist construction, but it could not stop the development of Soviet society or change the nature of the socialist state and its Armed Forces. The Party remained loyal to Marxism-Leninism. Inspired by socialist ideals and utterly devoted to the Communist Party and Soviet power, the people worked with dedication to translate the programme of socialist construction into reality and strengthen the might of their Armed Forces. Therein lay the unconquerable force of socialism.

2. SECURITY OF SOVIET FRONTIERS

In the late thirties the Soviet Union started the large-scale fortification of areas along its western border. Roads, depots, air strips and regular airfields were built in the border zone.

The Far Eastern border, too, was reinforced. This was known to the Japanese imperialists, who had invaded China. Bent on extending their aggression and seizing Soviet and Mongolian territories, the Japanese Army

* Society for the Defence of the Soviet Union and for the Promotion of Its Aviation and Chemical Industries.

twice (1938 and 1939) tested the strength of the Soviet Union's frontiers and those of its ally, the Mongolian People's Republic, by direct attacks.

The first attempt was made in July-August 1938 at the extreme southeastern tip of Primorye Territory at Lake Khasan. The Japanese opened hostilities on July 29. Two days later they crossed the Tumen-Ula, a river along the border, and lunged into Soviet territory. The pirate attack was motivated through diplomatic channels by the pretext that the border there between Russia and China had been inaccurately designated.*

On August 6, in retaliation to the Japanese act of aggression troops under Marshal V. K. Blücher attacked the Japanese-occupied heights. By the evening of August 9 Soviet territory was completely cleared of the invading force. The Red Army was ordered not to cross the frontier but to dig in on the heights. The hostilities ended on August 11.

But their failure at Lake Khasan did not deter the Japanese war architects. Less than a year later they repeated their aggression, this time on the border between China and the Mongolian People's Republic at Khalkhin-Gol. Some 300 Japanese troops crossed the Mongolian border on May 11, 1939, and advanced about 15 kilometres. In the days that followed the force was built up. The border violation sparked an armed conflict lasting nearly four months. The aggression was aimed both against Mongolia and the USSR. Under the terms of its friendship and mutual assistance agreement with Mongolia, the Soviet Union sent a large force against the invader.

Japanese attempts at mounting an offensive at the end of May and early in June failed. The US imperialists were obviously interested in fanning the Soviet-Japanese conflict and exerted pressure on the Japanese rulers. Giving way, the Japanese militarists prepared assiduously for a fresh offensive. Planes, heavy guns and tanks were deployed to the battle area. By August the Japanese force was 75,000 strong. The assault was set for August 24.

But the Soviet and Mongolian commands forestalled the enemy's offensive. Despite the remoteness of the war theatre from the railway and from supply depots, despite the absence of roads and the shortage of water and fuel, they deployed the Soviet 1st Army Group and attained a numerical advantage over the enemy. The group mounted an offensive on August 20 under G. K. Zhukov. Red Army and Mongolian troops inflicted a crushing defeat on the invasion force. By August 31 the last of the Japanese soldiers was driven out of Mongolia. The Soviet and Mongolian troops did not cross the frontier, a peace agreement being concluded between the USSR, the MPR and Japan in Moscow on September 15.

The failure of their two ventures convinced the Japanese militarists of Soviet strength. Their preparations for a new clash with the Soviet Union were now more deliberate and cautious, as borne out by the fact that Tokyo did not attack the Soviet Union together with Hitler Germany in 1941.

The war in the West posed new problems of defence and security for the USSR. After Poland's defeat, Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia were in peril of nazi enslavement: their population, separated from the Soviet Republic by the Polish imperialists in 1920, was, like the whole Polish nation, abandoned to its fate. After the Polish Government fled the country, the Red Army received orders, on September 17, 1939, to enter Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia and place the lives and prop-

* The border was demarcated by the Sino-Russian Hungchung Agreement of 1886, the attached map indicating incontrovertibly that the Lake Khasan area was inside the Russian border.

erty of the people under its protection. This operation was assigned to the Ukrainian and Byelorussian fronts (renamed from the Kiev and Byelorussian military districts); Western Ukrainians became part of the fraternal people of the Ukraine, while Western Byelorussians rejoined their brothers in Byelorussia.

Soon, the freely-elected people's assemblies of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia requested reunification with the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republics. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR granted the request in November 1939.

The tragic fate of bourgeois Poland alarmed Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, for they, too, faced the imminent threat of German aggression. Although the peoples of these republics owed their independence to the October Revolution and naturally gravitated towards the USSR, from which they had been separated by the counter-revolution in the early years of Soviet power, nazi Germany did her utmost to consolidate her influence there. This the Soviet Government could not countenance. Acting in the interests of the Baltic peoples, it offered Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia mutual aid agreements. These were concluded at the end of September and the beginning of October 1939. Under their terms, Red Army garrisons were stationed in the Baltic republics to ensure their security.

Economic and political contradictions beset the capitalist Baltic states. Reactionary elements stepped up their hostile activities against the Soviet Union and the Red Army units stationed in these countries. The anti-popular policy of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian governments gave rise to discontent. Revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the respective Communist Parties became widespread. In June 1940 the bourgeois governments were overthrown and replaced by people's governments. In July 1940 the newly-elected Sejms of Latvia and Lithuania and the Estonian Duma requested the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to admit their countries to the Soviet Union, and in August 1940 they became, respectively, the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian Soviet Socialist Republics.

That the Soviet border shifted westward improved the country's strategic position. But in the northwest the situation deteriorated rapidly due to the provocative and aggressive policy of Finland's rulers, who dreamed of extending their possessions eastward and founding a Greater Finland at the expense of Soviet territory. Leningrad, a large industrial and cultural centre whose population in 1939 equalled that of Finland, was the main object of their aggressive aims. The Soviet-Finnish border along the Karelian Isthmus passed but 32 kilometres from Leningrad, which was thus within range of heavy artillery. Kronstadt, the main base of the Baltic Fleet, was also within range of Finnish heavy guns. The Finnish rulers built a powerful system of fortifications, known as the Mannerheim Line, along the isthmus so that the Finnish Command could rapidly concentrate and secretly deploy a large force to seize Leningrad in a lightning assault. In addition, Murmansk, the Soviet Union's only ice-free port in the north, remained unprotected: part of the islands covering it on the west belonged to Finland.

With the Second World War raging in the West, the Soviet Union could not suffer this situation at the doorsteps of Leningrad and repeatedly offered Finland mutually acceptable terms on which to settle the border question. But the Finnish reactionaries had other plans. Finnish war preparations indicated that, far from wishing to settle the dispute peacefully, Finland was deliberately creating tension as a prelude to an armed conflict.

General mobilisation was proclaimed in Finland in November 1939, and some 15 divisions were deployed along the frontier with the Soviet Union. Things came to a point where Soviet territory was shelled. This compelled the Soviet Government to denounce its non-aggression treaty with Finland on November 28, 1939, and break off diplomatic relations. Finnish militarists responded with fresh provocations on the border near Leningrad.

In this situation hostilities broke out between the Finnish and Soviet armies on November 30.

An armed conflict might have been avoided if the Finnish Government had followed a policy consistent with the national interest of its people and had shown due understanding for the Soviet Union's request to shift the frontier in the vicinity of the Karelian Isthmus. The more far-sighted Finnish politicians admit this today. President Urho Kekkonen declared in September 1963: "If today, more than 20 years later, we put ourselves in the place of the Soviet Union, we would understand in the light of Hitler's attack on the USSR in 1941 that the concern that country felt, and was bound to feel, with regard to its security at the end of the thirties, was entirely legitimate." But the men who were at the helm at that time thought differently and plunged the country into a war.

The hostilities continued for three and a half months, surpassing the Far East conflict in scale and number of troops involved.

The main engagements were fought on the Karelian Isthmus. Soviet troops had to battle extraordinary difficulties. The winter that year was severe. The snow lay deep on all roads. The troops made slow and arduous headway against Finnish resistance between December 1939 and the beginning of February 1940. In the end, they reached the main zone of the Mannerheim Line. On February 11, the Northwestern Front (based on the Leningrad Military District), commanded by S. K. Timoshenko, assumed the offensive with naval and air support. Bitter fighting, which lasted all of a month, culminated in a breakthrough of the Mannerheim Line. Showing mass heroism Soviet troops occupied the fortified city of Vyborg, with operations also underway in other directions.

The breaching of the Mannerheim Line and the capture of Vyborg opened the road into Finland and, in particular, towards Helsinki, the capital. The Soviet Union, however, demonstrated once again that it did not intend to impair Finland's independence and agreed on March 8 to open peace negotiations.

The Soviet-Finnish conflict delighted reactionaries the world over. The German nazis worked covertly to fan it and turn it into a long, large-scale anti-Soviet war, while the Western imperialists did the same overtly. But the peace treaty signed with the Soviet Union by Finland against the formally expressed advice of the US, French and British governments frustrated their scheme. The situation along the northwestern border of the USSR returned to normal. Premises were created for lasting peaceful coexistence between the Soviet Union and Finland. The blame for the violation of peace on the Soviet-Finnish frontier over a year later falls squarely on the Finnish reactionaries and their nazi patrons.

After the peace treaty with Finland, the main problems of the Soviet Union's Western frontiers were solved, save one: that of Bessarabia. In 1918 the bourgeois-landlord royal Government of Rumania had annexed from the Soviet Republic the territory of Bessarabia between the Dniester and Prut rivers populated by Moldavians. The USSR had never recognised Rumania's title to this territory. Progressive elements in Rumania, notably the Communists, also opposed the forcible seizure

of Bessarabia. The prospective military alliance with Germany and fascist developments in Rumania made the solution of the Bessarabian question vitally necessary.

On June 26 the Soviet Government demanded the return of Bessarabia and the transfer of the northern part of Bukovina, whose population consisted mostly of Ukrainians. The Rumanian rulers did not risk an open conflict with the USSR, and complied with this lawful demand. By agreement, the Red Army crossed the Dniester on June 28 and reached the Prut on June 30. A new Soviet-Rumanian border was demarcated. Bessarabia was reunited with Soviet Moldavia. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, with Kishinev as the capital, was set up on August 2, 1940, Northern Bukovina became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as Chernovitsy Region. This put an end to a historical injustice that had lasted 22 years.

The reunification of the Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Moldavian peoples, the restoration of Soviet power in the Baltic republics and their accession to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were major milestones in the solution of the national question and in strengthening the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union's consistent fight for peace and security on the eve of the Second World War and in the war's early stage yielded important results. The country's international situation became more stable and its prestige rose. The strategic situation, too, was much improved. The new frontier was moved 200-350 kilometres westward, meaning that the distance from the border to vitally important centres had increased. The Soviet Navy acquired incomparably better bases in the Baltic.

The frontier changes were accompanied by difficulties. Most of the fortified areas built along the old frontiers lost their former significance. In 1939, therefore, the personnel in these regions was reduced by more than one-third, and in 1941 part of the artillery was removed from subsidiary sectors. The fortified areas were not entirely dismantled since it was seen that they could serve as a strong rear defensive line in the event of a forced withdrawal. The building of fortified areas along the new frontiers was started at a rapid rate. Nearly 140,000 men were engaged on this work daily, yet when nazi Germany attacked the strategic defensive lines still remained to be completed. Moreover, in Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine railway tracks had not yet been widened to match Soviet standards. Communications were not as extensive as in the old border areas. Yet time was short. That fortifications along the western frontier were not ready when the war broke out greatly hindered resistance.

3. THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES

On the eve of the nazi attack the USSR had powerful Armed Forces organised along professional lines, with universal conscription exercised as an honourable duty of all male citizens reaching the age of 18. This provided the Red Army with a reserve of many millions.

The ground troops, Navy and Air Force had a large officer corps and political cadres. The ground troops had modern firearms, artillery, armour and other equipment. While some types of Soviet weapons were inferior to those of the Germans, others were superior.

The Communist Party devoted much of its attention to the political education of servicemen through Army and Navy Party organisations,

fostering the spirit of Soviet patriotism, loyalty to socialist ideas and preparedness to defend the socialist country.

The Central Committee assigned 1,500 Party members to political posts in the Army and Navy at the beginning of 1940, and another 3,700 in June 1941, shortly before the war broke out. Of great importance was the further ideological and organisational strengthening of the Army and Navy Party organisations. More rank-and-file soldiers and commanders were admitted to Party membership. Ideological education improved. Primary branches grew and gained influence. By January 1, 1941, men from the ranks comprised 35 per cent of the Party membership in the Army and 46.3 per cent in the Navy. There were Communists in every Army platoon. In the Army, 12.7 per cent of the personnel were members or candidate members of the Party, and 39.5 per cent were Komsomol members.

Organisation, education and training were based on foremost Soviet military science that came into being together with the Red Army at the time of the Revolution and Civil War. It is founded on the general principles of dialectical and historical materialism, the Marxist-Leninist teaching on war and Army and the policy of the Communist Party and Soviet Government.

The basic tenets of Soviet military science had been worked out by Lenin in writings devoted to the key maxims of Marxist military theory: the decisive role of the people; the socio-economic and moral factors of modern warfare; importance of organisation and materiel in armed struggle; the dependence of military organisation and skill on the nature of the social system and technical development; the methods and forms of armed struggle and the laws governing it; the importance of single political and military leadership in war-time, etc.

Lenin was the first to examine the key aspects of the origin and the character of wars. He revealed the economic roots of war in the imperialist epoch, classifying wars, outlining the military programme of the proletarian revolution and substantiating the need for safeguarding the socialist country and building up its Armed Forces. Lenin's legacy proved an invaluable foundation for Soviet military science, which rapidly attained a high standard, surpassing bourgeois military thought in many respects.

M. V. Frunze, M. N. Tukhachevsky, A. I. Yegorov, B. M. Shaposhnikov, I. E. Yakir, I. P. Uborevich, S. S. Kamenev and many other outstanding generals and military leaders had contributed to the growth of Soviet military science. Valuable contributions had been made by individual commanders and the professors and instructors of military academies.

Soviet strategy defined the tasks of the various service arms. It rejected, and rightly criticised the various one-sided bourgeois theories ascribing the main role to some specific technical means—the air force or armour—or banking on "lightning war". With the defence of the socialist fatherland as its guideline, Soviet military doctrine, a doctrine with a progressive outlook, justly envisaged the conduct of war with decisive joint operations by all the service arms. Attack was rightly considered the decisive strategic action, while defence was admitted to be necessary and natural. However, the possibility of long defensive operations along the entire strategic front on home ground, with the Armed Forces retreating in depth, was overlooked.

Soviet operational art, i.e., the theory and practice of preparing and conducting front and Army offensive and defensive operations, was of an extremely high standard. Soviet experts were the first to develop this new field in the science of war, which appeared during the wars at the beginn-

ing of the imperialist era, especially during the First World War. Leading Red Army theorists, rightly appreciating the increasing role of aircraft, tanks, airborne troops and long-range artillery, advanced the theory of deep operations.

According to that theory, objectives had to be achieved by sledgehammer blows throughout the zone of the operational deployment of enemy troops, aiming to crush them. The theory of deep operations produced an alternative to positional warfare typical of the sanguinary but ineffective battles of the First World War. Methods were worked out for disposing defences in depth, capable of withstanding powerful offensives.

Tactics of general battle and combat by service arms—the theory and practice of fighting—were closely interlaced with the operational theory.

By and large, the Soviet science of war consisted of a sufficiently complete system of ideas on warfare, operations and combat. Soviet military thinking took into consideration the experience gained at Khalkhin-Gol, and the wars in Spain, Finland and Western Europe. On the whole, with some exceptions,* correct conclusions were drawn from this experience.

In March 1940 a special plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) examined the lessons of the war with Finland. It pinpointed the shortcomings and charted measures to eliminate them. A sweeping programme was launched to reorganise and rearm the Red Army. Many commanders who had had their baptism of fire at Khalkhin-Gol and in the Karelian forests were promoted. Training followed the principle, "Do as you would in battle". But the programme was not completed.

At the time it attacked the USSR the German Army, as we have already pointed out, had nearly 8,500,000 effectives. Together with her satellites, Germany massed on the Soviet western frontier 190 divisions (5,500,000 men), close to 2,800 tanks (excluding light tanks), 47,260 field guns and mortars (excluding 50-mm mortars) and 4,950 aircraft.

The powerful German force massed along the Soviet western frontier was faced by the Northern Fleet, units of the Leningrad Military District, the Baltic Fleet, and units of the Special Baltic, Western and Kiev districts, Odessa Military District and the Black Sea Fleet. The headquarters of each of the districts (excepting that of Odessa) was to serve as the headquarters of the respective fronts, while the Odessa HQ was to become that of the 9th Army.

At the close of April 1941, due to the worsening of the situation as a whole, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government took urgent steps to enhance the Red Army's combat preparedness. Under the mobilisation plan, approved by the Government in February 1941, the People's Commissar for Defence carried out a series of measures in May and June. On April 26 the Military Councils of the Transbaikal and Far Eastern military districts were ordered to prepare one motorised and two infantry corps (nine divisions in all) and two airborne brigades for dispatch to the western border districts. In mid-June several air divisions were ordered to redeploy to the European part of the USSR from the Transbaikal area and the Far East. The Urals Military District received orders

* The experience of using tank and motorised forces in Spain was wrongly assessed. It was decided to abolish tank corps and replace them with separate brigades and regiments. Soon afterwards the Soviet Command decided to return to the corps system. Nine motorised corps were formed in 1940. The formation of another 20 corps (with two tank and one motorised division in each) was commenced in February and March 1941. This measure was not completed by the time the war broke out because 16,600 tanks of new types were needed to bring these corps up to full strength, and industry was able to supply only 5,500 machines.

to send two divisions to the western frontier. On May 13, the 19th, 21st and 22nd armies from the North Caucasian, Volga and Urals military districts and the 25th Infantry Corps from the Kharkov Military District were ordered to deploy along the Western Dvina and the Dnieper. These units were to take up their positions on July 1-3 as the Reserve of the High Command. The 16th Army was ordered to redeploy to the Kiev Military District from the Transbaikal Military District.

In late May 793,000 men were called up for training from the Reserve. The concentration of additional forces in the border military districts, the formation of new units and the transfer of territorial units to professional status required more officers. To meet this demand the pre-schedule graduation of officer cadets from military schools was ordered by the People's Commissar for Defence on May 14, 1941. On June 12-15 the western border districts were ordered, in conformity with the defence plan to move all the divisions, deployed in depth, closer to the state frontier. On June 19, three days before the war broke out, the military councils of the border military districts were ordered to detail field commands for the Northwestern, Western and Southwestern fronts and install them in field command posts. At the same time steps were taken to speed up the combat preparedness of the first-echelon divisions of the border districts.

A decision to form the Southern Front was adopted on June 21. An operational group was dispatched from the Moscow Military District to Vinnitsa for this purpose. Under the same decision, the second-echelon armies, i.e., the High Command Reserve, were placed under a single command—Marshal S. M. Budyonny. General G. K. Zhukov, Chief of the General Staff, was appointed to the overall command of the Southwestern and Southern fronts, and General K. A. Meretskov was put in command of the Northern Front.

The People's Commissariat for the Navy ordered the fleets to intensify reconnaissance and tighten up security measures, and moved part of the Baltic Fleet from Liepaja and Tallinn to safer bases. Numerically the Soviet Armed Forces grew from 4,200,000 (in January 1941) to nearly 5,000,000 men (on June 1, 1941). Just before the outbreak of war the forces in the western border districts comprised 170 infantry, cavalry, tank and motorised divisions and two infantry brigades. These units had 2,900,000 effectives, and 1,800 heavy and medium tanks (including 1,475 KV and T-34 tanks). Besides, they had many obsolete light and baby tanks, 34,695 field guns and mortars (excluding 50-mm mortars), 1,540 aircraft of new types and a large number of obsolete planes. Special mention should be made of the fact that most divisions were understrength peace-time units, with only part being converted to full strength.

Thus, as a result of the growing tension, the Soviet Command, acting on orders from the Party and the Government, started regrouping the Armed Forces both in the frontier and in the interior districts. But this measure was not completed. When the nazi hordes invaded the Soviet Union, the Soviet troops were scattered over a vast territory stretching from the Barents to the Black Sea: the front-line ran for 4,500 kilometres, of which 1,125 kilometres were along the coast guarded by the Navy. Actually, 170 Soviet divisions occupied a front 3,375 kilometres long and 300-400 kilometres deep. The military districts' first-echelon units in direct proximity to the state frontier consisted of 56 divisions and two brigades. But even these units were thinly spread to a depth of some 50 kilometres. Second-echelon divisions were deployed at a distance of from 50 to 100 kilometres from the frontier, while Reserve units were 150-400 kilometres away from the frontier. All the tank divisions were in the second echelon or

in the Reserve. The first echelon was weak, while the Reserve was inadequately prepared to carry out its tasks. The second strategic echelon was not fully deployed. Much of the mobilisation supplies stockpiled close to the border zone were hit or captured by the nazis in the first days of the war.

The enemy's main advantage was that his troops were deployed close to the frontier in advance and concentrated in compact groups. His first echelon consisted of 103 divisions, ten of them panzer divisions, and was thus nearly twice as strong numerically as the Soviet first echelon. Furthermore, the German divisions were at full war-time strength and primed for combat. In contrast, the Soviet divisions were not readied for combat and were thus caught unawares by the enemy attack. In these conditions effective resistance proved difficult.

When the war broke out the situation and the balance of strength were obviously unfavourable for the Red Army. Besides, in the areas of the main blows the nazi Command had built up overwhelming superiority. In the Kaunas-Daugavpils direction, for example, it had 34 divisions (seven of which were panzer divisions) against 18 Soviet infantry divisions, in the Brest-Baranovichi direction, 16 (including five panzer) divisions against seven Red Army divisions, in the Lutsk-Rovno direction, 19 (including five panzer) divisions against nine Soviet divisions.

* * *

Nevertheless, the industrialisation and collectivisation under the pre-war five-year plans provided enough material and economic resources for a maximum build-up of the Soviet Union's defence capability which forged ahead particularly under the third five-year plan. "The Party," state the Theses of the CC CPSU on the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, "took important measures to reorganise industry and transport to meet the growing military threat. The defence industry built in the pre-war years ensured the Armed Forces with supplies of modern military equipment."

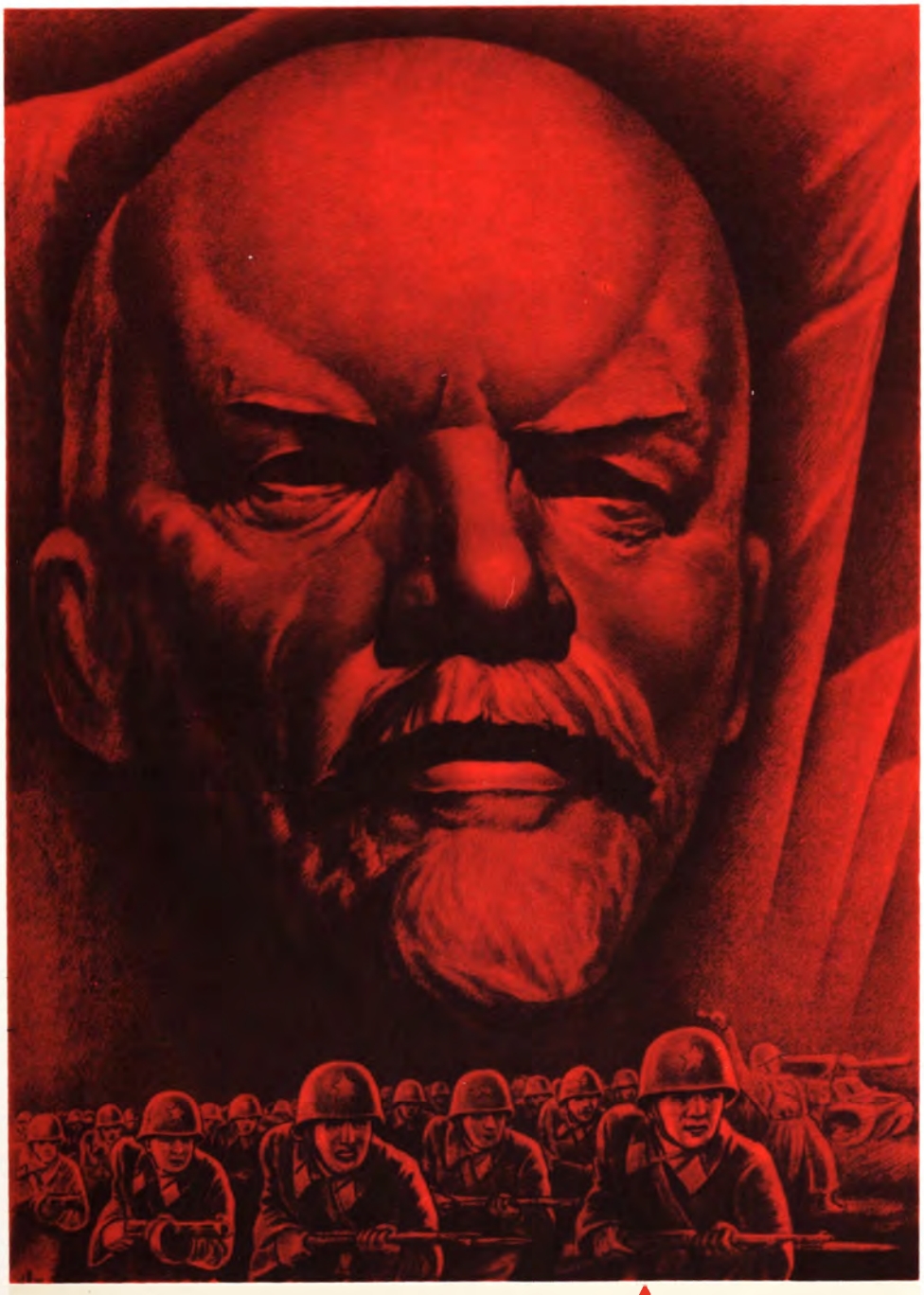
In the summer of 1941 the external situation was much more favourable for the Soviet Union than in 1939. There was no longer the threat of political isolation. The division of the imperialist states into two belligerent camps created the conditions for the formation of an anti-fascist coalition. The USSR averted the threat of a simultaneous attack on its Western and Far Eastern frontiers, of a war against Germany and Japan, and thereby gained precious time in which to strengthen its defence capability. This time was not wasted. The Party and the Government secured an acceleration of the output of modern armaments and the build-up of the necessary industrial potential, which in the course of the war gave Soviet arms numerical and qualitative superiority over the enemy.

Having seized many European countries, nazi Germany used almost their entire stock of armaments for her own Army. At her disposal were the armaments and equipment of 180 divisions of France, Belgium and other states. The absence of hostilities in the West enabled Hitler to throw the bulk of his own troops and those of the satellite states against the USSR. Along the frontiers of the Soviet Union nazi Germany deployed huge armies equipped with modern weapons and means of transportation.

All this put the Red Army at a disadvantage. The danger to the Soviet Union was extremely great.

Part II

ARDUOUS TIMES



"UNDER THE BANNER OF LENIN, FORWARD TO VICTORY!"

Poster by A. P. Voloshin, 1941

"THE MOTHERLAND CALLS!"

Poster by I. M. Toidze, 1941

Chapter Three

BLITZKRIEG PLAN FRUSTRATED

1. SNEAK ATTACK ON THE USSR

In the morning of June 22, 1941, Radio Moscow interrupted its regular broadcast to announce that in the middle of the night nazi Germany had invaded the Soviet Union without declaring war.

That was the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. The peoples of the Soviet Union were gripped by anger and grim determination to repel the aggressor. Workers, farmers, intellectuals, people of all nationalities, trades and professions pledged loyalty to their country. Like an oath of allegiance the song "Holy War", forceful and austere, resounded across the country:

Arise, arise great land,
For mortal strife arise.
Let noble anger seize you,
And surge up like a wave,
The war you wage is holy...

The nazis howled that Germany's only objective was to "deliver civilisation from the deadly Bolshevik peril". This time, however, Hitler and his clique did not deceive anyone. The peoples in the capitalist countries gave their sympathies to the Soviet Union. The Communist and Workers' Parties stood at the head of this solidarity movement. The Western governments realised that if the nazis won, the balance of strength on other fronts would change and the independence of the European states, as well as the interests of the ruling classes, would be in jeopardy. This prompted them to range themselves with the Soviet Union. The interest of the British, American, Soviet and other nations in smashing the fascist bloc provided common ground for a joint effort. It was this that lay behind Winston Churchill's well-known declaration of June 22, 1941, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's declaration of June 24 stating their intention to assist the USSR in the war against Germany.

For the Soviet Union the beginning was an arduous one. The Red Army was at a disadvantage. When the enemy struck, troops of no more than company and battalion strength were building fortifications in the immediate proximity of the border—three to five kilometres from the frontier posts, whereas most of the divisions assigned to cover the frontier were far away, engaged in combat training. The artillery of many divisions and corps, anti-aircraft units and troops of the military districts were at firing practice far from their headquarters. Many of the signals units were laying cables and building communication centres.

The pertinent directive was sent off by telegraph at 23.45 hours on June 21, i.e., four hours and fifteen minutes before the nazi invasion commenced. It stated that a German attack, which would in all likelihood begin with provocations, could be expected on June 22-23. While ordering all units of the border districts to be alerted, the People's Commissariat for Defence warned that troops should not react to provocations "liable to create serious complications". Within an hour and a half of receiving this directive the district commanders issued their orders to their armies, but these orders reached many of the units too late, after hostilities had broken out.

At 04.00 hours on June 22, true to their "principle" of beginning hostilities without a declaration of war, the nazis opened up with thousands of field guns, shelling Soviet frontier posts, unit headquarters, communication centres and troop cantonments. At the same time, thousands of German bombers invaded Soviet air space to a depth of 250-300 kilometres, barbarously raiding many towns in the Baltic republics, Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Moldavia and striking military objectives in the border area. Military airfields were the hardest hit with the result that nearly 900 Soviet aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Many communication lines and centres were put out of action a few minutes after the fighting broke out, disorganising troop control.

Frontier guards stood up to the initial assault, displaying extraordinary staunchness. Thus, Post No. 9 of the 92nd Detachment was defending a bridge across the river San near Radymno, 18 kilometres north of Przemysl. Attacked at dawn and caught by surprise the post commanded by Lieutenant N. S. Slyusarev repulsed repeated assaults by a numerically superior enemy. Finally, the Germans brought in tanks. True sons of the Soviet people, the men fought to their last breath.

The first to meet and repulse an enemy air strike along the naval frontier were the seamen at Sevastopol. In the Baltic area the 67th Division, 8th Army, stationed at Liepaja, a naval base, foiled a nazi attempt to seize the city and port in a lightning thrust. For several days till July 1 the troops, supported by naval units and local workers, held off a numerically superior enemy. The Navy owed its good preparedness to the fact that the alert to fleets and flotillas had been transmitted without delay and appropriate measures taken beforehand.

Soviet pilots displayed indomitable courage. During the very first minutes of the war a flight of the 46th Fighter Regiment led by Senior Lieutenant I. I. Ivanov joined battle with German bombers. When Ivanov's ammunition ran out he chopped off the tail of a German He-111 aircraft with the screw of his I-16. This was one of the first actions in the war in which an enemy aircraft was rammed in the air. On August 2, 1941, I. I. Ivanov was posthumously decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. On that same day enemy planes were rammed by pilots L. G. Butelin, S. M. Gudimov, A. S. Danilov, D. V. Kokorev, A. I. Moklyak, Y. M. Panfilov and P. S. Ryabtsev.

When the main German force mounted its offensive, its numerical superiority was overwhelming—4:1, even 5:1, in the main directions. This enabled the enemy to sweep over the forward Red Army units at many points. Soviet defence disintegrated into isolated pockets. Cover troops joined the fighting at different times in an unorganised manner. Requisite reserves were unavailable in the vicinity of the enemy's main blows. The absence of a close-knit front allowed enemy tanks and motorised units to detour and strike at points of resistance from flank and rear. As

a result, the Soviet troops were compelled either to fight on in pockets or retreat eastward.

Army guidance had to be reorganised. On the first day, the Special Baltic, Western and Kiev military districts were reconstituted into the Northwestern (8th, 11th and 27th armies), Western (3rd, 10th, 4th and 13th armies) and Southwestern (5th, 6th, 26th and 12th armies) fronts respectively, while the Odessa Military District became the 9th Army. On June 24 the Leningrad Military District was converted into the Northern Front (14th, 7th and 23rd armies), and the 9th and 18th armies were reformed into the Southern Front (Map 1).

In command of the fronts were: Northern Front, commander—General M. M. Popov; member of the Military Council—Corps Commissar* N. N. Klementyev; Northwestern Front, commander—General F. I. Kuznetsov; member of the Military Council—Corps Commissar P. A. Dibrova; Western Front, commander—General D. G. Pavlov; member of the Military Council—Corps Commissar A. Y. Fominykh; Southwestern Front, commander—General M. P. Kirponos; member of the Military Council—Corps Commissar N. N. Vashugin; Southern Front, commander—General F. V. Tyulenev; member of the Military Council—army commissar 1 st Rank A. I. Zaporozhets.

The military and political leadership of the Armed Forces before the war was exercised by the Central Military Council, which consisted of the People's Commissar for Defence, the Chief of the General Staff and two members of the Politbureau.

On June 23, by a decision of the Party Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars, the General Headquarters of the High Command was set up to provide strategic leadership of the armed struggle. Its members were People's Commissar for Defence Marshal S. K. Timoshenko (Chairman), Chief of the General Staff General G. K. Zhukov, J. V. Stalin, V. M. Molotov, Marshals K. Y. Voroshilov and S. M. Budyonny, and People's Commissar for the Navy Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov. It had a panel of permanent advisers drawn from among prominent military leaders and statesmen.

At the end of the first day a precarious situation arose at the junction of the Northwestern and Western fronts. The main forces of Army Group North under Fieldmarshal W. Loeb and the left wing of Army Group Centre under Fieldmarshal von Bock lunged at the line defended by General V. I. Morozov's 11th Army and units of the 8th Army (General P. P. Sobennikov), Northwestern Front, on the right, and the 3rd Army (General V. I. Kuznetsov), Western Front, on the left. The enemy advanced swiftly. Forward units of the 4th Panzer Group broke through to the Dubisa River 35 kilometres northwest of Kaunas, while divisions of the first echelon, 3rd Panzer Group, crossed the Niemen 60 kilometres south of Kaunas. Cut to pieces, the 11th Army retreated hastily towards Kaunas and Vilnius, exposing the flanks of the 8th and 3rd armies.

Almost as tense was the situation on the left wing of the Western Front. Ten divisions of Army Group Centre, including four panzer divisions, pounded four divisions of General A. A. Korobkov's 4th Army. Caught by

* When military ranks were introduced by a Government decree of September 22, 1935, political officers were given the following ranks: political instructor, senior political instructor, battalion commissar, regimental commissar, brigade commissar, divisional commissar, corps commissar, and army commissars 2nd and 1st rank. The rank of senior battalion commissar was introduced on September 1, 1939. A Supreme Soviet decree of October 9, 1942, instituted the same military ranks for political as for combat officers.

surprise, the 4th Army failed to man the prepared line of defence at Brest. Its units joined battle at random and could not stem the superior enemy force. The small garrison of Brest Fortress was invested. Its officers and men showed courage beyond compare, holding out in the tiny pocket for as long as a month, demonstrating the unbending tenacity and prowess of the Soviet soldier. The exploit was nothing short of legendary, with most of the fortress defenders falling in battle. In tribute, it was awarded the title of Hero-Fortress, the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star.

Brest Fortress pinned down a large nazi force. But the enemy was vastly superior, blocking it with infantry units and hooking round it north and south on the first day of the offensive. The 2nd Panzer Group, involved in that operation, advanced eastward. By the evening of June 22 enemy tanks were 50-60 kilometres inside Soviet territory approaching Kobrin. The threat of a deep enemy breakthrough and investment of the left flank hung over the Western Front.

In the Southwestern Front sector, Fieldmarshal Rundstedt's Army Group South delivered the main blow south of Vladimir-Volynsk against General M. I. Potapov's 5th Army and General I. N. Muzychenko's 6th. Unprepared, the two armies retreated 10-20 kilometres inside the border during the very first day.

The avalanche of German tanks, supported by aircraft, pressed eastward. The commands of the Soviet fronts, armies and even corps often lost contact with and control of their troops, because the enemy kept cutting communications. For this reason, neither the various Front headquarters nor GHQ and the General Staff had anything like a complete picture of the developments in the frontier zone. In the evening of June 22 the People's Commissar for Defence ordered an offensive for the morning of June 23 to counter the enemy's main thrusts. Specifically, it demanded the encirclement and annihilation of the enemy groups at Suwalki and Lublin.

The offensive mounted by the Northwestern and Western fronts on June 23-25 yielded no tangible results. By the evening of June 23 German armour had widened the breach at the junction of the two fronts to 130 kilometres and by the evening of June 25 forward enemy units penetrated the operational area of the Northwestern Front to a depth of 120-130 kilometres. Nazi troops that had rolled over both wings of the Western Front advanced nearly 180 kilometres towards Vilnius-Minsk and as much as 250 kilometres towards Baranovichi-Minsk. Gradually, the pieces fell into a pattern: it became clear that the enemy intended to encircle the main forces of the Western Front and cut them off from the Northwestern and Southwestern fronts.

The Northwestern Front was in difficulties. Units of the 11th Army, poorly controlled, suffered heavy losses; cut off from their neighbours, they retreated fighting. The 8th Army, a valid fighting unit, attacked constantly from the air, rolled back towards Riga under frontal attacks and harassment along the open left flank. A large breach appeared between the 11th and 8th armies, of which the nazi tanks took immediate advantage in developing a rapid drive on Daugavpils.

To forestall the total encirclement of the Western Front, on June 25, GHQ ordered it to withdraw from Western Byelorussia. However, panzer forces rapidly converged on Minsk. On June 29 they reached the vicinity east of the Byelorussian capital, cutting off retreat for 11 Western Front divisions. Part of the encircled troops broke out after heavy fighting, some joining the partisans, while a large number were either killed in battle or taken prisoner.

The Air Force assisted the ground troops to the best of its ability. A feat of heroism was performed on June 26 by Captain N. F. Gastello, squadron leader of the 207th Air Regiment, 42nd Bomber Division, and his crew: Lieutenants A. A. Burdenyuk and G. N. Skorobogaty and Senior Sergeant A. A. Kalinin. They had fulfilled their mission and were leaving the target area when an enemy shell pierced their petrol tank. Within seconds the aircraft was enveloped in flames. The choice before the crew was death or captivity. They chose death. The commander piloted the flaming aircraft into a cluster of enemy lorries, petrol cars and tanks. Captain Gastello was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union, and his crew were decorated with the Order of the Patriotic War, 1st Grade. This was an immortal feat, and it was repeated time and again by Soviet flyers during the Great Patriotic War.

Developments in the southwest were somewhat more favourable. There, the Soviet Command deployed a considerable force, engaging the enemy in the sector of his main effort. A tank battle ensued in the Lutsk-Brody-Rovno sector on June 23, the biggest tank engagement of the early period of the war, with some 2,000 tanks taking part on both sides. The Soviet forces supported from the air inflicted considerable losses on the enemy and held him up for a week, frustrating the nazi plan of investing the main forces in the Lvov area. But the Southwestern Front, too, paid a heavy price: the losses were great and the troops wearied by the unintermittent fighting. On June 30, GHQ ordered the Front to withdraw to the line Korosten-Novograd Volynsky-Proskurov, some 70-90 kilometres.

In all the crucial sectors, Soviet troops failed to stem the enemy advance in the border area, to fill in the deep breaches and afford cover for the concentration and deployment of the main Red Army forces. This, naturally, affected the operations of the initial period.

By the end of June GHQ realised that the disorganised and depleted troops in the border area would not halt the enemy. It called in reserves from the far rear to build up a new strategic line of defence.

The group of reserve armies (22nd, 20th, 21st and 19th) under Marshal Semyon Budyonny, formed by decision of the Political Bureau of the CC CPSU(B) on June 25, was ordered to deploy along the line Velikiye Luki-Vitebsk-Gomel-Chernigov-Desna River-Dnieper River (up to Kremenchug), manning combat positions and preparing for defence.

But the enemy forestalled the Red Army forces. On June 26 the 4th Panzer Group captured Daugavpils on the march and three days later seized the area near Krustpils. The 21st Motorised Corps, sent by the Soviet Command to slow down the nazi advance, engaged the enemy at Daugavpils on June 28 and stood firm for some time.

To hold up the nazis at the approaches to Pskov, along the last large natural line of defence, the Velikaya River, the 50th Engineers Battalion was ordered to blow up the bridges. By midday July 8 seven of the eight bridges were demolished. In the meantime, Soviet rearguard units, pursued by German tanks, were withdrawing across the remaining bridge. A group of sappers under Junior Lieutenant S. G. Baikov was ordered to blow up the bridge. They let enemy tanks approach the bridge, but when they turned the switch they found that the electric wire had been severed. In face of enemy fire the sappers connected a fuse and detonated it, blowing up the bridge with the German tanks on it. For this action the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decorated Junior Lieutenant Baikov with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

On July 9 the enemy captured Pskov, creating a threat to the town of Luga.

Meanwhile, the Western Front delayed the advance units of Army Group Centre along the Berezina. The fighting was particularly fierce at Borisov on the Minsk-Moscow Highway. Colonel Y. G. Kreizer's 1st Moscow Motorised Division delivered a well-timed counter-blow, stopping the enemy for two days and nights on the Berezina. Guderian, the nazi panzer general, admitted later that in this battle his troops learned of the formidable Soviet T-34 tanks, which were impervious to German anti-tank shells. Kreizer was one of the first Soviet officers to be created Hero of the Soviet Union. General I. N. Russiyanov's 100th Division acquitted itself splendidly in holding the river bank. Enveloped on the flanks and later totally cut off from the main force, it broke out of the enemy ring and rejoined the units of the Front near the Dnieper. In so doing, the division destroyed considerable enemy personnel, some 150 tanks, 300 motorcycles and 30 lorries.

But when units of the 2nd and 3rd Panzer groups arrived on the scene the balance changed in favour of the nazi troops. The enemy forced the Berezina and headed for the Dnieper. It was at the approaches to this important water barrier northwest of Orsha that Soviet resistance was most tenacious.

Towards the close of the first decade of July the Germans encountered resistance along the Dnieper and in the upper reaches of the Western Dvina from the Red Army's second strategic echelon.

Early in July the situation on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front deteriorated. On July 1 Rumanian and German troops struck from Rumania at the junction of the Southwestern Front (which was holding the line Rovno-Dubno-Kremenets) with the Southern Front. The enemy advanced 60 kilometres in six days. Also, the Germans crashed through the Soviet defences on the right wing of the Southwestern Front, seizing Zhitomir on July 9, with part of the force wheeling against Kiev. It was clear that the simultaneous assault on the flanks of the Southwestern Front was part of a nazi plan to surround the main Soviet force. Counter-attacks from north and south and a last-minute withdrawal of the central armies averted total encirclement and enabled the Soviet Command to straighten out the Front. By mid-July a certain stability was achieved at Novograd-Volynsky, Zhitomir and Berdichev.

A breakthrough by the German 11th Army at the junction between the Southwestern and Southern fronts compelled the withdrawal of the left-wing armies of the Southwestern Front and the 18th Army (under General A. K. Smirnov) of the Southern Front.

In the Extreme North hostilities erupted in the Murmansk direction on June 29, when the left flank of the German Army Norway under General Falkenhorst mounted an offensive. On the following day, Finnish troops attacked towards Ukhta and on July 1 German and Finnish forces struck from the Kuolajarvi area towards Kandalaksha. The operations were local and did not vitally affect the general strategic situation on the Soviet-German front.

Soviet warships and naval planes attacked enemy sea communications, airfields and bases, and provided cover and support with artillery, shore batteries and planes to troops fighting along the seaboard. Jointly with the ground forces and volunteer workers' battalions the warships defended the naval bases of Liepaja and Riga in the first week of the war and those of Odessa and Tallinn somewhat later, with a large part of the ships' crews ashore helping the infantry. The sailors acquitted themselves splendidly on land, while the fleets laid mines and guarded sea communication lines.

During the first three weeks of the war the Red Army abandoned Latvia, Lithuania, part of Estonia, almost the whole of Byelorussia, Moldavia and a large part of the Ukraine. Nazi troops penetrated some 450-500 kilometres into the country in the northwestern direction, 450-600 kilometres in the western and 300-350 kilometres in the southwestern. They threatened Leningrad, Smolensk and Kiev.

But the price the Germans paid for their advance was high. Their losses were incomparably greater than those incurred in Western Europe. According to official, undoubtedly minimised, nazi figures, the Wehrmacht lost more than 92,000 effectives by mid-July, with tank losses at some 50 per cent of their initial number. The Luftwaffe lost 1,284 aircraft from June 22 to July 19.

Fighting as it did in extremely unfavourable conditions, the Red Army suffered heavier casualties. The loss of brave and deeply devoted men was aggravated by huge losses of equipment. Suffice it to say, that the Western Front lost nearly all its artillery depots containing more than 2,000 carloads of ammunition. Thus, numerical superiority in weapons and equipment passed to the Germans for a fairly long time.

The reasons for the early setbacks of the Soviet Armed Forces were many, traceable to political, economic and military factors of an international as well as domestic nature. The Soviet Government's efforts to create a system of collective security and organise a collective rebuff to nazi aggression received no support from the ruling circles of the Western powers. Their short-sighted policy enabled the nazis, who had been preparing for a predatory war for a long time, to conquer a number of European states one by one, substantially strengthen their strategic and economic position and build up a temporary economic and military superiority over the USSR. When nazi Germany attacked the USSR she was in control of the economic and military resources of nearly the whole of Western Europe. By June 1941 her equipment was of the latest and her troops had acquired considerable combat experience.

The Red Army had no such experience. Its officers, many newly appointed shortly before the war, had no practical experience of controlling large units and operational groups. And few had yet learned to handle properly the up-to-date equipment available at the outbreak of the war.

All these circumstances, favourable for Germany and unfavourable for the Soviet Union, were aggravated by the element of surprise achieved by the nazis. The attack was sudden both for the nation and the Soviet Armed Forces.

The Theses of the CC CPSU on the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution stated that "there were miscalculations in determining the time of a possible nazi attack against us, and shortcomings in the preparations for repelling the first blows". Until the very last moment Stalin believed that he could delay the outbreak of war by political and diplomatic means. This is mentioned, in particular, by Marshal G. K. Zhukov in *Reminiscences and Recollections.*

Even during the last days before the nazi invasion, the Soviet Government sought to delay the outbreak of war by diplomatic means. An attempt was made on June 13, 1941, through the German Ambassador Werner Schullenburg to obtain an assurance from the leaders of nazi Germany that they would abide by their commitments under the 1939 treaty. In the evening of June 21 the Soviet Government asked the German Ambassador to say why German aircraft were frequently intruding into Soviet air space and violating the Soviet frontier. No reply was given.

Some of the senior officers of the Soviet Armed Forces likewise miscalculated the possible time of a nazi invasion. Correct conclusions were not always made from the communications of intrepid Soviet intelligence men, Richard Sorge* in particular, who reported that nazi Germany was preparing to attack the USSR. As a result the Armed Forces were not fully readied for action in time.

The pressure on the western border military districts and the heavy losses sustained by them placed the Red Army in an exceedingly difficult position. The breakdown of communications with troops at the firing lines and with subordinate headquarters deprived commanders and staffs at all levels, GHQ and the General Staff included, of the possibility of receiving regular reports from the fighting units.

The Soviet forces had no continuous line of defence. The swift enemy drives prevented them from digging in along tenable positions. The enemy, who had compact forces in the main directions, was thus able, as a rule, to keep the initiative and, all too often, encircle Soviet troops.

The Red Army was poorly equipped with vehicles, and this affected its mobility. Troops were brought up with delays to deployment areas and moved too slowly when it was wiser to evade an enemy blow. The nazis, on the other hand, were amply supplied with vehicles and were highly mobile. Another factor adversely affecting the operations of the Soviet troops was that before the war the accent in combat training had been on offensive tactics. However, in the initial stage of the war, the situation was such that the Red Army had to fight defensive battles and acquire the necessary experience of repulsing a powerful enemy in savage fighting.

Those were the main factors operating against the Red Army and Navy in the initial period of the war.

The withdrawal of the Soviet forces from the frontier areas disrupted the planned mobilisation of material and manpower resources for the requirements of the war. Huge numbers of people and vast material values had to be urgently evacuated to the eastern regions. The situation was desperate—and it was not possible to carry out this task in full, with the result that there was a temporary diminution of the country's military and economic potential.

The great Bolshevik Party, created and reared by Lenin, found in itself the strength and ability to surmount the consequences of mistakes and mobilise the Soviet people for organised resistance.

2. FIRST STEPS BY THE PARTY

As soon as war broke out the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) took urgent steps to organise nation-wide resistance to the enemy. The Politbureau considered and approved an appeal to the people in connection with the nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. This appeal was broadcast at 12 o'clock on June 22 by V. M. Molotov. The mobilisation of able-bodied citizens born in the period 1905-18 got under way.** A state of emergency was proclaimed in a number of republics and regions.

The Party Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars passed a decision defining the war-time tasks of Party and Government

* Richard Sorge, citizen of the USSR, member of the CPSU(B) and grand-nephew of Friedrich Sorge, prominent leader of the international working-class movement and pupil and associate of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

** With the exclusion of those resident in Central Asia, the Transbaikal area and the Soviet Far East.

bodies. A joint Party and Government directive to Party and Government bodies in the war-affected areas, dated June 29, was the basic document, the main points of which were also set out by Stalin in a radio speech on July 3. Stating that mortal danger threatened the country, the directive called on the nation to switch to a war-time footing in the shortest possible time and fight for every inch of Soviet territory.

While rallying resistance, the Party did not conceal the difficulty of fighting the strong and treacherous enemy. It emphasised that victory would come only if the nation mustered all its strength and redoubled its vigilance. Also, it demanded that the nation make a realistic appraisal of its strength and of the enemy's potentials because, it pointed out, lack of confidence bred confusion and panic.

Importance was attached to launching a partisan movement in nazi-occupied territory. The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) issued orders to Party, Government and trade union organisations in the war-affected areas to take the lead in the people's struggle behind enemy lines. Where Soviet troops withdrew, these orders said, it was up to them to ensure that no locomotives, carriages, grain or fuel fell into nazi hands.

The Party and Government appeal had a visible impact. To a man, Soviet people voiced support of the programme. The flow of volunteers to the Armed Forces increased.

Love of country gave impetus to a mass movement for civil defence. Vigilance battalions were formed at factories, collective and state farms and offices to fight spies, saboteurs and air-dropped infiltrators. Self-defence units learned the craft of war after working hours.

The prime economic task was to put the economy on a war-time footing in the shortest possible time, to supply the Army with the needed arms and equipment, notably tanks and planes.

At the very outset of the war the Party Central Committee placed the members and alternate members of the Politbureau in charge of various sections: military, economic and ideological. One-third of the members and alternate members of the Central Committee and also many secretaries of regional and territorial committees and Party central committees of the Union republics were appointed to political posts in the Armed Forces. They included L. I. Brezhnev, M. A. Burmistenko, A. A. Zhdanov, A. A. Kuznetsov, A. P. Matveyev, P. K. Ponomarenko, M. A. Suslov, N. S. Khrushchev and A. S. Shcherbakov. Altogether 47,000 leading Party, Government, trade union and Komsomol functionaries were mobilised to enlarge the officers' corps of the Army and Navy. Central Committee Secretary A. A. Andreyev and Central Committee members M. I. Kalinin, Y. E. Kalnberzin, A. N. Kosygin, O. V. Kuusinen, V. A. Malyshev, D. Z. Manuilsky, A. I. Mikoyan, M. G. Pervukhin, V. P. Potyomkin, A. I. Shakhurin, N. M. Shvernik, I. F. Tevosyan, V. V. Vakhrushev, B. L. Vannikov, N. A. Voznesensky, Y. M. Yaroslavsky, A. I. Yefremov, R. S. Zemlyachka, A. G. Zverev and others were charged with building up Red Army reserves, evacuation and the reorganisation of the economy.

To secure operational guidance of the armed struggle and of the work behind the firing lines, the Party and Government altered the structure of their various bodies, adapting them to war-time conditions. Prompted by Civil War experience, the Party accentuated centralisation in government and demanded that all its organisations bear greater responsibility in matters of state.

All power was concentrated in one body capable of co-ordinating the efforts of the front and rear and quickly adopting and giving effect to

decisions. This extraordinary body, the State Defence Committee, headed by Stalin, was formed on June 30, 1941, by decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the Party Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars, with several new all-Union commissariats, administrations and committees set up to secure better operational guidance.

Lower-echelon Party organisations were refashioned to make them more dynamic, and they assumed important tasks in the political and economic spheres. The Central Committee also laid a strong accent on educational and ideological work among the people, encouraging initiative and urging activists of local Party, government and trade union organisations to concert their efforts. The drive improved Party guidance in all economic, military and ideological fields.

Local government bodies were vehicles for the Party programme of mobilising all available forces to repulse the enemy. Much attention was devoted to military matters, enlisting civilians to man local anti-aircraft defences, ensure chemical defence and generally prepare for the eventualities of war. It was up to them, too, to care for the families of front-line soldiers, for war invalids and pensioners.

The trade unions helped the Communist Party mobilise the working class, and played an important part, hand-in-hand with the economic bodies and public organisations, in training personnel. They took the lead in the socialist emulation movement started by the people, assuring the speedy fulfilment of war orders and encouraging the patriotic movement for fulfilling double and triple daily assignments. They also showed continuous concern for the living conditions and cultural needs of workers in the rear.

The Komsomol helped the Party in every possible way. Its membership of more than ten million responded to the Party call, devoting themselves to the war effort. On the second day of the war, the Komsomol Central Committee defined the tasks of its local branches and called on all Komsomol members to display vigilance, cohesion and firm discipline, urging them to be prepared to fight for their country with dedication. Throughout the country young men and women were eager to enlist in the Army or work at the war factories, devoting their strength and vast store of energy to the war effort.

Soviet women made a priceless contribution, learning difficult trades and replacing their husbands, sons and brothers at the work benches. They did splendid work in the factories and on the farms. Schoolchildren, most of them Young Pioneers, displayed lofty patriotism, many enrolling in vocational schools or learning a trade directly in the factory shop.

The Communist Party's giant political and organisational effort provided impetus for mass heroism at the front and inspired Soviet people behind the firing lines. The guiding role of the Party and its closeness to the people were an earnest that the ordeal of war would be overcome and that the enemy would pay dearly for the grief and suffering of the people, the war-ravaged cities and gutted villages.

3. THE BATTLE OF SMOLENSK

At the price of tremendous effort, the Red Army slowed the enemy advance in the main directions. By July 10 the front had been stabilised, at least for a brief spell, running somewhat north of the southern border

of Estonia in the northwestern direction along a line north of Pjarnu-Tartu and the Velikaya River, and in the centre along the Dnieper, while in the southwestern direction the enemy was halted at the approaches to Kiev.

The German General Staff believed that the Soviet Command had not more than 66 combatworthy divisions at its disposal along the entire front (with the exception of the Finnish sector). It was sure that it had triple numerical superiority over the Red Army and that this would allow it, fully in accordance with the Barbarossa plan, to conduct a non-stop offensive in all three main directions: Leningrad, Smolensk-Moscow and Kiev. The nazi leadership overrated its own forces and underrated the Red Army's ability to resist. In mid-July the enemy had a numerical superiority of nearly 3:2 over the Red Army, and he was better equipped. But the Red Army was strong enough to contain the powerful enemy pressure for a long time and thereby disrupt his plans for a blitzkrieg.

The Soviet Command had reason to believe that the enemy would continue his offensive along a broad front, but concentrated mainly on organising defences in the Smolensk-Moscow sector. Counter-action there was planned to eliminate the threat of an enemy breakthrough to Moscow and inhibit the offensive ability of the nazis in other directions.

The hostilities expanded to immense proportions. Events developed rapidly. It was difficult for General Headquarters to control the troops directly. On July 10, therefore, the State Defence Committee passed a decision forming three main commands: Northwestern (commander—K. Y. Voroshilov; member of the Military Council—A. A. Zhdanov), assigned to control the Northern and Northwestern fronts and the Northern and Baltic fleets; Western (commander—S. K. Timoshenko; member of the Military Council—N. A. Bulganin), controlling the Western Front and the Pinsk Naval Flotilla; and Southwestern (commander—S. M. Budyonny; member of the Military Council—N. S. Khrushchev), controlling the Southwestern and Southern fronts and the Black Sea Fleet. These commands had to co-ordinate the fronts operating in the corresponding strategic area. The same decision converted High Command General Headquarters into Supreme Command General Headquarters. The members of GHQ were J. V. Stalin (Chairman), V. M. Molotov, Marshals S. K. Timoshenko, S. M. Budyonny, K. Y. Voroshilov and B. M. Shaposhnikov, and the Chief of the General Staff General G. K. Zhukov.

In preparing for the coming battles the State Defence Committee substantially changed the structure of the Army formations and units. Particular attention was devoted to bolstering the morale and political awareness of the troops. All the efforts of the Party and political apparatus in the Army and Navy were directed towards this end. Extensive work was started to form and train reserve armies and special units.

At the beginning of July the Smolensk direction was covered by troops of the Western Front, of which Marshal Timoshenko assumed command on July 2. In effect, it was a new Front formed of armies of the GHQ Reserve. Five of them (22nd, 19th, 20th, 13th and 21st) were deployed along a wide front from Idritsa in the north to Rechitsa in the south. Part of the 4th Army was withdrawing from Bobruisk into the sector held by the 13th and 21st armies, commanded respectively by Generals V. F. Gerasimenko and F. I. Kuznetsov. General M. F. Lukin's 16th Army of the GHQ Reserve was moving towards Smolensk.

Facing the Western Front was Army Group Centre and part of the nazi 16th Army, with 28 divisions, including nine panzer and six motorised divisions, and one motorised brigade, in the first echelon, while the

second echelon (34 divisions and two brigades) advanced to the middle reaches of the Western Dvina and the Dnieper after the battles west of Minsk.

When the battle for Smolensk began, the balance on the Western Dvina-Dnieper line was still tilted in favour of the nazis. The enemy had a nearly 2:1 advantage in manpower, 2.4:1 in guns and mortars and as much as 4:1 in the air. In tanks, however, the ratio was 1.3:1 in favour of the Red Army.

When they mounted the offensive, the nazis thought the Western Front had no more than 11 divisions against Army Group Centre. But this was a serious miscalculation. The Western Front was much stronger, and several reserve armies were deployed behind the battle-lines, going into action effectively at the end of the battle for Smolensk and stemming the German drive against Moscow.

On July 10, the 2nd and 3rd Panzer groups struck from the vicinity of Vitebsk at Dukhovshchina and from south of Orsha at Yelnya. The left flank of the 3rd Panzer Group advanced from north of Polotsk towards Velikiye Luki, and the right flank of the 2nd Panzer Group from south of Mogilev towards Krichev-Roslavl. They intended to dismember the Front, envelop the 19th, 20th and 16th armies covering Smolensk, and capture the city.

The battle gained in intensity. The Germans pounded at narrow sectors, driving deep wedges into the Soviet lines at Polotsk, Vitebsk and north and south of Mogilev, compelling the right wing of the Western Front to roll back to Nevel.

In the heavy fighting for Mogilev, part of the 13th Army (four infantry divisions and the remnants of the 20th Mechanised Corps) was surrounded. General F. A. Bakunin, commander of the 61st Corps, assumed command and organised a perimeter defence. A succession of enemy attacks was heroically repulsed until July 26. Jointly with the right-flank divisions of the 21st Army, which counter-attacked towards Mogilev from the south, Soviet troops pinned down part of the nazi 46th and 24th motorised corps, 2nd Panzer Group, and inflicted heavy losses.

While the nazis pressed their attack east of the Dnieper, the 21st Army, Western Front, struck back on July 13. L. G. Petrovsky's 63rd Infantry Corps was committed in the main direction, forcing the Dnieper with other units, recapturing Rogachev and Zhlobin, and advancing northwest towards Bobruisk.

The staunchness of the Soviet troops in defence and their determined counter-blows are recorded in the feats of thousands of men of all ranks and of entire units. The ground troops were effectively supported by the Air Force, reinforced with planes from the GHQ Reserve and long-range bombers. Soviet artillery acquitted itself splendidly. At the beginning of the Smolensk battle the Red Army was supplied with rocket launchers, whose devastating effect was a surprise for the enemy. The first such rocket assault was made on July 14 at Orsha by Captain I. A. Flerov's battery. The new weapon was fondly christened "Katyusha" by the Soviet soldiers.

Partisans rendered the Red Army effective assistance. The Party organisation of Byelorussia, active in the Western Front sector, built up a powerful partisan force and organised a Party underground behind the enemy lines. On June 30 and July 1, 1941, the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Communist Party issued two successive directives, instructing local Party organisations to form underground Party groups and partisan detachments. Underground (three-man) centres appeared almost

overnight in 80 districts and towns in Eastern Byelorussia and in Pinsk Region. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia and the regional committees had left some 1,200 Communists behind the enemy lines for this purpose. By August 1 more than 12,000 partisans were fighting the enemy in Byelorussia. One of the areas in which they were active was Oktyabrsky District, Polessye Region. "German tanks appeared in our area one day in July," T. P. Bumazhkov, commander of the Krasny Oktyabr detachment, subsequently recalled. "They were heading for the river with the objective of crossing it and capturing the district centre. That was when we went into action. At an opportune moment we blew up the bridge and opened up on the enemy with machine-guns and rifles. Hand-grenades landed under the tank tracks. We put to good use also our incendiary bottles. The tanks did not get across the river."

The Soviet thrust towards Bobruisk, hooking round the large enemy force at Mogilev, alarmed the Army Group Centre Command. To repulse the threat, it withdrew several divisions and regiments from other sectors, reinforcing them with reserves to block the 21st Army. All the same, eight nazi infantry divisions took a bad beating.

Bitter fighting continued in the central sector against the group heading for Smolensk. The 20th Army, whose flanks were harassed from Vitebsk and Orsha, made a succession of counter-attacks but failed to halt the nazi 9th Army, which entered Smolensk on July 16.

The threat of a German breakthrough to Moscow mounted steadily. Although Smolensk had fallen, the fighting to the east of it raged for nearly a month longer along a wide sector.

While the fighting for Smolensk was still at its height, GHQ began reinforcing the Western Front with reserves. An echelon of reserve armies (29th, 30th, 24th, 28th, 31st and 32nd) was deployed in its rear with orders to hold the Staraya Russa-Bryansk line.

In the latter half of July the fighting in and east of Smolensk gained in fury. Everywhere the enemy came up against stiff resistance. On July 18 GHQ formed the Mozhaisk Defensive Line Front west of Volokolamsk, Mozhaisk, Maloyaroslavets. It was manned by the 32nd, 33rd and 34th armies, whose task was to prepare the defences at the distant approaches to Moscow. It was under the control of the Moscow Military District Command. On July 23 the Western Front hit strongly from around Roslavl in a northwesterly direction towards Pochinok. On July 24 and 25 thrusts followed from south of Bely and Yartsevo. By July 27 the 16th Army assisted by the 20th had driven the Germans back to Smolensk, recapturing the northern part of the city. The enemy pummelled the flanks of the 16th and 20th armies, surrounded them and brought them to a halt. After heavy fighting many units of these armies broke out of the enemy ring and linked up with the Front's main forces at their starting positions.

While Army Group Centre rolled forward, the Luftwaffe raided Moscow, seeking to put its industries out of operation, paralyse life, crush morale and help the panzer divisions gain possession of the city. The first air-raid was at night, July 21-22, but was effectively repulsed. Later raiders were also driven back. Between July 22 and October 1, Moscow's anti-aircraft forces warded off 36 attacks.

Heavy fighting was in progress also on the left wing of the Western Front, between the Dnieper and the Berezina. In late July a successful Soviet offensive towards Bobruisk-Slutsk imperilled the flank of Army Group Centre's main force. This sector thus gained considerable importance, and GHQ formed a Central Front there on July 24, consisting

of the 13th and 21st armies. General F. I. Kuznetsov was put in command, with P. K. Ponomarenko as the Front's member of the Military Council.

To firm up the defences in the Western sector GHQ issued an order on July 30 forming a Reserve Front consisting of the 34th, 31st, 24th, 43rd, 32nd and 33rd armies, which were deployed along the Rzhev-Vyazma line.

At the end of July the enemy blocked the Soviet thrust at Bobruisk, forcing the Red Army to draw back across the Dnieper. Northeast of Bobruisk Soviet troops held positions on the Sozh River along the line Mstislavl-Krichev until August 1 and Krichev-Propoisk until August 8. The Red Army was also still in possession of areas on the western bank of the Dnieper north and south of Rechitsa. The Western Front inflicted heavy losses on Army Group Centre and compelled the main nazi strike force to disperse.

Resistance also increased on the flanks of the Soviet-German front. The line in Karelia was stabilised, while Army Group South was pinned down along the Dnieper at the approaches to Kiev.

On July 30, after much hesitation, the nazi Command ordered Army Group Centre to halt its drive to Moscow and assume the defensive. This signalled a new stage in the fighting for the nazi troops. The enemy's main effort shifted from the central sector to the flanks. In contravention of Operation Barbarossa, the 2nd Panzer Group and the 2nd Army veered south from their original eastward route, striking at the rear of the Southwestern Front, which had dug in along the Dnieper.

Early in August GHQ* still thought that the main German force would make an effort to capture Moscow. It expected the enemy to try and outflank the main forces of the Western Front after its head-on blow had failed, and ordered the Western Command to hold the Velikiye Luki and Gomel salients, retain the pincers round Army Group Centre's positions and continue to pound the main nazi forces.

On August 14 GHQ decided to form the Bryansk Front in order to repulse possible assaults by the enemy 2nd Panzer Group northeastward on Moscow via Bryansk or southeastward into the rear of the Southwestern Front's Kiev group. This new front (commander—General A. I. Yeremenko; member of the Military Council—Divisional Commissar P. I. Mazepov) consisted of the 50th and 13th armies and the units of the Central Front dissolved on August 25.

Throughout August and in early September the Western and Reserve fronts struck counter-blows at various points. There was particularly heavy fighting in the environs of Yelnya, which the enemy meant to hold at all costs. Yelnya was recaptured on September 6. The nazis were defeated at Dukhovshchina as well. But this costly operation exhausted the Soviet troops. In accordance with GHQ orders, the Western Front went on the defensive on September 10 and the Reserve Front on September 16.

The two months' Battle of Smolensk ended. When Army Group Centre assumed the defensive it as much as admitted the failure of its headlong drive on Moscow. That was the main outcome of the gallant Soviet stand. Displaying unparalleled courage the Red Army not only survived the ferocious assault, but had hit back. Although in the two months Army

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* On August 8, 1941, GHQ of the Supreme Command was reconstituted into GHQ of the Supreme High Command, with Stalin appointed Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Group Centre advanced some 170-200 kilometres east of the Dnieper, it was far short of the objectives originally envisaged.

Bitter fighting continued in August against the 2nd Panzer Group and the 2nd Army advancing towards Konotop and Chernigov. Operating against them were the Central Front units and, as of August 16, also units of the Bryansk Front.

Stiffening Soviet resistance slowed down the enemy offensive in the Smolensk direction. In July the Germans advanced an average of some six or seven kilometres a day as against 30 in the first days of the war. Enemy troops were deployed along a huge front from Velikiye Luki to Mozyr, with the main forces of the 3rd Panzer Group, which the nazis had intended to send against Leningrad, pinned down in the western direction, greatly easing the pressure on Leningrad.

For tenacity in defence and extraordinary courage in attack, four divisions of the Western direction—100th, 127th, 153rd and 161st—were renamed Guards divisions on September 18, 1941, being the first to be so distinguished. Their commanders were General I. N. Russiyanov and Colonels A. Z. Akimenko, N. A. Gagen (promoted to General on November 9) and P. F. Moskvitin, respectively. About 1,000 men were awarded Orders and medals, epitomising the mass heroism and improved combat skill of the Soviet soldiers.

Successful resistance by the Western Front was in many ways facilitated by the patriotic devotion of the people of Smolensk Region, who had helped build fortifications and air strips, and assisted in air defence. More than 50,000 collective farmers and factory and office workers came out to dig trenches daily in the course of July and August, the wounded were taken care of by civilians, and the best buildings in the area were turned into hospitals. Local Party and government bodies assisted in evacuating people, property, factory equipment, livestock and food supplies. Harvesting was made part of the war effort, with factory and office workers, students and schoolchildren helping the farmers in the field. A large part of the harvest was shipped to safety. The Smolensk Regional Party Committee, evacuated to the east of its region, supervised civilian resistance. More than two-thirds of its members and more than 70 per cent of the leading Party and government officials were assigned to the Army, anti-paratroop battalions, partisan detachments and for underground work behind the enemy lines. Fifty-four partisan detachments, aggregating 1,160 men, were formed in July. On July 29 the Regional Committee took steps further to promote the partisan movement and establish underground Party cells behind the enemy lines.

4. AT THE APPROACHES TO LENINGRAD

The nazis presumed that once they captured Leningrad, Kronstadt and the Murmansk Railway they would gain complete control over the Baltic and the Extreme North, and also corner and destroy the Baltic Fleet. Moreover they expected thereby to come into possession of convenient sea and land supply lines for Army Groups North and Centre and of a springboard for hitting the Soviet forces covering Moscow.

The nation was determined to hold Leningrad, the cradle of the Revolution. The Military Council of the Northern Front, in conjunction with Leningrad Party and government bodies, drafted a plan for the construction of fortifications round the city as early as the close of June. Work

started at the beginning of July along a 900-kilometre line through Pskov, Luga, Novgorod, Staraya Russa and along the Karelian Isthmus. Leningrad was to be girdled by a deep system of defences. Civilians helped the troops, hundreds of thousands coming out daily in July and August. Ten civil guard divisions were formed, while dozens of partisan detachments of Leningrad volunteers harassed the enemy behind the lines. Arms were made day and night at the factories. After shifts, the workers learned to handle weapons, and formed anti-paratroop battalions.

Early in July fighting broke out at the distant approaches to Leningrad. The Northwestern Front, holding a sector 455 kilometres long, had 31 divisions, 22 of them depleted by more than 50 per cent, and two brigades facing Army Group North's 21 divisions. To avert an enemy breakthrough to Leningrad, GHQ deployed part of the Northern Front from the south along the line from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ilmen. The outermost natural barrier covering Leningrad in the south was the Luga River, but when the Germans attacked the planned fortifications along its banks were not yet completed. The Luga Operational Group (six infantry divisions, two civil guard divisions, two Leningrad Military Schools and a separate mountain brigade) under General K. P. Piadyshev was swiftly moved there, digging in along the Mshaga River and a line near the town of Luga. A strong artillery group under Colonel G. F. Odintsov was brought in for support.

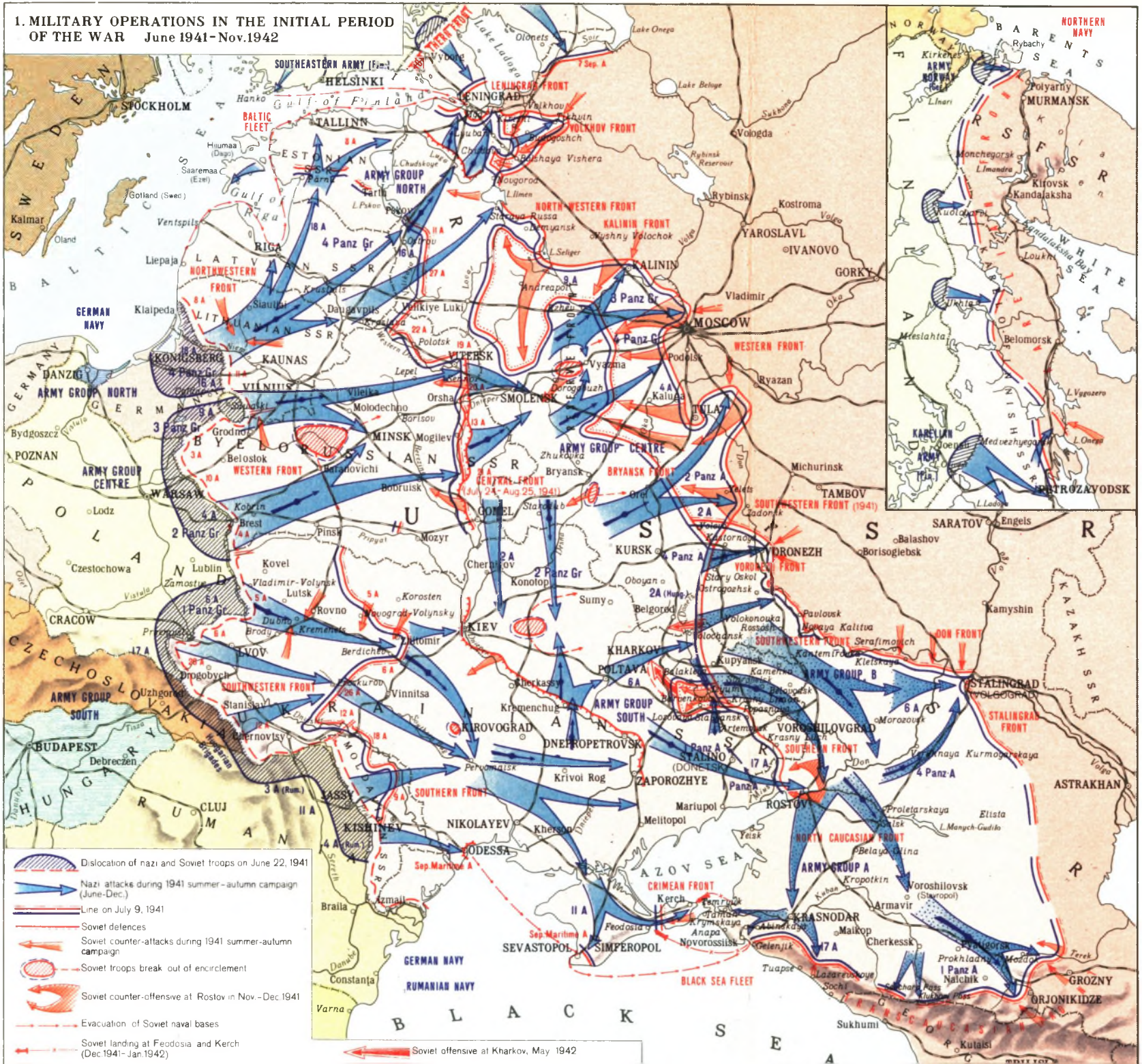
On July 12, the German 41st Motorised Corps, which drove along the Leningrad Highway towards Luga, was met by concentrated shellfire and halted. Moving part of the troops secretly southeast of Kingisepp, the enemy crossed the Luga and captured two bridgeheads on its right bank. Heavy fighting ensued. Soviet troops fought with unyielding tenacity. Cadets of a Leningrad military school and the 2nd Civil Guard Division repulsed fierce attacks and mounted a series of counter-assaults in a gallant attempt to drive the nazis back across the Luga. Yet, at a heavy price, the Germans clung on to their bridgeheads. Signalmen of the 22nd Infantry Corps, which defended the important Dno railway junction, displayed supreme heroism in the fighting at the approaches to Luga. On July 17 a handful of signalmen hurled back all the enemy attacks in the course of several hours. The senior officer was A. K. Meri, deputy political instructor of the 415th Battalion's radio company, who, despite his wounds, continued directing the battle. Several score of the enemy were killed. Meri was created Hero of the Soviet Union.

Enemy motorised forces appeared west of Shimsk in the Novgorod direction on July 14. The 11th Army, defending the area, engaged them at Soltsi with air support, and flung them back 40 kilometres in four days of fighting. The 8th Panzer Division broke out of a Soviet ring with heavy losses, and was out of action for a month; rear units of the nazi 56th Motorised Corps were also badly mauled. Thus, the German threat to Novgorod was temporarily lifted.

Stunned by the Soviet operation, the nazi Command on July 19 halted the offensive on Leningrad until the main forces of Army Group North could reach the Luga. Until August 10 the front along the river was stable.

The Finnish offensive on Petrozavodsk and Olonets began on July 10. General F. D. Gorelenko's 7th Army resisted stoutly and brought the enemy to a halt by July 30.

Developments in Estonia were less favourable. The 8th Army under General F. S. Ivanov held the line Pjarnu-Tartu-Lake Chudskoye until


1. MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE INITIAL PERIOD OF THE WAR June 1941 - Nov. 1942
NORTHERN NAVY
NORTHERN FRONT
SOUTHEASTERN ARMY (Fin.)
LENINGRAD FRONT
VOLKHOV FRONT
BALTIC FLEET
ARMY GROUP NORTH
NORTH WESTERN FRONT
KALININ FRONT
NORTHWESTERN FRONT
WESTERN FRONT
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
BRYANSK FRONT
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT (1941)
VORONEZH FRONT
DON FRONT
ARMY GROUP B
STALINGRAD FRONT
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT
ARMY GROUP SOUTH
SOUTHERN FRONT
NORTH CAUCASIAN FRONT
ARMY GROUP A
CRIMEAN FRONT
BLACK SEA FLEET
GERMAN NAVY
RUMANIAN NAVY
KARELIAN ARMY
Dislocation of nazi and Soviet troops on June 22, 1941
Nazi attacks during 1941 summer-autumn campaign (June-Dec.)
Line on July 9, 1941
Soviet defences
Soviet counter-attacks during 1941 summer-autumn campaign
Soviet troops break out of encirclement
Soviet counter-offensive at Rostov in Nov.-Dec. 1941
Evacuation of Soviet naval bases
Soviet landing at Feodosia and Kerch (Dec. 1941 - Jan. 1942)
Soviet offensive at Kharkov, May 1942


Saaremaa (Ezel)
Gotland (Swed.)
Kalmar
Oland
Gulf of Riga
Ventspils
Liepaja
RIGA
LATVIAN SSR
NORTHWESTERN FRONT
BALTIC
GERMAN NAVY
Klaipeda
Siauliai
Daugavpils
Kraslava
LITHUANIAN SSR
KONIGSBERG
KAUNAS
DANZIG
ARMY GROUP NORTH
GERMANY
VILNIUS
Bydgoszcz
POZNAN
Grodno
Belostok
WESTERN FRONT
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
WARSAW
Lodz
Kobrin
Brest
Pinsk
POLAND
Czestochowa
Lublin
Zamostye
Kovel
Vladimir-Volynsk
Lutsk
Rovno
Dubno
Kremenets
Brody
CRACOW
Przemysl
LVOV
Drogobych
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
ARMY GROUP SOUTH
Uzhgorod
Stanislav
Chernovtsy
BUDAPEST
Debreczen
HUNGARY
Hungarian Brigades
RUMANIA
CLUJ
JASSY
KISHINEV
ESTONIAN SSR
Parnu
Tartu
L. Chudskoye
L. Pskov
Pskov
Ostrov
ARMY GROUP NORTH
4 Panz Gr
Bolshaya Vishera
Nougorod
L. Ilmen
NORTH-WESTERN FRONT
Staraya Russa
Demyansk
KALININ FRONT
Vyshny Volochok
L. Seliger
KALININ
Andreapol
Rzhev
3 Panz Gr
Velikiye Luki
Polotsk
VITEBSK
Lepel
Molodechno
Vileika
Borisov
MINSK
Mogilev
Orsha
SMOLENSK
Dorogobuzh
Vyazma
MOSCOW
4 Panz Gr
Podolsk
WESTERN FRONT
Kaluga
TULA
Ryazan
Rybinsk
Kostroma
YAROSLAVL
IVANOVO
GORKY
Vladimir
BYELORUSSIAN SSR
Baranovichi
Bobruisk
CENTRAL FRONT (July 24-Aug.25, 1941)
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
Zhukovka
Bryansk
BRYANSK FRONT
2 Panz A
Orel
Yelets
Michurinsk
TAMBOV
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT (1941)
Zadonsk
GOMEL
Starodub
Mozyr
Chernigov
Konotop
2 Panz Gr
KURSK
4 Panz A
VORONEZH
VORONEZH FRONT
Stary Oskol
Ostrogozhsk
Oboyan
2A (Hung.)
Sumy
Belgorod
Korosten
Novograd-Volynsky
Zhitomir
Berdichev
KIEV
Volokonovka
Rossosh
Volchansk
Pavlovsk
Novaya Kalitva
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT
Serafimovich
Kantemirovka
Kletskaya
DON FRONT
KHARKOV
POLTAVA
Kupyansk
Balakleya
Izyum
Barvenkovo
Kamenka
Belovodsk
ARMY GROUP B
STALINGRAD (VOLGOGRAD)
STALINGRAD FRONT
Proskurov
Vinnitsa
Cherkassy
Kremenchug
ARMY GROUP SOUTH
Lozovaya
Slavyansk
Artemovsk
VOROSHILOVGRAD
Krasny Luch
SOUTHERN FRONT
Morozovsk
KIROVOGRAD
DNEPROPETROVSK
Pervomaisk
Krivoi Rog
ZAPOROZHYE
STALINO (DONETSK)
1 Panz A
17 A
ROSTOV
Verkhnaya Kurmoyarskaya
4 Panz A
SOUTHERN FRONT
NIKOLAYEV
Kherson
ODESSA
Sep. Maritime A
Mariupol
Melitopol
Yeisk
Proletarskaya
Salsk
Elista
L. Manych-Gudilo
NORTH CAUCASIAN FRONT
Belaya Glina
ARMY GROUP A
Kropotkin
Voroshilovsk (Stavropol)
Armavir
ASTRAKHAN
AZOV SEA
CRIMEAN FRONT
Kerch
Temryuk
Taman
Krymskaya
Anapa
Novorossiisk
Abinskaya
KRASNODAR
Maikop
Cherkessk
Pyatigorsk
Prokhladny
Mozdok
1 Panz A
Nalchik
Terek
GROZNY
ORJONIKIDZE
Feodosia
SEVASTOPOL
SIMFEROPOL
Sep. Maritime A
Gelenjik
Tuapse
Lazarevskoye
Sochi
Sancharo Pass
Klukhori Pass
BLACK SEA FLEET
TRANSCAUCASIAN FRONT
Sukhumi
Kutaisi
TBILISI
GEORGIAN SSR
Batumi
Leninakan
L. Sevan
ARMENIAN SSR
YEREVAN
TURKISH TROOPS
TURKEY
Trabzon
Samsun
GERMAN NAVY
RUMANIAN NAVY
BLACK SEA
Braila
Constanta
Varna
Izmail
Danube
3 A (Rum.)
4 A (Rum.)
L. Imandra
Kirovsk
Kandalaksha
Kuolojarvi
Kandalaksha Bay
WHITE SEA
Loukhi
Ukhta
KARELO-FINNISH SSR
FINLAND
Mieslahta
Belomorsk
L. Vygozero
KARELIAN ARMY (Fin.)
Joensuu
Medvezhyegorsk
L. Onega
PETROZAVODSK
L. Ladoga
SARATOV
Engels
Balashov
Borisoglebsk
Kamyshin
KAZAKH SSR
USSR
Dislocation of nazi and Soviet troops on June 22, 1941
Nazi attacks during 1941 summer-autumn campaign (June-Dec.)
Line on July 9, 1941
Soviet defences
Soviet counter-attacks during 1941 summer-autumn campaign
Soviet troops break out of encirclement
Soviet counter-offensive at Rostov in Nov.-Dec.1941
Evacuation of Soviet naval bases
Soviet landing at Feodosia and Kerch (Dec.1941-Jan.1942)
Line at close of 1941 summer-autumn campaign (Dec.) and beginning of 1941-42 winter campaign
Soviet attacks during winter campaign, Dec.1941-Apr.1942
Line at close of 1941-42 winter campaign (April) and beginning of 1942 summer-autumn campaign (June)
Soviet offensive at Kharkov, May 1942
Nazi attacks in 1942 summer-autumn campaign (June-Nov.)
Soviet counter-thrusts during 1942 summer-autumn campaign
Line at close of 1942 summer-autumn campaign (Nov.)
km 100 0 100 200 300 km

July 22. But with three additional divisions shifted to the Estonian border, the Germans breached this line, reaching the Gulf of Finland near Kunda on August 7. The 8th Army was cut in two, the 11th Infantry Corps retreating under fire to Narva and the 10th Infantry Corps to Tallinn. The defence of Tallinn, the main Baltic naval base, was organised by the Military Council of the Baltic Fleet (commander—Admiral V. F. Tributs; member of the Military Council—Divisional Commissar N. K. Smirnov). The 10th Corps withdrew to the city and was merged with its garrison, which was hastily putting up fortifications with the help of local workers' detachments.

The nazis opened the battle for Tallinn on August 19 with a powerful artillery bombardment. The defenders withstood fierce enemy attacks for five days and nights, the ground troops being supported by warships, the coastal defence and aircraft of the Baltic Fleet. Coastal anti-aircraft guns, employed as artillery supporting the infantry, performed splendidly. Men and officers of all service arms displayed extraordinary heroism, firing until they exhausted their ammunition. During the fighting round the village of Harku, the nazis captured Y. A. Nikonov of a reconnaissance unit, who was badly wounded. He was a member of the Komsomol. Unable to get any information about the Soviet forces from him, they gouged his eyes, tied him to a tree and burned him alive. Y. A. Nikonov was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union and entered eternally in the crew roster of the destroyer leader *Minsk,* on which he had served. Tallinn's factory workers also made a heroic stand.

Towards the evening of August 24, pressed by superior enemy forces, Tallinn's defenders withdrew to the city proper. In view of the highly unfavourable situation and needing all available forces to defend Leningrad, on August 26 the Northwestern Command ordered the fleet and garrison of Tallinn to withdraw to Kronstadt and Leningrad.

Steaming out of Tallinn harbour, the warships and transports were shelled from shore, attacked at sea by torpedo-boats and strafed and bombed from the air. The fleet sailed without air cover through the heavily-mined waters of the gulf. Yet thanks to the courage and seamanship of their crews, none of the warships was sunk by the Luftwaffe, while the German torpedo-boats were repulsed by gunfire. After dark a new peril, floating mines, had to be faced. The mine-sweepers were too few to ensure safety for the many ships. As a result 53 of the 197 ships, troop transports and auxiliary vessels were lost. On August 29, the main fleet arrived in Kronstadt and Leningrad, bringing most of the garrison. The enemy intention of destroying the Baltic Fleet was thus thwarted.

With the loss of Tallinn the situation in the Baltic Sea deteriorated. The off-shore islands were virtually abandoned, though in Hanko and on some of the islands the garrisons continued to resist.

The Finnish troops were the first to mount the offensive against Leningrad. They attacked General P. S. Pshennikov's 23rd Army along the Karelian Isthmus on July 31, and on August 8 a German strike force thrust in the direction of Kingisepp. Two days later a southern group went into action against Novgorod, a support group against Luga, and Finnish troops north of Lake Ladoga.

On the Karelian Isthmus after a month of heavy fighting the 23rd Army rolled back to the 1939 frontier, holding it until the summer of 1944. General K. A. Meretskov's 7th Army, supported by the Ladoga Flotilla, fought a two-months'-long battle with the Finnish group advancing northeast of Lake Ladoga. The enemy was finally halted on the Svir River, the sector there stabilising until the summer of 1944.

Staunch resistance frustrated the enemy attempt to break through to Leningrad. In a month, the nazis advanced no more than 60 kilometres.

A large battle broke out north of Lake Ilmen, where the enemy mounted his main blow against Leningrad. On August 12 the nazis, with nearly triple numerical superiority, breached the Soviet defences at Shimsk, capturing Novgorod on August 19.

From Novgorod the Germans launched a strong thrust at Chudovo. But the Soviet 34th Army and part of the 11th Army, with strong air support, delivered a sudden northwesterly counter-blow from south of Staraya Russa, advancing nearly 60 kilometres by the evening of August 14, investing the enemy's right flank at Staraya Russa and threatening his rear at Novgorod.

This compelled the nazis to shift motorised troops from Novgorod and Luga to the Staraya Russa area and redeploy the main forces of the 8th Air Corps. The nazi 39th Motorised Corps was brought in from Smolensk. As a result, the scales again tilted in the enemy's favour. Barely blocking nazi thrusts, the 34th Army withdrew to the Lovat River by August 25. The threat to Leningrad increased. General Headquarters responded to the peril on August 23 by dividing the Northern Front into the Karelian and Leningrad fronts and assigning the latter to defend the city proper.

On August 25 a German force renewed the advance on Leningrad from Chudovo. It reached Kolpino on August 29, but was stopped by the 55th Army (under General I. G. Lazarev). Leningrad's civil guard units fought heroically together with the 55th Army.

On September 8 the nazis crossed the Mga River, captured Schlisselburg (Petrokrepost), and blockaded Leningrad from the mainland. The nazi ring enclosed the 42nd, 55th and 23rd armies, as well as units of the Baltic Fleet. Contact with Leningrad was maintained solely across Lake Ladoga and by air, which made defending the city doubly difficult. On reaching Schlisselburg, the Germans tried to cross the Neva and make contact with the Finnish troops on the Karelian Isthmus, but were repulsed.

On September 9 a new offensive on Leningrad began, with the main blow aimed from the south in a northerly direction from west of Krasnogvardeisk. Before starting the assault the enemy heavily shelled and bombed the city. The situation was extremely tense. The Germans broke through to the city's approaches, and to stiffen the defences the Leningrad Front Command, which had been taken over by General G. K. Zhukov on September 13, drew up a new plan. On Zhukov's orders some units were transferred from the Karelian Isthmus to the most threatened sectors, reserve units were reinforced with volunteers, and a large number of sailors was transferred from the ships to shore duty. The Front Command took the resolute step of using part of the city's anti-aircraft guns against tanks. The powerful defence line held by the 42nd Army, supported by the fire power of land artillery, naval vessels and the coastal defence, was now impregnable. A bold manoeuvre aimed at striking a strong counter-blow was planned in the sector of the 8th Army.

In the course of nine days of uninterrupted fighting in the vicinity of Krasnogvardeisk, General I. I. Fedyuninsky's 42nd Army wore down the enemy, stopping him along the Ligovo-Pulkovo line on September 18. However, the situation deteriorated in the sector of the 8th Army. By mid-September, despite desperate resistance, the Germans had reached the Gulf of Finland near Strelna and cut off the depleted units of the 8th Army from the main force. That was the origin of the Oranienbaum

beachhead, which played an important part in defending Leningrad and, later, in smashing the besieging enemy force.

The sector at the approaches to Leningrad was finally stabilised at the close of September. The city was besieged by nazi troops, whose flanks had reached the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga. All of Leningrad's land communications with the rest of the country were severed. But the enemy failed to capture the city. The State Defence Committee and GHQ kept a close watch on developments in the Leningrad sector and took the necessary steps to prevent the enemy from entering the city. Skilful leadership by GHQ and the heroism of Leningrad's defenders gave the operations the nature of a battle of attrition.

On failing to capture Leningrad, the enemy decided to bring its defenders to their knees by a long siege, methodical shelling and continuous air-raids. A report to Operational Headquarters of the German High Command, dated September 21, said among other things: "...b) At first we shall blockade Leningrad (hermetically), and, if possible, destroy the city by artillery and air.... d) The remainder of the 'fortress garrison' will stay there for the winter. In spring we shall penetrate into the city ... and ship all survivors to the heart of Russia, or shall take them prisoner, raze Leningrad to the ground and give the area north of the Neva to Finland."

This monstrous plan was frustrated by the heroic efforts of the Soviet troops and the people of Leningrad, who were deeply conscious throughout the ordeal of the continuous concern shown for them by the Communist Party and the country as a whole.

At the approaches to Leningrad ground troops fought in close cooperation with the Air Force, the Baltic Fleet and the Chudskoye and Ladoga flotillas.

More than 4,300 enemy planes took part in the raids on Leningrad in July-September, but in all only 508 bombers broke through to the city. As many as 312 enemy planes were shot down in air battles.

Warships of the Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga Flotilla ferried troops to the city from the coast of Lake Ladoga, the Vyborg Bay and Oranienbaum. By the autumn of 1941 the Baltic Fleet Command began to form naval brigades, separate detachments and battalions to help defend Leningrad. These units numbered some 80,000 men.

The Baltic Fleet performed independent missions as well. It protected islands of the Moonsund Archipelago and drove off enemy ships trying to enter the Riga and Finnish gulfs. Soviet submarines raiding the enemy's Baltic supply lines operated via the Moonsund Islands, and island-based bombers raided Germany. On the night of August 7-8 Baltic Fleet bombers under Colonel Y. N. Preobrazhensky took off from Saaremaa (Ezel) Island for Berlin. Before September 4, 1941, Soviet planes made a series of raids on the German capital, debunking the nazi claim that the Soviet Air Force had been destroyed.

The nazi Command was determined to capture the Moonsund Islands and gain control of the Baltic Sea. On September 8 a nazi force landed on Wormsi Island and on September 14 on Muhu, connected by a dam with the island of Saaremaa. For ten days the Soviet troops retreated slowly under fire to Sirve Peninsula, where the battle raged for another fortnight.

On the night of October 5-6, under cover of darkness, the garrison crossed from the peninsula in motorboats, fishing vessels and rafts to the Latvian shore, leaving behind only a tiny rearguard.

Early in the morning, on October 12, the enemy landed a task force

simultaneously at several points on Hiiumaa Island. Its defenders fought staunchly for 10 days, then over 500 troops withdrew by sea to Hanko Peninsula, while some forces pulled back into the heart of the island and continued resistance in the enemy's rear.

The nazi grip on the Gulf of Finland tightened, complicating the situation for the Hanko garrison, which displayed great courage, standing its ground under General S. I. Kabanov until orders were received to withdraw. Between October 26 and December 2 the Baltic Fleet secretly evacuated more than 22,000 troops together with their armaments to Leningrad and Kronstadt, whose garrison and the naval vessels rebased there harassed the enemy throughout the period from 1941 to 1944.

In the Extreme North the enemy was engaged by the Karelian Front (commander—General V. A. Frolov; member of the Military Council—A. S. Zheltov). The ground troops covering Murmansk were supported by seamen of the Northern Fleet under Admiral A. G. Golovko (member of the Military Council—A. A. Nikolayev). The fleet also operated independently off-shore. As many as 260 transports and hundreds of coastal ships worked the internal lines in 1941, with 53 transports from Britain putting into Soviet northern ports.

Submarines, the main attack force of the Northern Fleet, sank more than 30 enemy warships, totalling about 100,000 tons, before the end of 1941. The fleet contributed greatly to the defence of the Extreme North and ensured uninterrupted communications, guarding important military convoys.

5. THE BATTLES IN THE SOUTH

In the middle of July 1941 the Southwestern Front fought hard defensive engagements south of Polessye, at the approaches to Korosten and Kiev, while the Southern Front blocked an enemy drive in Moldavia.

The Southwestern and Southern fronts faced the main forces of Army Group South, 64 nazi divisions and 16 brigades assaulting the depleted 5th, 6th, 12th, 18th, 26th, and 9th armies. In the Southwestern theatre, the enemy had a 2:1 advantage in men, guns and mortars, and a 1.5:1 advantage in aircraft, the advantage being considerably greater in the areas of the main blow.

Bitter fighting was in progress all along the sector held by the Southwestern and Southern fronts, the situation near Kiev being most desperate.

On July 7, 1941, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine, its Council of People's Commissars and the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee called on the Ukrainian people to perform their civic duty. The influx of volunteers into the Red Army and the civil guard swelled greatly as more than 200,000 Kiev citizens joined the ranks. The city's Party organisations sent more than 30,000 Communists to the Armed Forces. Kiev's civil guard had 29,000 men by mid-July, and there were more than 60,000 in Kiev Region. Anti-paratroop groups totalling over 200,000 men were formed.

Squads were trained to fight behind the enemy lines. On July 5 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine issued a decision to form partisan detachments and underground groups in districts likely to fall into enemy hands. In Kiev alone, 11 partisan detachments were organised, with nearly 1,800 men.

Young workers and students responded enthusiastically. More than 13,000 young men and women joined the Army and 1,500 joined partisan

detachments. Some 2,500 girls went to the Front as nurses, and nearly 3,500 people became blood donors.

On July 11 enemy motorised troops drove forward, but were stopped some 15-20 kilometres from the city on the Irpen River along prepared lines, where they were held for more than two months. A new army, the 37th, which bore the brunt of the fighting, was formed in the Kiev area.

Troops operating north and south of Kiev helped stem the assault. The Soviet 5th Army, operating from Korosten, was particularly effective. The Germans deployed eight divisions in an effort to neutralise it. Continuous Soviet counter-attacks on the right wing of the Southwestern Front from the Korosten and Kiev fortified districts, helped by Kiev's civil guard, pinned down the German 6th Army and the main forces of the 1st Panzer Group.

On August 10 Army Group South went on the defensive along the Korosten-Kiev line. On the left wing, however, the enemy continued to advance to Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye. Fighting costly rearguard actions, the Soviet 6th and 12th armies retreated to the east and southeast. The main forces of the 1st Panzer Group jointly with the German 17th Army succeeded in cutting the route of the two Soviet armies on August 2 and closed the pincers in the vicinity of Uman. Surrounded, the Soviet armies fought heroically up to August 7, with resistance continuing here and there unitil August 13. Some units broke out of the pocket, many others joined the partisans, but thousands of men fell in battle and large numbers were taken prisoner.

The Southern Front was in considerable difficulties, the situation deteriorating when the Rumanian 4th Army breached the lines of the 9th Army under General Y. T. Cherevichenko to the west of Tiraspol. GHQ ordered the Front to withdraw to rear defensive lines, while the left-wing divisions of the 9th Army, which had been cut off from the Front's main forces, were formed into a Separate Maritime Army under General G. P. Sofronov. At the same time GHQ reinforced the units operating in the Southwestern theatre with 24 newly formed divisions.

On August 4 Stalin had ordered the Southwestern and Southern fronts to form a strong defence line along the Dnieper up to Kremenchug, embracing the Kiev area, and running farther through Krivoi Rog, Kakhovka and Kherson. Throughout August the Germans made repeated attempts to capture Kiev and force the Dnieper in the sector held by the Southwestern Front. The German Command then wheeled a considerable force southward, so as to strike the flank and rear of the Southern Front. The Soviet Command opportunely got wind of the enemy's intention of detouring Kiev from the north and south. On August 19, GHQ passed this information on to the Military Council of the Southwestern sector and the commanders of the Southwestern and Southern fronts, ordering them to hold the Kiev and Dnepropetrovsk districts and cover the areas of the Ukraine along the eastern bank of the Dnieper and also the Donets Basin and the North Caucasus.

The enemy delivered several blows at the junction of the 9th and Separate Maritime armies, compelling the former to pull back east, to crossings on the Southern Bug at Nikolayev and the Separate Maritime Army to retreat south to Odessa.

When the enemy reached the Dnieper on August 25-30 the Southwestern and Southern fronts found themselves in a desperate position. The nazis could now effect a deep pincer movement from around Kremenchug, hitting the rear of the Southwestern Front and driving the Southern Front to the

Black and Azov seas. A threatening situation arose at the junction of the two fronts. Moreover, developments in the sectors held by the Central and Bryansk fronts added to the complications at Kiev and in the territory to the east of the Dnieper.

The German 2nd Army and 2nd Panzer Group had mounted an offensive towards Gomel and Starodub on August 8 in an effort to outflank the Southwestern Front. Exhausted by long defensive battles, Central Front units rolled back. In this situation GHQ ordered General A. I. Yeremenko, Bryansk Front commander, to attack the flank of Guderian's panzer group, which was advancing southward. General Yeremenko assured Stalin and the Chief of the General Staff Marshal B. M. Shaposhnikov that the enemy panzer group would be destroyed. But all of the Bryansk Front's attempts to carry out these orders fell short of the objective: it failed to prevent the enemy from gaining the rear of the Southwestern Front. An air operation by a relatively small force of planes against the 2nd Panzer Group proved ineffective. Reserves of the Southwestern Front, deployed to block the nazi troops, failed to change the situation. On September 7 German tanks reached Konotop, east of the Dnieper, while other enemy units were highly active along the entire sector held by the Southwestern Front. Southeast of Kremenchug several divisions of the German 17th Army forced the Dnieper and by September 9 captured a large bridgehead.

The Southwestern Command realised that the disaster looming on the right wing could not be averted with the available forces. Large additional strength was needed to restore a continuous front. However, neither the Front Command nor General Headquarters had the necessary reserves. The sole alternative was to withdraw immediately from the Kiev salient and dig in more strongly along some favourable line. Stalin rejected the Southwestern Command's plan of September 11 and, instead, ordered that Kiev should be held at any price. S. M. Budyonny, who had been in command, was replaced by S. K. Timoshenko, who assumed his duties on September 13, when enemy troops advancing from north and south had straddled the communication lines of the Southwestern Front in and south of Konotop. The 5th, 37th and 26th armies, as well as part of the 21st and 38th armies, found themselves encircled. The surrounded units continued to put up a fierce resistance until September 27.

At the beginning of the Kiev operation, the Southwestern Front had 677,085 effectives. By the time it ended this number was reduced to 150,541 men. The losses before the encirclement and in the subsequent ten days of fighting were immense. The Pinsk Naval Flotilla, which supported the encircled units, was destroyed. Front commander General M. P. Kirponos, member of the Front Military Council M. A. Burmistenko, the Front Chief of Staff General V. I. Tupikov and most of the staff and political officers of the Front fell in the fighting. A large number of troops broke out of the enemy ring. Part of the men and officers joined the partisans, the others were taken prisoner. The number of prisoners did not exceed one-third of the original strength of the armies that were encircled.

Kiev and part of the Ukraine east of the Dnieper were captured by the enemy as a result of this defeat inflicted on the Soviet forces. The enemy was now able to develop his offensive eastward. GHQ had no alternative but to transfer precious reserves to the Southwestern Front. With these reserves and with the 40th, the reactivated 21st and 38th armies, as well as the 6th Army transferred from the Southern Front, the Southwestern

Front finally stabilised the situation along a line running through Belopolye, Lebedin, Krasnograd and Novo-Moskovsk.

The reasons for the catastrophe suffered by the Southwestern Front are analysed in *Hero-City on the Dnieper,* a book by Marshal I. K. Bagramyan, who participated in the fighting in that sector of the Front. Until the very last moment, Stalin, he writes, hoped that "units of the Bryansk Front would, in the end, smash Guderian's panzer army". To a certain extent this "adversely affected subsequent developments, which predetermined the tragic end of the operation conducted by units of the Southwestern Front". Stalin's hopes that the Bryansk Front would be successful against the enemy panzer group were "one of the serious reasons behind GHQ's dogged reluctance to withdraw the troops of the Southwestern Front in the middle of September". Moreover, a negative role was played by the indecision of the Southwestern Front Command and the Chief of the General Staff, who did not firmly insist on withdrawing the troops from the region of Kiev.

But the enemy, too, paid a high price, for a considerable force of Army Group Centre had been assigned to the Kiev operation. The Red Army smashed more than 10 veteran divisions, German casualties running to more than 100,000 officers and men. This won for the Red Army over a month's precious time, upsetting the nazi plan of capturing Moscow and completing the war against the Soviet Union before the winter.

Soviet forces put up a heroic resistance in the Ukraine. They were supported by the whole people. Kiev was created a Hero-City and decorated with the Order of Lenin, and all the veterans of the battle were awarded the medal "For the Defence of Kiev".

Heavy fighting commenced in the Odessa area. Clashes at the city's distant approaches broke out at the beginning of August. On August 5 the Southern Front was ordered to defend Odessa. The Separate Maritime Army (two infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade) withdrew in face of superior numbers to the suburbs of the city on August 10.

The naval forces had built a fortified ring round the port-city some time before the enemy began his thrust. The local Party organisations had begun preparations well in advance. In response to their call, some 100,000 people assisted in building the fortifications. By the beginning of September the city was girdled with defensive installations totalling more than 250 kilometres. Inner defence zones were built within the city limits, providing cover in case of a retreat and evacuation. The streets were heavily barricaded.

Reinforced by the Separate Maritime Army, the capability of the city's defenders was considerable. By joint efforts the army and fleet were to organise impregnable defence of the city. On August 8 the Black Sea fleet (commander—Admiral F. S. Oktyabrsky; member of the Military Council —N. M. Kulakov) formed two marine regiments, committing 8,000 seamen to the battle for Odessa. A civil guard division fought shoulder to shoulder with the regular troops and naval units. Nine out of every 10 Odessa Communists saw action.

Starting on August 10, the Rumanian 4th Army of 18 divisions with 5:1 numerical superiority mounted attack after attack to capture Odessa on the march, but made little headway. All subsequent attempts collapsed in face of the unexampled tenacity of the defenders. After August 15 the enemy halted the offensive along the Front and started heavy attacks on the flanks, to which the Soviet troops responded with counter-blows, frustrating the nazi plan.

On August 19 the troops defending Odessa were reformed into

the Odessa Defence Area under Admiral G. V. Zhukov, commander of the Odessa Naval Base. Ground troops totalled 34,500 officers and men.

On August 20 the enemy renewed his assault. With every passing day the fighting grew fiercer. For an entire month Soviet forces repulsed the successive Rumanian assaults, the enemy suffering considerable losses and halting 8-15 kilometres from the city. On September 22 a counter-blow flung the enemy some 15 kilometres back in the southern sector.

However, by the end of September the situation in the Southern Front sector deteriorated. Having captured a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Dnieper, near Kakhovka, at the beginning of the month, the Germans started a powerful offensive towards the Crimea on September 9. Their advance units reached the Perekop Isthmus, and then Chongar Most and the Arabat confluence, cutting off the Crimea. An enemy offensive developed along the entire southern sector, rolling forward rapidly to Kharkov, the Donets Basin and Rostov.

Due to the complications in the south, the Supreme High Command issued permission on September 30 for the evacuation of the Odessa Defence Area. The withdrawal proceeded secretly, in orderly fashion, with the last warship steaming out of the port at 09.00 hours on October 16. Troops evacuated from Odessa reinforced the defence of the Crimean Peninsula.

The defence of Odessa had been militarily and politically important. The city's defenders had pinned down more than 18 enemy divisions (nearly half the Rumanian Army) for quite a long time, inflicting heavy losses. This gave the Southern Front a chance to withdraw across the Dnieper and organise new defences. Besides, the fact that Odessa was in Soviet hands was also of help to the Navy in the northwestern part of the Black Sea. In tribute to the heroism of the city's defenders, the Soviet Government instituted a medal, "For the Defence of Odessa", on December 22, 1942.

On October 18 the German 11th Army started an all-out assault on the Crimean Isthmus. The 51st Separate Army held its lines tenaciously, but the forces were unequal. Units of the Separate Maritime Army (commanded by I. Y. Petrov since October 5), hurrying to the rescue from Odessa, came late. Only advance units reached the battle area by October 23.

This was not the help the 51st Army needed. On October 25 the enemy breached its positions and compelled it to withdraw to Kerch. But it had no chance to dig in, and was evacuated to Taman Peninsula on November 16. In the meantime, the Separate Maritime Army retreated to Sevastopol, which had been prepared for defence beforehand. There, operating jointly with the Black Sea Fleet, it stood firm until the summer of 1942.

* * *

When they started the invasion of the Soviet Union, Hitler and his General Staff boasted that their troops would be in Moscow in two or three weeks. They expected to consummate their eastern campaign as swiftly as their conquests in Western Europe. But the unexampled bravery of the Soviet troops upset the nazi forecasts. Contrary to what Hitler had expected, the war was clearly becoming one of attrition. The blitzkrieg plan had fallen through.

In the summer-autumn campaign the Red Army inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, bleeding his finest divisions. The German Command hastened to modify its Operation Barbarossa. While part of the troops advanced in the Leningrad and Kiev directions, Army Group Centre went over to the defensive. In September the Red Army halted the enemy in the Extreme North, at the approaches of Leningrad and on the rivers Svir and Volkhov. The nazi offensive in the sector held by the Northwestern Front bogged down. However, after the unfavourable outcome of the Kiev operation the situation in the south remained precarious. Again, the enemy could concentrate a large force in the central direction for a thrust to Moscow. The Red Army's main task was to stem any further advance and win time to prepare for a counter-offensive in the decisive directions.

Chapter Four

THE SOVIET UNION BECOMES A UNITED MILITARY CAMP

1. ARMED FORCES GROW STRONGER

In the autumn of 1941 the enemy was at the walls of besieged Leningrad and threatened Moscow. In the south he was pushing towards Kharkov, the Donets Basin and Sevastopol. In his hands were key economic regions, millions of Soviet people and considerable material wealth. Towards the close of the year not a single of the south's iron-and-steel plants and converters could be used. Only 38.4 per cent of the country's pre-war blast-furnaces and 52.2 per cent of its rolling mills were in operation. In December 1941, as compared with June, pig iron output diminished 75 per cent. Of the factories producing munitions, 303 were put out of commission in the period from August to November.

Yet the nazis had to be stopped. The country had to mobilise its moral and material resources. The might of the Soviet state had to be concentrated on crushing the enemy. This meant a titanic effort for the entire nation. During the Civil War Lenin said: "All honest workers and peasants, all Soviet officials must *pull themselves together like soldiers* and concentrate *to the maximum their work,* their efforts and their concern *directly on the tasks of the war.*" He said the Soviet Republic "must become *a single military camp,* not in word but in deed". This was doubly valid in 1941.

Stabilising the military situation and reinforcing the Soviet Armed Forces held top priority. In the heavy defensive fighting of the summer of 1941 the Armed Forces had suffered losses in men and in field and anti-tank guns, tanks and aircraft. Huge stores of fuel, ammunition and weapons were either captured by the enemy or destroyed by retreating Soviet troops. The shortage in tanks, guns and aircraft was acute. Even rifles and cartridges were in short supply. The losses had tilted the scales sharply in the enemy's favour.

The unintermittent battles and the withdrawal farther into the country had an adverse effect on Army morale. Although, by and large, men and officers fought tenaciously, signs of a tank- and plane-phobia bordering on panic appeared here and there. There were cases of cowardice and indiscipline. Troop units abandoned positions without orders for withdrawal, and officers lost their heads when in difficulty, issuing contradictory orders instead of keeping firm and skilful control.

The Party Central Committee and the State Defence Committee took steps to tighten discipline and improve organisation. While commending the heroism and courage of the Army and Navy as a whole, and noting their high morale and loyalty, GHQ condemned cowardice, panic and loose

discipline. Commanders and political instructors were to maintain order and punish men who broke their Army oath or were unsteady in battle. True, errors of judgement were committed in carrying out this instruction. Many officers resorted to compulsion, while neglecting educational work. On October 4, 1941, the People's Commissariat for Defence condemned distortions in disciplinary practices and required better educational work with the ranks. The men had to be told that if the powerful and brutal enemy was to be defeated, they had to display supreme self-sacrifice, show contempt of death and be merciless to traitors, cowards and deserters.

To enhance Party influence among the troops, the Central Committee of the Party passed decisions on June 27 and 29, 1941, to send Communists and Komsomol members to the front as political instructors. More than 95,000 of the best-trained were despatched for active service by regional and territorial Party committees in the first three months of the war.

On July 16, 1941, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a decree reorganising political propaganda and introducing military commissars in the Red Army. A few days later the decree was extended to include the Navy. The boards and departments for political propaganda were converted into political boards and departments. The rank of military commissar was instituted in the regiments, divisions, corps, headquarters, military schools and other Army institutions, and the post of political instructor was instituted in the companies, squadrons and batteries. The Party and the Government called on the commissars, political bodies and Party organisations to conduct their work in a new way and intensify mass political agitation and propaganda in the Army and Navy in order to achieve an effective enhancement of the troops' combat capability in the shortest possible time.

Commanders, political officers and the Party organisations explained to Army and Navy personnel the home and foreign policy of the Party and Government, the just nature of the Great Patriotic War, kindling their patriotism and making them confident of final victory. Emphasis was placed on eliminating fear of tanks and aircraft. Skill in fighting enemy tanks and planes improved visibly.

Party and Komsomol organisations gave invaluable help to commanders in raising the combat ability of the troops. Communists and Komsomol members helped to weld the personnel into close-knit units, setting examples of bravery. Their conduct in battle was an inspiration for other men. But the number of Communists dwindled after every action. Often, Party organisations in companies and batteries became non-existent due to the heavy casualties. Urgent measures were needed. Hundreds of thousands of officers and men accepted as an honour the call to join the Leninist Party. According to the Party Rules they needed character recommendations by three Communists having a three-year Party record and acquainted with the applicant through joint work for at least a year. In war-time this, naturally, hindered the growth of Army Party organisations. The Central Committee of the CPSU(B) modified this rule on August 19, 1941: men in active service with a good battle record were admitted on the recommendation of three Party members with a one-year Party record who knew the applicant for even less than a year. While 27,068 armymen were admitted to the Party as candidates between January 1 and June 30, 1941, as many as 126,625 joined the Party in the next six months.

The term at officer training schools and military academies was shortened and the number of trainees increased. New schools were opened, and advanced training courses, notably two- and three-month courses for

junior lieutenants, were instituted. By the end of the first six months of the war more than 192,000 officers had been freshly trained.

To build up a large Army, GHQ and the General Staff centralised the training of reserve troops. This was put into the hands of a special group responsible to the Defence Commissariat, later reorganised into the Central Administration for Army Activation and Equipment.

To meet combat losses and increase the fighting force, reinforcements streamed in from the rear. As many as 291 divisions and 94 brigades were sent to the front between June 22 and December 1, 1941, in addition to troops in western border areas at the beginning of the war. In the meantime, new divisions were formed in the far rear. Men of all nationalities, from all the Soviet Republics, were called up. Azerbaijanians, Kazakhs, Kirghizes, Turkmenians and many of the other formerly oppressed peoples, never called up in tsarist Russia because they were not trusted with weapons, went to defend their country, which had been liberated by the Revolution. National divisions were formed of men from the Caucasian republics, Central Asia and the Baltic area.

Fundamental changes were introduced into the Armed Forces. A reorganisation was carried out in July and August. Due to the shortage of command personnel the control administrations of most of the infantry corps were dissolved. The number of divisions in an army was reduced to five or six. Motorised divisions were converted into ordinary infantry divisions. Tank and air corps were disbanded, chiefly due to the shortage of vehicles and aircraft. The number of regiments in an air division was reduced from three to two and the number of aircraft in a regiment was also reduced.

The new infantry divisions differed from the pre-war, their numerical strength being reduced. In July-September 1941 GHQ formed 48 cavalry divisions, expecting to make the ground forces more manoeuvrable and mobile. Yet they did not compensate for the shortage of armour and motorised troops. The formation of tank brigades and battalions to support infantry was begun in August and proved to be successful. Artillery, too, was reorganised, enabling GHQ to manoeuvre better with the available strength.

Seeing that the fighting had assumed immense proportions and operational troop guidance had become more complicated (while top-level commanders lacked experience), the fronts were reduced in size. The five fronts formed at the beginning of the war were broken down into eight by the end of the summer campaign, with four separate armies operating independently. The General Staff, which throughout the war was the working organ of GHQ and was subordinated to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, was reorganised to improve the leadership of the Armed Forces..

It was soon clear that the Army's logistics had to be reorganised. Supply was centralised, and General A. V. Khrulev was appointed to the post of Chief of Logistics. Similar posts were also instituted in fronts and armies. One of the members of the respective military councils was made responsible for logistics. Soon, the Party Central Committee established political departments handling supplies in fronts and armies, and a centralised committee to care for wounded and sick servicemen was formed in October 1941, with A. A. Andreyev, a Secretary of the Party Central Committee, at its head.

A civil guard of many thousands was formed under Party guidance. This patriotic movement initiated by the citizens of Moscow and Leningrad played an active part in defending the capital, Leningrad, Smolensk,

Kiev, Makeyevka, Gorlovka, Sevastopol, Odessa, Tula and many other cities.

Anti-paratroop detachments and battalions were formed by local Party, government and other public organisations to combat saboteurs, spies and enemy paratroops, and to patrol military objectives close to the battlelines.

Much was done to stiffen the anti-aircraft defences in cities and to protect the population from possible gas attacks. Local anti-aircraft defence bodies were organised, and on July 2 a Government decision made anti-aircraft training obligatory for all citizens. Men of 16 to 60 and women of 18 to 50 were formed into self-defence squads at factories, offices and on the residential principle. The squads trained after working hours.

All these measures dating from the summer of 1941 improved the combat capacity of the Soviet Armed Forces and strengthened the defence of towns, villages and military objectives behind the firing lines.

2. ECONOMIC REORGANISATION

The Soviet economy had to go on a war-time footing in the shortest possible time. On June 30 the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) and the Council of People's Commissars issued an economic mobilisation plan for the third quarter of 1941. It was focussed entirely on meeting the war needs. But events developed so swiftly and unfavourably for the Red Army that the plan became impracticable before it was put into practice. To meet the emergency, on July 4 the State Defence Committee delegated N. A. Voznesensky, Chairman of the State Planning Board, to head a commission assigned "to work out a war-economy plan ensuring the country's defence and utilising the resources and production facilities of, or evacuated to, the Volga area, Western Siberia and the Urals", thus turning these regions into the main arsenal of the Red Army.

The war-economy plan for the last three months of 1941 and for 1942 (for the Volga area, the Urals, Western Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia), endorsed by the Party and Government on August 16, envisaged a rise in the output of heavy industry, of arms, ammunition and other materiel in order to tip the scales and give the Soviet Union a technical advantage over the invader.

War costs were huge. The state budget needed a drastic revision. Allocations for war requirements were increased, while those for civilian industries and social and cultural requirements were cut.

The industry of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the western part of the Russian Federation had to be removed at top speed to the country's east. Shifting heavy industry proved difficult; it meant evacuating large factories, such as Zaporozhstal, Dneprospetsstal, the Kirov Plant of Leningrad, the Izhory, Novokramatorsk and Mariupol iron-and-steel giants and the Zuyev and Shterovka power plants. Factories had to be dismantled, equipment loaded on railway cars, often under enemy bombing, transported, and then reassembled without delay at new, safer sites.

Nothing like this had ever been undertaken before. But the evacuation passed without a hitch, again demonstrating the immense advantages of the socialist system of economy. Between July and November 1941 as many as 1,523 factories, including 1,360 large, chiefly war-industrial plants, were shifted to and restarted in the Urals, Siberia, the Volga area and Kazakhstan. In a little over five months nearly 1,500,000 carloads of freight was transported by rail.

Overall guidance of the evacuation was assigned to a Council for Evacuation set up by decision of the Party Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars and headed by N. M. Shvernik, with A. N. Kosygin and M. G. Pervukhin as his deputies. Evacuation bureaus and committees were formed at commissariats and administrations. At new sites guidance was provided by local Party and government bodies.

The evacuation of industry was a glorious chapter in the history of the Soviet working class and the annals of the war. Factories operated at their original sites until the last minute. Dismantling did not begin until orders were given by the authorised representative of the State Defence Committee and the People's Commissariat. The valuable equipment of Zaporozhstal, for example, was loaded on railway cars when the western bank of the Dnieper was already in German hands. The factory personnel helped by the local coal-miners loaded 8,000 carloads of iron and steel, and the entire plant, under the very nose of the enemy. The main plant was reinstalled at the Magnitogorsk iron-and-steel complex and gave excellent service.

The personnel of power stations in war-affected areas displayed true civic courage. Plant was removed in virtually the last minute. The dismantling of the Zuyev Power Station, for example, proceeded when the enemy was at the door. It seemed that the nazis would capture the station, and to prevent this, explosives were placed under the plant as it was being dismantled. Work continued in mined premises.

The evacuation of 109 big factories from Byelorussia took place after many districts there had already fallen into nazi hands, and in Moscow and Moscow Region 498 factories were evacuated before the end of November.

To remove industry from west to east and deny the enemy the use of the Soviet economic potential was of paramount importance. But it was no less important to reassemble and restart the evacuated plant at new sites. The Soviet people coped with the task splendidly. That the distribution and reactivation of evacuated factories were, on the whole, efficient is a credit to the thoroughly planned, far-sighted policy of the Communist Party. Long before the war it foresaw the need for stand-in engineering, oil-refining and chemical plants in the Urals, Western Siberia and the Volga area. These "understudies" were natural sites for the evacuated factories.

Non-productive premises and buildings still in the construction stage were also used to house evacuated enterprises. In some cases, however, newly arrived factories began operating literally from scratch, in the taiga, near a remote railway station. Yet erection of new buildings, assembly of plant and the start-up of production were almost simultaneous. The country's biggest aircraft works produced its first fighter plane in the Volga area 14 days after the arrival of the last carload of evacuated plant. The workshops were still unroofed when the machinery was started.

The changed conditions entailed a reorganisation of management. N. A. Voznesensky, Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, was appointed "to represent in the city of Kuibyshev the Council of People's Commissars, to head the work of the Commissariats evacuated to the east, notably Aviaprom, Tankoprom, Armaments, Ferrous Metallurgy and Ordnance, and to put into operation plants evacuated to the Volga area, the Urals and Siberia in the shortest possible time". A. A. Andreyev, who was also stationed in Kuibyshev with part of the Central Committee staff, supervised the regional Party committees in the Volga area, the Urals, Siberia and Central Asia "in matters concerning the organisa-

tion of industry evacuated to these regions, and in matters concerning the procurement of farm products".

A Government decision of July 1, 1941, gave the People's Commissars added powers. The same applied somewhat later to the People's Commissars of the Union republics. New Commissariats of the mortar and tank industries were formed to improve guidance of the war industry, and many regional, city and district Party committees set up special departments to supervise defence production. The Central Committee sent authorised organisers to the bigger factories, building projects and transport enterprises to help local Party bodies organise production and promote the socialist emulation movement. All these measures put economic management on a war-time footing.

Naturally, difficulties occurred. The railways were overstrained. Often freight arrived late; cars with parts of large machines arrived at long intervals, delaying assembly; the shortage of metals, ferro-concrete and building materials for new industries and the evacuated factories was acute.

A modern factory is a highly complex body, tied in with dozens, sometimes hundreds of ancillary enterprises. It could not function normally without them. The war wrought havoc with well-established contacts; cooperation in new locations was hard to resume. The only solution was to use local resources, organising production of necessary materials on site to avoid long-distance transportation and to relieve the railways.

Another formidable problem was manpower. Many workers had enlisted in the services. No more than 30 to 40 per cent were evacuated with the enterprises. The shortage of specialists and assemblymen was near disastrous. On the instructions of the Party Central Committee, local authorities campaigned for new workers trained under crash programmes. The working day was extended for the duration of the war by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of June 26, 1941, and annual leaves were replaced by money compensation credited to the workers at savings banks. A special committee was set up to distribute manpower. All people employed at war-important factories and ancillary enterprises were declared mobilised and attached to their places of employment.

The task was to increase output. This applied to all factories, those relocated in the east as well. But there was another no less important problem: that of producing aircraft, tanks, anti-tank guns and mortars of a quality superior to the enemy's.

A number of engineering and machine-tool enterprises, as well as electrical engineering plants, were turned over to the aircraft industry. New aircraft plants were built. In the last six months of 1941 the average monthly output of Il-2 attack planes, Pe-2 dive-bombers and Yak-1, Mig-3 and LaGG-3 fighters was doubled, while the general output also grew, amounting to 8,000 planes against the 3,950 planes in the first half of the year.

The tank plants, too, increased serial production of armour superior to any other of its kind: the heavy KV tanks, the medium T-34 and the light T-60 and T-50. In the latter half of 1941 the output of tanks showed a more than 2.5-fold increase and amounted to 4,740 tanks. Nazi General Günther Blumentritt, Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, which advanced on Moscow, admitted that the T-34 tanks "were the most powerful in existence" in 1941. He amplified: "Our 37- and 50-mm anti-tank guns were impotent against the T-34.... When the Russians got this new tank, the infantry was made completely defenceless."

The search for better armour and ways of speeding production went on at all tank works. It was the tank industry that first employed Acade-

mician Y. O. Paton's automatic welding method, which increased productivity fivefold. Gear-cutters of V. M. Tsaplinsky's team began operating 37 machine-tools instead of 19; various innovations raised the team's productivity fivefold.

Everybody concerned, whether worker or superintendent, looked for ways of increasing the output of arms and ammunition. The stream of submachine-guns, machine-guns, shells and cartridges coming off the production lines swelled steadily.

Towards the close of 1941 the war industry was still unable to satisfy the Red Army's growing demand for weapons and other war supplies. The supplies received from the Allies fell far short of the commitments they had undertaken at the Moscow Conference in September 1941. Of the 800 aircraft and 1,000 tanks which Britain had promised to deliver in October-December 1941, the Soviet Union received 669 aircraft and 487 tanks. In the period from October 1941 to July 1942 the USA sent the Soviet Union 545 aircraft and 783 tanks or less than one-third of the promised number, and 16,502 lorries or less than one-fifth of the number it had pledged to supply. The Soviet Union had to put a further strain on its own resources.

Large quantities of high-grade steel were needed for the production of aircraft, tanks and other war machines. Before the war high-grade steel was smelted at plants in the southern and central districts. To meet the new steel demand plants in the Urals and Western Siberia had to change their techniques and the production flow.

Gifted Soviet engineers, mechanics and steelworkers found rapid solutions for the most puzzling technical problems. G. I. Nosov, director of the Magnitogorsk Complex, engineer V. A. Smirnov, foreman M. M. Khilko and furnaceman D. N. Zhukov devised a way of smelting armour steel in big open-hearth furnaces. The Kuznetsk Plant also worked out new methods for making armour and rolling grade steels. The Zlatoust Steel Mill learned to make 78 new grades of steel in the first six months of the war. Output of high-grade rolled stock went up steeply, though in the more than 200 years since the founding of the plant it had never produced more than ten different grades of steel.

To make grade steel, the industry needed ferro-alloys. The Nikopol mines, which had provided most of the manganese before the war, had been captured by the Germans, and new sources had to be found urgently. At the end of 1941 the steel mills began receiving manganese from the Urals, and in 1942 also from Kazakhstan. The non-ferrous industry expanded. So did the chemical industry. In the last three months of 1941 the Urals provided 62 per cent of the country's pig iron, nearly 50 per cent of the steel, and all the aluminium, magnesium, nickel and cobalt.

Steelworkers in the Urals, Siberia and Kazakhstan knew that the metal they made was armour for the tanks, and parts for aircraft, shells, arms and ammunition to defeat the enemy.

All industries were in the toils of radical change, of technical progress.

An acute shortage of coal resulted from the loss of the Donets Basin and the coal deposits in Rostov Region. The situation deteriorated still more in the autumn of 1941, when the coal basin near Moscow also fell into enemy hands. Before the war, the above-mentioned areas accounted for 63 per cent of the country's coal. In the circumstances, coal extraction in the eastern areas had to be increased without delay. A Government decision of December 8 envisaged higher output by the operating mines, and set strictly specified dates for starting up new mines. A plan for capital mine-sinking was finalised on December 25. Forty-four mines with

Infantry marching to the battle-line, June 1941. Poster says: Our Fight Is Right. The Enemy Will Be Beaten. Victory Is Certain

Workers at the Serp i Molot Factory pledge to help defeat the enemy, Moscow, June 1941

Workers of the Leningrad Metal Plant volunteer to the Red Army, July 3, 1941

Arms distributed to members of Moscow's civil guard, July 1941

J. V. Stalin, People's Commissar of Defence and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the USSR

Marshal of the Soviet Union K. Y. Voroshilov, Commander - in - Chief, Northwestern Sector

Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko, Commander - in - Chief, Western Sector

Marshal of the Soviet Union S. M. Budyonny, Commander-in-Chief, Southwestern Sector

An army unit's Party branch meets to admit new members, Western Front, August 1941

Western Front Military Council (left to right): Front Commander General of the Army G. K. Zhukov, Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General V. D. Sokolovsky and member of the Military Council I. S. Khokhlov, winter 1941-42

Fortifications on Moscow outskirts, November 1941

The traditional Red Square military parade took place on November 7, 1941, despite closeness of advancing nazi troops

Meeting after liberation of Volokolamsk in commemoration of partisans executed by nazis, December 20, 1941

Nazis retreating from around Moscow in December 1941 abandoned most of their war machines

"Invincible" nazi army in headlong flight, December 1941

IL-2 planes in production, 1942

Assembly of KV tanks at the Kirov Plant, Chelyabinsk, 1942

Assembly of mortars at a Siberian factory, June 1942

Moscow Region collective farmers' delegation presents unit with tank column built on personal savings, 1942

Young Pioneers of Ashkhabad School No. 19 visit wounded in hospital, 1942

General meeting of Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Sverdlovsk, May 1942

Soviet flag raised over battle-scarred Stalingrad, February 1943

Fieldmarshal Friedrich von Paulus, Commander of German 6th Army (left), taken prisoner by Soviet troops, on way to 64th Army Headquarters, January 31, 1943

Nazi men and officers taken prisoner in the city, February 1943

Rocket launchers begin the counter-offensive at Stalingrad

Men of the 62nd Army firing from the semi-demolished Krasny Oktyabr Plant, November 1942

a total annual yield of 5,120,000 tons were to go into operation in the Urals, the Kuznetsk Basin and Karaganda in the first three months of 1942. This plan was fulfilled.

The socialist emulation movement helped boost labour efficiency and achieve Party and Government targets. The call, "Don't go home until you've finished your assignment", first issued by aviation workers, quickly found millions of followers in other industries.

"In the heat of an open-hearth furnace one feels like a fighter at the battle-lines," wrote A. Y. Sorokovoi, steelworker of the Kushva Mill, in a letter to his Urals colleagues. "I shall use all my experience and knowledge to reduce smelting time without lowering quality On the contrary, I shall try to improve it."

The crew of the open-hearth mill at the Third Magnitogorsk Complex pledged to cut production time. Soon, Magnitogorsk steelworkers P. A. Savelyev and A. L. Shalaginov, M. V. Burkatsky and I. T. Popov, both of Kuznetsk, D. D. Sidorovsky of the Urals Engineering Works and I. A. Biserov of Zlatoust won recognition throughout the country for their performances.

Collective farmers and the personnel of state farms matched the workers in devotion. They coped with the immensely important job of providing the Army and population with food, and industry with raw materials. Agriculture was badly damaged in the beginning of the war. Technical facilities and supplies had dwindled instantly. Lorries, powerful tractors and horses were requisitioned for Army use in large numbers. Repair workshops, too, were switched to war orders. The shortage of fuel and spare parts for machinery was acute.

A considerable part of the rural population was drafted into the Army or employed at factories, mines and timber camps or building fortifications. Yet the harvest had to be brought home at all costs. Soviet farmers showed what people can do if their honour, freedom and independence are at stake. Wives and sisters took the place of their husbands and brothers, operating combines and tractors. Millions of women worked in the sweat of their brow in the fields and on livestock farms.

The shortage of manpower and farm implements could delay harvesting, which meant a loss of grain, potatoes, cotton and sugar-beet. To avert this, all able-bodied rural inhabitants and part of the urban population were called out. Outdated machines, horse-drawn threshers, sickles and scythes were put to use.

Despite this heroic effort, procurement of grain and other products fell sharply in 1941, chiefly because vast tracts of land, yielding 38 per cent of the country's pre-war grain and 84 per cent of the sugar-beet, were occupied by the enemy. The lost areas had also accounted for 38 per cent of the cattle and 60 per cent of the swine herd.

The eastern and southeastern regions, i.e., the Volga area, Siberia, the Urals, Kazakhstan and Central Asia became the main source of food products and raw materials as well. Despite the difficulties, winter crops there were extended by 2,000,000 hectares as compared with 1940. This was the first major result of the reorganisation. Production of fodder was increased: much more hay and silage were procured in the rear areas than throughout the country in 1940.

The first months of the war provided striking evidence of the advantages of the socialist system of collective farming.

Soviet transport faced a crucial test. The enemy did all he could to bring the railways to a standstill. By December 1941 he had made 5,939 air-raids on railway lines running near the front—the Byelorussian, Ki-

rov, Oktyabrskaya, Moscow-Kiev and others. This created bottlenecks and interrupted traffic. Closer to the front, trains often travelled at a distance of only a few hundred metres from each other. It was not easy in the circumstances to ensure scheduled traffic. But transport workers did their job, taking trains to and from the front. To speed traffic, they devised rapid coupling methods, adding extra carriages and running on the minimum of fuel and water. In the first 40 days of the war nearly 2,500,000 men were rail-borne to the battle-lines. "In one week in June 1941," wrote I. V. Kovalev, People's Commissar for Railways, "military entrainment and transport surpassed by more than 50 per cent the entrainment of armed forces in tsarist Russia in 1914 during the period of deployment, which had lasted nearly two months." Extraordinary dedication was needed to cope with the difficulties in the early months of the war. The railwaymen had such dedication in full measure. Distinguished services were rendered during the defence of Kiev by V. I. Kazansky, engine-driver on the Southwestern Railway. Wounded in both legs when an enemy aircraft strafed his train, he nonetheless drove the train to its destination. M. I. Kushner, engine-driver of the Ostashkov depot, Kalinin Railway, had come through many German air attacks unscathed, but when his train was carrying wounded troops German aircraft damaged his engine, wounding him in the leg and his assistant Y. I. Tyulkov in the head. But the crew stuck to their post and brought the train safely to the station.

Merchant seamen and river crews, too, acquitted themselves splendidly, especially in the Dnieper-Dvina, Northwestern and Volga basins. The Lake Ladoga shippers delivered freights to beleaguered Leningrad and brought out evacuees, in all weather, under enemy fire.

All modes of communication—the telephone, telegraph, mail and radio—were at the complete disposal of the Armed Forces. On July 23, I. T. Peresypkin, People's Commissar for Communications, was appointed simultaneously Chief of Red Army Communications, securing better use of all signals at front and rear.

The first few weeks of the war saw industry and agriculture, transport and communications converted to war-time conditions, providing for the war needs and adding to the war potential of the Soviet Union.

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Soviet scientists and researchers had their hands full. The quality of German arms, and those of her allies, had to be surpassed in the shortest possible time; the Soviet soldier needed more powerful up-to-date arms than those of the enemy.

The job was tackled in extremely difficult conditions. Research institutes and laboratories had for the most part been evacuated from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, and the other big cities. Local Party organisations undertook to co-ordinate research. In Tomsk, for example, the City Party Committee set up a science council which supervised the work of some 300 scientists, affording indispensable help to factories, transport, agriculture and, directly, to the Red Army. The Commission for Mobilising the Resources of the Urals, headed by Academician V. L. Komarov, President of the Academy of Sciences, made an invaluable contribution.

Geologists had a big assignment: to find new deposits for industries as quickly as possible. Large deposits of iron ore were discovered in the Kuznetsk Basin, oilfields in Bashkiria and bauxites in the Urals, all this in the early months of the war.

Scientists and engineers worked hand-in-hand at Magnitogorsk, Sverdlovsk and Kuznetsk to devise advanced methods of metal smelting. They

succeeded in reducing the time of open-hearth smelts, making complex rolled stock for tanks and producing tubes for mortars.

Physicists, chemists and designers joined in the war effort. They found ways of replacing critical materials, yielding a saving in expensive strategic metals: nickel and molybdenum. In Moscow and Lipetsk researchers produced a substitute for coke, badly needed in the foundries of engineering plants; no longer did coke have to be shipped in from afar, relieving thousands of railway cars.

Despite the difficult war-time conditions, the Government did not neglect personnel training at universities and research institutes.

The war created immense problems for the educational system. Many school buildings were converted into hospitals and other war-time institutions. The shortage in trained teachers was acute. Yet children continued to go to school. Thousands of teen-agers finishing occupational, vocational and railway schools took the place of their elders at the work-benches.

Political education among the population was of the utmost importance during the economic conversion to war-time. The Party explained Lenin's proposition on the need to defend the socialist motherland and rally the nation to the struggle against the enemy, making every citizen deeply conscious of his personal responsibility for the nation's future.

Newspapers, avidly read, explained the Party's war-time policy and reported the situation at the front and rear. *Pravda*, organ of the Party Central Committee, exposed the man-hating ideology of fascism and summoned the people to battle and to feats of labour.

Literature and art helped the war effort. Many writers and poets went to the battle-lines as war correspondents. The far from complete list includes M. P. Bazhan, P. U. Brovka, V. V. Vishnevsky, A. P. Gaidar, Mussah Jalil, A. Y. Korneichuk, Y. S. Krymov, K. M. Simonov, A. A. Surkov, V. P. Stavsky, A. T. Tvardovsky, M. A. Sholokhov and I. G. Ehrenburg. Novels, short stories and poems were eagerly read. Many appeared in central, regional and Army newspapers, and as brochures and booklets. The composers, too, contributed: their songs inspired faith in victory and raised morale. More than 100 songs were written in Moscow in the first four days of the war. A. V. Alexandrov's "Holy War" (lyrics by V. I. Lebedev-Kumach) was first published on June 24, winning country-wide popularity overnight. Also popular were M. I. Blanter's (lyrics by M. V. Isakovsky) "Good-bye, Towns and Villages", A. I. Khachaturyan's (lyrics by A. Lugin) "Captain Gastello" and M. G. Fradkin's (lyrics by Y. A. Dolmatovsky) "Song of the Dnieper". Soviet artists attacked the enemy in cartoons and posters. People crowded round TASS street displays of posters by the Kukryniksi team (M. V. Kupriyanov, P. N. Krylov and N. A. Sokolov) "Crush and Destroy the Enemy!", A. A. Kokorekin's "Death to the nazi scum!", D. S. Moor's "What Have You Done for the Front?", I. M. Toidze's "The Motherland Calls!", and so on. Theatrical companies performed at hospitals and for the troops in the trenches, often under enemy shelling.

The Soviet intelligentsia closed its ranks, standing shoulder to shoulder with the nation to repulse the enemy.

3. THE FIGHT BEHIND ENEMY LINES

The Party and Government did their utmost to organise the fight behind the enemy lines. It began on the first day of the war. Under Party guidance, underground organisations, partisan groups and sabotage crews

were formed of workers, farmers, intellectuals, Communists, Komsomol members, non-Party people, men and women of all nationalities and age groups. Their ranks were swelled by soldiers, commanders and political officers breaking out of enemy pockets or escaping from POW camps. Trained in the art of war, they injected discipline and organisation into the partisan units, helped the partisans to acquire war skills, and were often chosen to head partisan formations.

Millions of Soviet citizens responded zealously to the Party Central Committee's call for vigorous resistance behind the enemy lines; they were recruited in occupied territory and on the Soviet side of the front. Letters pleading for assignments behind the enemy lines streamed in from all over the country. "Our country is engulfed in flame," wrote engineer K. S. Zaslonov, who was not a member of the Party, "and it is up to every patriotic citizen, breathing the healthy Soviet air, to defend his land." At his request, Zaslonov was authorised to form a partisan detachment.

By the end of 1941, a few months after the war had broken out, nearly 3,500 partisan groups were active in the enemy's rear. However, mistakes were made at the initial stage of the partisan movement. The detachments and wrecking groups were modelled on military units and formations despite the fact that this did not fit in with the specifics of the struggle. The forms and methods used by the partisans were sometimes incorrect. Steps to remove these shortcomings were taken in the course of the war.

The directive of June 29 was followed up by a Central Committee decision of July 18 stating the tasks of Party bodies in specific terms. The job of organising resistance behind the enemy lines was assigned to republican, territorial, regional and district Party organisations. In 1941 more than 800 city and district committees and district Party centres, and nearly 300 city and district Komsomol committees, were formed clandestinely in the occupied territory of Leningrad, Kalinin, Smolensk, Orel, and Kursk regions, and in the Karelo-Finnish, Byelorussian, Moldavian and Ukrainian republics, assuming leadership of the people's fight behind the enemy lines.

The firmest, most tempered and tested Communists, Komsomol members and other citizens were selected for underground bodies, partisan units and sabotage crews. The Ukrainian Party organisation alone assigned 26,536 Communists to underground missions.

Many secretaries of regional, city and district Party committees, chairmen of executive committees, secretaries of regional and district Komsomol committees and other Party, Komsomol and Government officials were left behind to work in the enemy's rear. Braving danger day and night, these devoted men turned the underground Party and Komsomol organisations into highly efficient units, the real headquarters of the embattled nation behind the enemy lines.

The elusive underground made life unbearable for the invaders. They struck in nazi-occupied towns and villages, on railways, roads, in the forests and in the steppe. They blew up bridges, destroyed roads, cut communication lines and derailed trains, attacked rear headquarters and garrisons, and frustrated regulations issued by the occupation authorities.

Underground anti-fascist organisations with many non-Party people in their ranks alongside Communists and Komsomol members devised numerous ways of harassing the enemy. Their acts of sabotage were highly effective. But that was not all. Under Party guidance the under-

ground conducted political education among the population, publishing leaflets and newspapers, reporting the latest war news and calling on the people to sabotage the measures of the occupation authorities and join the partisans. They gathered information on troop movements and helped supply partisans with arms and food.

What were the mainsprings of the nation-wide struggle against the invaders? Some bourgeois, particularly West German, historians maintain that had the occupation authorities not been so brutal towards the population there would have been no popular movement. This is contrary to the facts. Of course, the occupation was the basic source giving rise to the patriotic struggle of the population for liberation. The "new order" established by the invaders was a regime of terror and violence. The nazis destroyed everything that the people had gained in the years of Soviet power. They wiped out the Soviets of Working People's Deputies, all public organisations, and common public ownership of land and factories. They denied the people personal as well as political freedom. The workers were subjected to inhuman exploitation. Food, fodder and livestock were requisitioned from the peasants. The best land was given to German colonists, nazi officials and traitors. The nazis set about destroying the culture of the Soviet peoples methodically. Never before had people experienced such oppression. The "ideas" expressed in the man-hating East Plan and similar nazi documents, drawn up beforehand, were translated into practice in the occupied territory. The invaders decimated the Soviet population behind the lines; many were flung into concentration camps or shipped to Germany for forced labour. The assault was primarily on Communists, Komsomol members, activists and those who were so much as suspected of sympathising with the partisans.

The Soviet people could not suffer this "new order". Nothing on earth would make them accept the reactionary system. Soviet power was their own power. That is the basic reason for the large-scale partisan and anti-fascist movement, and the underground. It was love of country, the determination to safeguard its freedom and independence, and loyalty to socialist ideas, that prompted the population to resist. The brutality of the occupation regime, rooted in the very nature of fascism, only doubled their hatred of the invaders and steeled them for an irreconcilably bitter struggle.

Thousands of Soviet patriots laid down their lives fighting the enemy in the early months of the war, but new men came to take their place.

Partisans and underground resistance fighters T. P. Bumazhkov, M. A. Guryanov, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, I. N. Kuzin, F. I. Pavlovsky, A. V. Petrova, S. I. Solntsev and Liza Chaikina were created Heroes of the Soviet Union for the courage displayed by them in 1941.

All Soviet people rose as one to stamp out the danger of nazi enslavement. At the front and in the rear, and in nazi-occupied areas, they did not spare themselves in fighting for the honour, freedom and independence of their socialist country. All the resources of the Soviet state, all its material and spiritual powers, were marshalled to safeguard the great gains of the October Revolution. Government, Party and mass organisations devoted themselves totally to the war effort. The country became a united military camp. It was guided by the Communist Party, whose inspiring and leading role was of decisive importance in mobilizing the entire nation for the defeat of the enemy.

Chapter Five

THE BATTLE OF MOSCOW

1. THE HEROIC DEFENCE

After the failure of the adventurist plan of breaking through to Moscow via Smolensk in a single thrust, the nazi leaders did not abandon their intention of capturing the Soviet capital. The Wehrmacht Command, however, had to introduce fundamental changes into the "blitzkrieg" plan. A new decision to seize Moscow (Operation Typhoon) was adopted on September 6. Ten days later Army Group Centre was ordered to start an offensive. The nazis felt that the time was opportune for such an offensive. They believed that the Soviet Armed Forces had not recovered from the blows struck at them at Leningrad, Smolensk and Kiev and that to attain their political objective in the war it was enough to take the Soviet capital. But this plan was also frustrated.

The Battle of Moscow, one of the most hard-fought of the war, began at the close of September. It embraced a huge area. For the nature of the fighting and the objectives, this battle may be divided into two phases: the defensive phase—from September 30 to December 4, 1941; and the offensive phase, which covered a Red Army counter-offensive (December 5-6, 1941 to January 7-8, 1942) and general offensive in the Western (Moscow), Northwestern and Southwestern directions (January 7-10 to April 20, 1942).

The overall situation was as follows. The western approaches were covered by three fronts—Western, Reserve and Bryansk. The enemy had been halted along the line Lake Ilmen-Andreapol-Yartsevo-Zhukovka-Glukhov (Map 1) in the summer, and urgent measures were being taken to reinforce this line. But time was short: the troops were unable to fortify the front dependably. A difficult situation evolved in the sector of the Bryansk Front, which had just ended an unsuccessful offensive. Not even a defensive group existed there. The troops were short of tanks, aircraft, field guns, submachine-guns, automatic rifles and ammunition. At the beginning of October, the general balance of strength on the Soviet-German front was still against the Red Army.

The nazi Command planned to breach the Soviet defences by means of massive panzer thrusts from the vicinity of Dukhovshchina, Roslavl and Shostka, surround the main forces of the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts (Map 2) at Vyazma and Bryansk, and mount a general frontal infantry offensive against Moscow. In the meantime, tanks and motorised troops were to hook round the city from north and south. The Soviet capital was to be blockaded and its population starved to submission. In the autumn of 1941 Hitler told a conference at Army Group Centre Headquarters that "no Russian soldier, no civilian, be it man, woman or child, must escape from the city.... Every attempt

at doing so must be squashed." He planned flooding the city and its environs, creating a sea that would for ever conceal Moscow from the eyes of the civilised world.

The nazi Command regrouped its forces at the end of September. Army Group Centre was reinforced with the 4th Panzer Group and two army corps. The 2nd Army and the 2nd Panzer Group were returned to the Moscow direction from the south. On October 1 the three armies and three panzer groups had 77 divisions, of which 14 were panzer and eight motorised divisions. This force comprised more than 1,000,000 effectives and had over 14,000 field guns and mortars, 1,700 tanks and 950 aircraft. The enemy massed his strength in three compact groups and thus gained an overwhelming superiority in the direction of the main thrusts. Against these forces the Red Army used 95 divisions with nearly 800,000 effectives, 6,800 field guns and mortars, 780 tanks (of which 140 were heavy and medium tanks) and 545 aircraft, mostly of obsolete design.

Parallel with the assault on Moscow, the nazi Command planned to renew its offensive against Tikhvin, Rostov and the Crimea. It hoped to close the ring round Leningrad and compel it to surrender; to capture the Donets Basin and the Crimea, and to cut off the Caucasian seaboard; Turkey would be forced to enter the war on Germany's side. That was expected to divert Red Army forces from the Moscow sector and thereby expedite the fall of the Soviet capital, that being the main objective of the autumn campaign.

The general offensive on Moscow (as it was called by the nazi chiefs) was begun on September 30 with an attack by the 2nd Panzer Group near Shostka. On October 2 the main strength of Army Group Centre struck at the Western (commander—General I. S. Konev; member of the Military Council—N. A. Bulganin) and the Reserve Front. A battle of immense size ensued. The Soviet troops met the assault bravely, but enemy superiority in men and arms in the breakthrough areas enabled the nazis to drive wedges into the Soviet positions on the very first day.

GHQ ordered battle commanders to take vigorous measures, destroy enemy forward units in the breaches and restore the lines. But the Bryansk and Western fronts were obviously too weak to cope with this assignment. The situation grew more precarious by the hour. On October 4-5 German troops captured Spas-Demensk and Yukhnov. They also broke through in the centre of the Western Front, with the result that the latter's 19th, 16th and 20th armies, and the 32nd, 24th and 43rd armies of the Reserve Front, were tightly enveloped on the flanks. Total encirclement seemed unavoidable and GHQ ordered a withdrawal to the Rzhev-Vyazma defence line.

Swiftly advancing motorised troops cut off the avenue of retreat for the 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd armies, and by October 7 closed the ring round them at Vyazma. The 22nd, 29th and 31st armies of the Western Front withdrew to the northeast, to the line Ostashkov-Sychevka, repulsing continuous attacks.

Holding their perimeter, Soviet troops pinned down at first 28 and later up to 14 enemy divisions, destroying thousands of men and officers and putting an immense number of enemy weapons out of action. But the Soviet forces could not break out of the enemy ring. Towards mid-October only part of them reached the Mozhaisk defence line. The dogged resistance put up by the surrounded Soviet troops was of great significance, for it enabled the Soviet Command to take urgent measures and strengthen the Mozhaisk defence line.

Events developed no less tensely in the Bryansk Front sector. On the first day of the offensive the 2nd Panzer Group* breached the Soviet line and emerged in the rear of the 13th Army. On the following day the nazis crashed through the defence of the 50th Army. The Front could not halt the enemy. Troop control was lost. General Headquarters had to assume direct command, but events moved so swiftly that all attempts to help the Bryansk Front were of no avail.

On October 3 enemy motorised forces drove into Orel and moved on along the Orel-Tula highway.

To stem them GHQ hastily massed reserve forces at Mtsensk. Transports of the Moscow Special Air Group (the Civil Air Fleet) and long-range bombers helped deploy troops and equipment. In three days they air-lifted some 5,500 effectives together with weapons and some 13 tons of ammunition to the battle-line. At the approaches of Mtsensk the enemy was halted by Colonel M. Y. Katukov's 4th and Lieutenant-Colonel A. V. Bondarev's 11th Tank brigades. German tanks attempted to outflank them, but a vigorous counter-attack by the 4th Tank Brigade frustrated the move. Resistance at Mtsensk came as a complete surprise to the nazi Command.

The situation in the Bryansk area was grave. Enemy tanks broke into Karachev and Bryansk on October 6. The Bryansk Front armies were fractured and their avenues of retreat were blocked.

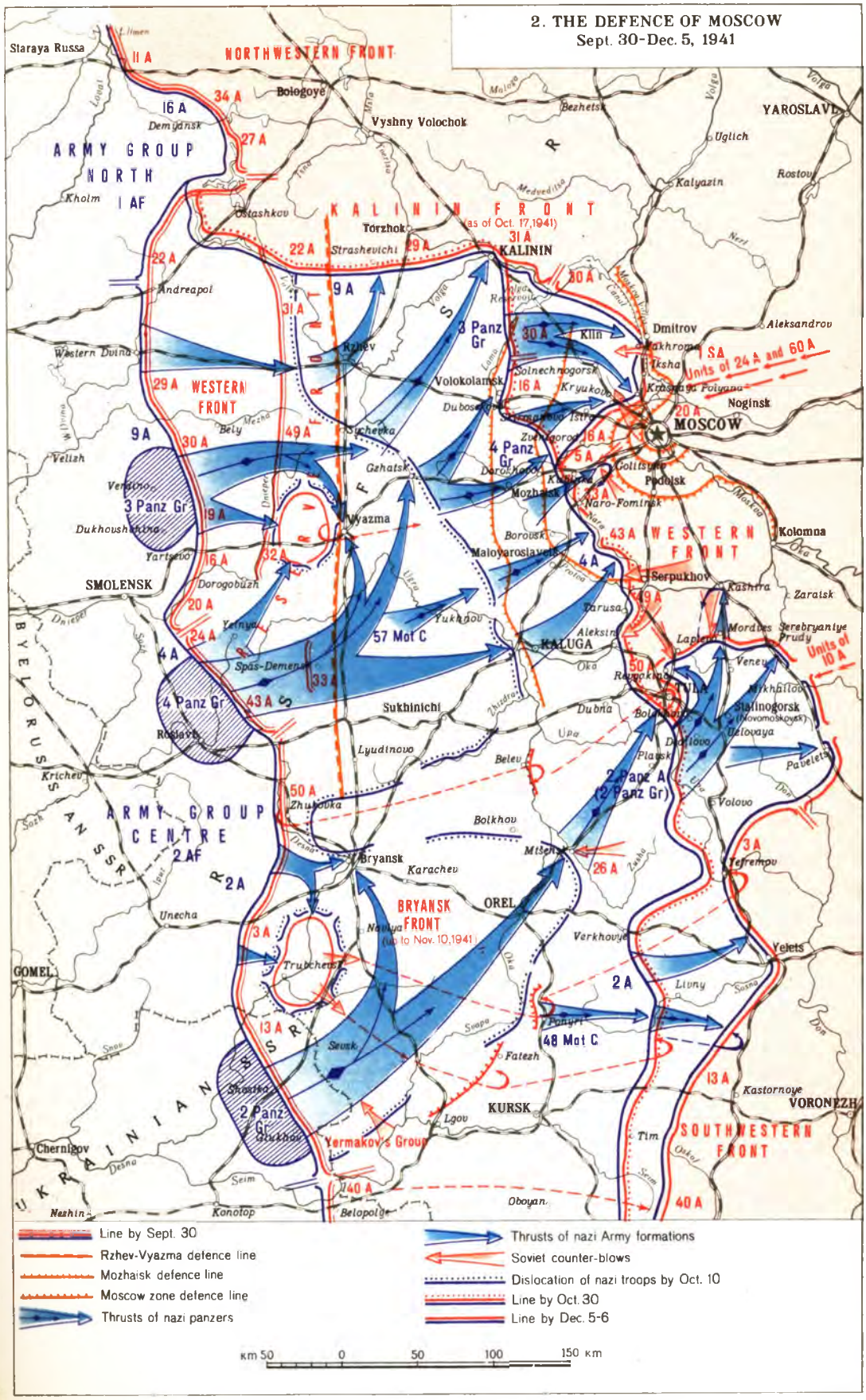
The unfavourable turn of events at Vyazma and Bryansk made it doubly difficult to hold Moscow. All available strength and the country's resources were marshalled to defend the capital. The most urgent task was to restore troop control and build up a strong new group to drive off the invading force. On October 5 the State Defence Committee passed a special decision on the defence of Moscow, picking the Mozhaisk defence line as the main resistance zone for the Western Front. On October 6, General Headquarters issued a directive readying this Front for action and reinforcing it from its own Reserve with six infantry divisions, six tank brigades and about a dozen anti-tank artillery regiments and machine-gun battalions. Several divisions of the Northwestern and Southwestern fronts were also hastily transferred to the sector.

On October 10, to co-ordinate leadership of the troops in the Western sector and secure more efficient control, GHQ incorporated the armies of the Reserve Front into the Western Front. General G. K. Zhukov was put in command. Continuing the build-up, GHQ strengthened the Western Front with troops deployed on the Mozhaisk defence line. The newly-formed 26th Army was deployed along the Zusha River to cover the withdrawal of the Bryansk Front.

The Red Army's resistance at Vyazma and Bryansk temporarily stopped the German advance. Large forces were massed along the Mozhaisk line within a week. However, the situation at Moscow's approaches remained grave. On October 13 the Military Council of the Western Front ordered its troops, deployed in this area, to block an enemy breakthrough in an easterly direction.

To reinforce the immediate approaches of Moscow, on October 12 the State Defence Committee ordered building fortified lines near and in the capital. These consisted of a security zone and two defence belts. The main semi-circular defence line ran some 15-20 kilometres away from Moscow. The internal perimeter followed the railway ring round the

* In early October 1941 the 1st and 2nd Panzer Groups were renamed into tank armies.


2. THE DEFENCE OF MOSCOW
Sept. 30-Dec. 5, 1941
NORTHWESTERN FRONT
ARMY GROUP NORTH
KALININ FRONT
(as of Oct. 17,1941)
WESTERN FRONT
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT
BRYANSK FRONT
(up to Nov. 10,1941)
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
MOSCOW
KALININ
SMOLENSK
KALUGA
TULA
YAROSLAVL
VORONEZH
KURSK
OREL
BRYANSK
GOMEL
Staraya Russa
Bologoye
Vyshny Volochok
Torzhok
Andreapol
Rzhev
Vyazma
Sukhinichi
Yukhnov
Mozhaisk
Borovsk
Maloyaroslavets
Naro-Fominsk
Podolsk
Serpukhov
Kolomna
Zaraisk
Kashira
Noginsk
Dmitrov
Klin
Solnechnogorsk
Volokolamsk
Gzhatsk
Dukhovshchina
Velizh
Demyansk
Ostashkov
Kholm
Uglich
Kalyazin
Rostov
Aleksandrov
Yefremov
Yelets
Livny
Fatezh
Lgov
Oboyan
Belopolye
Konotop
Nezhin
Chernigov
Shostka
Unecha
Krichev
Roslavl
Spas-Demensk
Belev
Mtsensk
Volovo
Pavelets
Stalinogorsk
Tyoplaya
Kastornoye
Tim
Verkhovye
Trubchevsk
Seusk
Yermakov's Group
Units of 24 A and 60 A
Units of 10 A
Line by Sept. 30
Rzhev-Vyazma defence line
Mozhaisk defence line
Moscow zone defence line
Thrusts of nazi panzers
Thrusts of nazi Army formations
Soviet counter-blows
Dislocation of nazi troops by Oct. 10
Line by Oct. 30
Line by Dec. 5-6
km 50 0 50 100 150 km

capital. The system was given the name of Moscow Defence Zone and it was manned by the Moscow Garrison, civil guard divisions and forces transferred from the GHQ Reserve. Some 450,000 Moscow citizens (75 per cent were women), including 50,000 students, were called out to build fortifications.

A meeting of Moscow Party activists took place on October 13. It called on Moscow's Communists to maintain discipline and fight all signs of panic, and reaffirmed its trust that the population would resist the invasion to a man.

In the meantime, the situation northwest of Moscow deteriorated. On October 10 the nazis resumed their offensive towards Kalinin. Two days later they began a drive along the Volga from southeast of Rzhev to the northeast, and occupied Kalinin on October 14. But their attempt to break through to the flank and rear of the Northwestern Front was foiled. To cover the capital from the northwest GHQ formed the Kalinin Front of units belonging to the right wing of the Western Front (22nd, 29th, 30th and 31st armies), putting it under the command of General I. S. Konev, with D. S. Leonov as member of the Front Military Council. The front's troops resisted staunchly, forcing the enemy to commit many units in this sector and weaken the group advancing on Moscow.

Now, manning the Mozhaisk defence line, the Western Front would cover Moscow from the west quite dependably. However, it needed more men and materiel. Four divisions, four tank brigades and a few anti-tank artillery regiments arrived on October 13 from the GHQ Reserve. All in all, the four armies deployed from the Moscow Sea to Kaluga (230 kilometres) had but some 90,000 men. This ruled out a strong stand along the entire sector, and the Front Command concentrated its forces to cover the more important directions leading to Moscow: the Volokolamsk direction by General K. K. Rokossovsky's 16th Army, Mozhaisk by General L. A. Govorov's 5th Army,* Maloyaroslavets by General K. D. Golubev's 43rd and Kaluga by General I. G. Zakharkin's 49th.

These depleted armies, and the units in the Kalinin, Bryansk and other sectors operated in extremely difficult circumstances. The enemy had full command of the air. Nazi tanks were deeply wedged into the Soviet defences. Often, Soviet troops fought fierce skirmishes in the enemy's rear. Not until the threat of encirclement loomed did the troops withdraw to new lines. And with the Army, the population moved east, too, fleeing from nazi slavery. The roads were crowded with horse-drawn carts, automobiles and livestock.

Fierce battles were fought in the vicinity of Moscow on October 13-18. The nazis, determined to capture the capital, flung in all their strength. Soviet troops resisted courageously, fighting for every inch of land.

Special mention was earned in the fighting at Volokolamsk by Colonel S. I. Mladentsev's regiment of military school cadets and General I. V. Panfilov's 316th Infantry Division, which had been formed in Kazakhstan and consisted of Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs and Kirghizes. Repulsing ceaseless enemy attacks for six consecutive days and nights, the men put 80 tanks out of action and destroyed several hundred enemy troops. None of the enemy attempts to capture the Volokolamsk area and pry open the door to Moscow from the west succeeded. For the first time, the Soviet units employed a system of deep anti-tank belts, some 20-25 kilometres wide, in the tank-hazardous directions. All available guns,

* From October 11 to 16 the 5th Army was commanded by General D. D. Lelyushenko. L. A. Govorov took over when General Lelyushenko was wounded.

including anti-aircraft guns, were used against the enemy armour. Fire was massed in the more dangerous directions, enabling the defenders to halt the tanks for a time.

The 5th Army offered the nazis staunch resistance at the approaches of Mozhaisk. From his observation post, the Army commander, General Lelyushenko, surveyed the field where the famous Battle of Borodino was fought nearly 130 years before. "We had the feeling," he recalls, "that we were facing history, which ordered us: do not disgrace those who fell here in battle, add to their glory, stand your ground, stop the enemy."

The brunt of the fighting at Borodino was borne by Colonel V. I. Polosukhin's 32nd Division supported by three tank brigades. They warded off strong successive assaults by enemy armour and infantry. Their ranks thinned, but not their courage. Four days and nights they kept the enemy at bay west of Mozhaisk despite inferior strength, putting several thousand German troops and dozens of tanks out of action. Not until the enemy outflanked the division did its regiments retreat fighting to Mozhaisk. Bombed and strafed, the city was enveloped in flames, and under pressure of nazi tanks the 32nd Division finally abandoned it on October 18.

Halting the avalanche of enemy armour rolling to Maloyaroslavets was next to impossible. The Moscow civil guard, cadets of the Podolsk infantry and artillery schools, two battalions of a reserve regiment and the 17th Tank Brigade supported by four artillery regiments and three rocket launcher battalions made a courageous stand. The nazis breached the line north of Maloyaroslavets and stormed Borovsk, capturing it after a two-day battle. Suffering heavy losses, the civil guard units retreated to the Protva River, where the main forces of the 43rd Army were being concentrated. On October 18 enemy tanks rumbled into Maloyaroslavets.

The loss of Borovsk and Maloyaroslavets created a new threat in the Podolsk direction. Troops deployed in the Naro-Fominsk area were put under the control of General M. G. Yefremov, commander of the 33rd Army. Also deployed in the area was the 43rd Army, reinforced by one division and two tank brigades. Somewhat south of it, the 49th Army covered the Serpukhov direction. Its greatly depleted and battle-weary troops failed to hold Kaluga and withdrew eastward, the nazis also capturing Tarusa on October 18.

Heavy fighting was in progress in the other sectors of the Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts. Soviet resistance was now better organised and more tenacious. But the enemy, too, whose offensive capability was still far from exhausted, was strong. Fresh German troops were being sent into battle and, as before, the enemy held superiority in arms, especially in the sectors of the main thrust. The Soviet Command failed to stabilise the defence along the Mozhaisk line, although troops of the Western Front fought heroically. The nazis crashed through at several points, and fighting raged a mere 80 to 100 kilometres from Moscow.

The capital was in deadly peril. It became extremely difficult to administer the country from it. The State Defence Committee, therefore, moved to Kuibyshev some of the Party and Government offices and the diplomatic corps. And because air-raids, more frequent now, could destroy factories, as well as scientific and cultural treasures, the bigger war-industrial plants and the research and cultural institutions were ordered to evacuate as well. This was an immense undertaking in which the workers of the capital, the railwaymen and the capital's Party

organisation gave a good account of themselves. Thousands of Communists and Komsomol members were mobilised to load and guard factory equipment and ensure order at railway stations and food depots.

The Moscow population was imbued with deep patriotic concern for their city. Everybody worked with supreme dedication. But there were also rumour-mongers, cowards, and the like, who spread tales of Moscow's imminent surrender. Extraordinary measures were taken. On October 17, A. S. Shcherbakov, Secretary of the Central Committee and the Moscow Party Committee, spoke over the radio, explaining the difficulties at the approaches of Moscow, the reasons for evacuating offices, factories and the population, and denying false rumours. "We shall fight to the last drop of blood for Moscow. Hitler's plans must be stifled at all costs." On October 19, the State Defence Committee declared a state of siege in Moscow and its environs. G. K. Zhukov, commander of the Western Front, was put in charge of the city's defence line some 100-120 kilometres west of Moscow.

The grim truth which the Party told the Muscovites spurred them. Helping the troops, the population rapidly threw up an external and internal belt of fortifications. Tank traps girdled Moscow from northwest, west and southwest. Anti-tank guns were mounted on all roads leading to the capital. Local anti-aircraft units scanned the skies vigilantly, helping the Army anti-aircraft gunners. Hundreds of ambushes were laid.

Workers, office employees and intellectuals, Communists and non-Communists, volunteered to Communist battalions. Twenty-five newly-raised volunteer companies and battalions were formed into three divisions, with a fourth formed of newly-conscripted men. This added tens of thousands of determined fighters to the force defending Moscow.

Moscow is the heart of Russia. In Russian history invading forces were crushed time and again at the walls of Moscow. Its workers were the first to rise in arms against the tsarist autocracy. In Moscow, Lenin took charge of the defence and construction of the world's first socialist state.

In an appeal to officers and men, the Military Council of the Western Front called for a supreme effort. Political officers and commanders steeled the soldiers for the critical hour, impressing on them the need to complete building the fortifications as quickly as possible. The Front's political administration, headed by D. A. Lestev, a Communist of great courage, worked wonders in mobilising the population.

The troops were determined to hold the capital. "No fascist will enter Moscow!" was the response to the Party's call. "We promise our mothers, who gave us life, we promise our people, the Party, the Soviet Government," wrote the men and officers of Colonel A. I. Lizyukov's 1st Moscow Guards Motorised Infantry Division, "we promise them that so long as our hands can hold a rifle and our hearts beat in our breasts, to our last breath, we shall fight relentlessly and destroy the fascist scourge."

The heroic defenders kept their word.

At the end of October, the Western Front struck a series of counter-blows. The line south of Ostashkov-Kalinin-Volga Reservoir-Volokolamsk-Naro-Fominsk-the Nara-the Oka-Aleksin, held by the Kalinin and Western fronts, became stable.

The Bryansk Front, meanwhile, had its hands full. For three weeks the 3rd and 13th armies fought fierce battles in the enemy's rear, pinning down the main forces of the 2nd Field and 2nd Panzer armies. By October 23 they broke out of enemy encirclement and reached the line Belev-Mtsensk-Ponyri-Lgov. However, heavily pummelled and fatigued, they

were not likely to withstand another assault. GHQ ordered a withdrawal to a new line east of Dubna-Plavsk-Verkhovye-Livny, with the main force concentrated round Tula and in the Yelets direction.

In hot pursuit of the Soviet forces, units of the 2nd Panzer Army reached the outskirts of Tula on October 30, but failed to break into the city. Encountering well-organised, tenacious resistance, Guderian's tanks stalled. Nor could they seize Tula in a savage frontal assault.

The badly depleted troops of the Soviet 50th Army fought with determination at the approaches to the city. Their courage was boundless. The people, too, displayed model revolutionary consciousness and discipline. All Communists and Komsomol members able to bear arms joined the troops, followed by many thousands of non-Party people. A workers' regiment was formed, with Captain A. P. Gorshkov in command. While the armed workers and the regular troops repulsed the ferocious nazi attacks, the people of Tula threw up barricades, dug trenches and erected tank traps under enemy fire, turning their city into a fortress. The City Defence Committee headed by V. G. Zhavoronkov, Secretary of the Party Regional Committee, was the moving spirit in this activity.

The heroic defence of Tula was the culminating stage in the defensive battles fought at the southern approaches of Moscow in October 1941. As a result, the Bryansk Front was stabilised, assuring dependable cover for the left flank of the Western Front.

In early November, the enemy offensive on Moscow was brought to a halt in nearly all sectors.

The outcome of the Moscow October battles came as a surprise for the nazi Command. They blamed the autumn rains and the mud, which, they said, had slowed down their advance. That was their inept excuse for their failure, seized upon by various falsifiers of history who refuse to admit that the first offensive against Moscow was stemmed by the supreme dedication and tenacity of the Soviet soldier, by the unexampled courage of the people, who had profound faith in victory.

The tension round Moscow was thus somewhat relieved. Reconnaissance indicated that the enemy was regrouping and hastily bringing in reserves. Something like 10 divisions of the reserve were deployed closer to Moscow, the 3rd Panzer Group was shifted from the Kalinin direction to the Volokolamsk-Klin sector and the 2nd Panzer Army reinforced with two army corps and more than 100 tanks. The 4th Army was also reinforced with tanks. It was obvious that Hitler was intent on capturing Moscow at any price before winter.

The nazi offensive in the south continued. In the northwest, German troops continued the siege of heroic Leningrad, hoping that hunger would bring its defenders to their knees. Immense efforts were required to smash the fascist plan.

In this difficult time the nation celebrated the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution. On October 31 the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) published appeals to the people and the Armed Forces, calling on them to fight the invader without mercy and devote all available resources to the war effort. As usual, an anniversary meeting of the Moscow Soviet, jointly with the Party and public organisations of the capital, was held on the eve of the holiday. However, this time it gathered not in the Bolshoi Theatre, but underground, in the Mayakovsky Square Metro station. Joseph Stalin, Chairman of the State Defence Committee, addressed the sitting, and on November 7 the traditional military parade took place as usual on Red Square, where Stalin again spoke to the nation. Addressing the troops, who were leaving for the firing lines directly after the parade,

he said: "The whole world watches you as the force capable of destroying the piratical hordes of German invaders. The enslaved peoples of Europe watch you ... as their liberators." He ended his speech with the words: "May the victorious banner of the great Lenin illumine your road. Under the banner of Lenin, forward to victory!"

Red Square looked solemnly majestic on that frosty day. The ancient walls of the Kremlin were powdered with snow. The parading troops marched past the Lenin Mausoleum in their hardy winter uniforms, promising the nation that they would halt the enemy. Infantry, cavalry, artillery and tanks passed by the stands. The cheers of the men and the measured tread of marching boots blended with the drone of airplane motors. To the whole country this was a harbinger of victory.

The distinctly stiffer resistance at the immediate approaches to Moscow, the firm confidence in victory expressed by the Party and Government, Stalin's report to the Moscow Soviet and his speech in Red Square, and the unprecedented parade in Moscow fortified the morale of the nation. In *Reminiscences and Reflections* Marshal G. K. Zhukov writes that this "played an enormous role in strengthening the morale of the Army and the Soviet people and was of tremendous international significance. Stalin's speeches showed that the Party and the Government were more than ever confident of the enemy's ultimate defeat". Newspapers carrying both Stalin's speeches and a report of the parade in Red Square on November 7 were sent to the areas occupied by the Germans. They infused Soviet people with new spirit, mobilised them for an uncompromising struggle against the nazi enslavers and gave them confidence in ultimate victory.

The Soviet Supreme Command had an accurate idea of enemy intentions and possibilities. It decided to strengthen the Western Front, which was confronting the main nazi strike force. Between November 1 and 15 several fresh infantry and cavalry divisions and brigades were deployed to that front, and most of its armies were given additional tanks, anti-tank artillery and Guards rocket launcher units. In the first fortnight of November reinforcements totalled 100,000 men, 300 tanks and 2,000 field guns. The 50th Army was transferred to the Western Front from the Bryansk Front* on November 10 and the 30th Army from the Kalinin Front on November 17.

The Soviet Command used the lull round Moscow to continue fortifying the defensive lines and complete the training of new formations. Ten newly-formed armies were deployed deep behind the fighting front along a line running through Vytegra, Rybinsk and farther along the Volga. The Party intensified its political work among the troops. Party meetings that summed up the previous operation were held in the various units. The situation on the Soviet-German front was discussed. These talks and mass meetings helped to boost morale. Delegations from Moscow and other cities, regions and republics toured the forward positions. The 316th Infantry Division was visited by delegations from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the 50th Army by a group from remote Yakutia, and the Air Force by a delegation of aviation workers.

The measures that were undertaken by the Party, the Government and GHQ greatly strengthened the position of the Soviet troops, but did not yet remove the threat to Moscow. Coming into possession of reports that

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* The Bryansk Front was dissolved on November 11; its units were turned over to the Southwestern Front.

the Germans were massing their main forces on the flanks of the Western Front, GHQ ordered that Front to counter enemy attempts to detour the capital from the northwest and south. The Kalinin and Southwestern fronts were ordered to engage in active resistance, pin down the enemy and prevent him from transferring troops to the area round Moscow. At the same time the Southern and Leningrad fronts and the Volkhov group were ordered to prepare for an offensive in the vicinity of Rostov and Tikhvin with the assignment of smashing the enemy's Rostov and Tikhvin groups and diverting his reserves from the Moscow sector.

In the meantime, Hitler exhorted his troops to settle the fate of Moscow.

Powerful strike forces on the flanks of the Western Front were built up for the second offensive on Moscow. Another strong force, consisting of the 3rd and 4th panzer groups and units of the 9th Army, advanced against Moscow from the northwest while the 2nd Panzer Army advanced on Tula and Kashira, and the 4th Army prepared to attack in the Zvenigorod, Kubinka, Naro-Fominsk, Podolsk and Serpukhov directions. For each thrust the nazis had an army corps with tank support. Fifty-one divisions, including thirteen panzer and seven motorised divisions, were assigned to capture Moscow, while the 9th and 2nd armies were deployed to cover the outside flanks of the assault forces.

By then the Western Front had more divisions than the enemy and three planes to every two nazi aircraft. However, the Red Army divisions were much weaker than those of the enemy, both in fire power and personnel. Moreover, the Germans had a nearly 2:1 advantage in men, 1.5:1 in tanks and 2.5:1 in field guns and mortars, this superiority being most pronounced in the areas of the main thrust. In the Klin direction, for example, against the 56 tanks and 210 field guns and mortars of the 30th Army the enemy had 300 tanks and 910 field guns and mortars, and in the Istra direction the 16th Army with its 150 tanks and 767 field guns and mortars faced an enemy force which had 400 tanks and 1,030 field guns and mortars; in the Kashira area, too, nearly 400 tanks and 810 field guns and mortars were poised against the 45 tanks and 315 field guns and mortars of the 50th Army.

The nazis were certain that Moscow would fall, and they put all their power into the second offensive which began on November 15-16. In face of heavy enemy pressure General Lelyushenko's 30th Army rolled back to the Volga, south of Kalinin, giving the enemy the possibility of pushing forward in the direction of Klin. Two days later the 2nd Panzer Army resumed its attack southeast of Tula, while the 4th Army mounted operations in the centre. The Soviet forces responded to every manoeuvre with a counter-manoeuvre and to every blow with a counter-blow. The nazis suffered heavy losses, advancing literally over the bodies of their own men.

The operations that were carried out in this period by the 316th Division show the character of the fighting, the fortitude of the Soviet troops and the losses suffered by the enemy. In the course of November 16 this division repulsed several furious attacks by enemy tanks that were trying to break through to Moscow along the Volokolamsk Highway. A tank-destroyer group of this division's 1075th Regiment performed its immortal feat at Dubosekovo junction. In the morning the regiment's positions were heavily bombed by enemy aircraft. German submachine-gunners attacked before the smoke from the explosions had dispersed. When this attack was repulsed the enemy hurled 20 tanks and a fresh group of submachine-gunners into the battle. V. K. Klochkov, company

political instructor, joined the men in the trenches, telling them that things were not very bad because there was less than one tank to a man. This attack was also hurled back with the enemy losing 14 tanks. Soon the roar of engines was heard again. Another 30 tanks were advancing on the Soviet positions. This was when political instructor Klochkov uttered the inspired words: "Russia is huge, but there is nowhere to retreat. Moscow is behind us!" This legendary battle raged for four hours. The enemy lost 18 tanks and a large number of troops, but was unable to gain any ground.

The other units of the 316th Division also gave a good account of themselves. The division was decorated with the Order of the Red Banner and converted into the 8th Guards Division. The men felt that to a large extent this was due to the capable leadership of General Ivan Panfilov, who was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The General did not live to see the complete rout of the Germans at Moscow. He died a hero's death on November 18 at the village of Gusenevo.

On November 23 the enemy outflanked the Soviet forces northeast and southwest of Klin, entering the city, where street fighting ensued. To avoid encirclement, the 16th Army withdrew from Klin and Solnechnogorsk. From there the main force of the 3rd and 4th panzer groups struck in the direction of Yakhroma and Krasnaya Polyana, approaching to within 27 kilometres of Moscow.

The situation deteriorated still further. On instructions from GHQ Colonel A. I. Lizyukov's operational group* was urgently sent to the vicinity of Khlebnikovo. Moreover, GHQ concentrated considerable reserves in the region south of the Iksha River and placed them at the disposal of the Moscow Defence Zone (commander—General P. A. Artyomov; member of the Military Council—K. F. Telegin). General V. I. Kuznetsov's 1st Strike Army from the GHQ Reserve manned the bank of the Moscow-Volga Canal between the town of Dmitrov and the Iksha Storage Lake. Two divisions, two tank brigades and two anti-tank regiments were deployed in the Kryukovo area. These reserves reinforced the capital's northwestern approaches.

The main forces of this army were positioned along the eastern bank of the canal by November 28. In the night, however, the enemy crossed the canal over the ice, captured a bridge and several villages. Orders arrived to eliminate the enemy bridgehead, and were carried out on the following night. Vigorous action by the 1st Strike and 20th armies at Yakhroma and Krasnaya Polyana helped the 16th and 30th armies to halt the enemy on the right wing of the Western Front. The Germans were driven out of several villages and compelled to go on the defensive.

In the latter half of November a dangerous situation arose near Tula. On November 18, breaching the 50th Army's line, the 2nd Panzer Army wheeled from the southeast on Kashira and Kolomna, making a detour round Tula. On the following day the Germans captured Dedilovo and on November 22 Stalinogorsk (Novomoskovsk). However, the German Command did not have a large enough force for such a thrust: its troops were pinned down by fierce Red Army resistance at Tula, Venev and elsewhere. As a result, only one panzer division attacked Kashira. On November 25 its advance guard broke through to the southern outskirts of the town but

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* On November 29 Lizyukov's group, reinforced by reserve troops, was reconstituted into the 20th Army.

was met with annihilating fire from Major A. P. Smirnov's anti-aircraft gunners.

On the same day, General P. A. Belov's 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and Colonel A. L. Getman's 112th Tank Division began concentrating at Kashira, hitting back hard at the enemy on November 27 and driving him to Mordves.

After this setback part of the 2nd Panzer Army tried outflanking Tula from the northeast. However, a sudden counter-attack from Laptevo by the 49th and 50th armies pushed the Germans back to their starting positions. Guderian called a halt to the offensive and ordered the main forces to withdraw to the railway line Tula-Uzlovaya and the Don River.

The hour of decision had come. Soviet troops faced the historic task of defeating the enemy. A *Pravda* editorial on November 27 was headlined: "The Beginning of the Enemy's End Must Be at Moscow."

Day and night, trainloads of arms and ammunition arrived in the capital from the east. Divisions and brigades from the Urals, Siberia and the Soviet Far East streamed to Moscow. Blockaded and starving Leningrad also helped Moscow, its snipers picking off dozens of nazis daily and its workers making arms, despite the siege, and sending part of them to the capital. In the half-empty shops of their evacuated plants, the people of Tula repaired for the troops 529 machine-guns, 66 tanks and 70 field guns. The same could be said of the entire country. The Muscovites, two million of whom had been evacuated, acquitted themselves splendidly. The premises of the 210 big factories shifted to safer places were used for war production, supplying the Western Front and, to a considerable extent, also the Kalinin and Southwestern fronts. The heroic labour of the Muscovites epitomised the unity of the nation and Army, the source of strength of the Soviet Armed Forces.

The enemy, halted at Moscow's northern and southern approaches, mounted an assault in the centre of the Western Front sector. He broke through north of Naro-Fominsk on December 1, but was soon stopped by the 5th Army. Losing nearly half their tanks, the Germans turned east, heading for Golitsyno station, where they were met by the 33rd and 5th armies. The enemy attempt to lunge into Moscow was thus repulsed. On December 4 the 33rd and 5th fought fiercely against the attacking enemy and restored the front along the Nara River.

That was the last German assault on Moscow. In a book entitled *Offensive on the Russian Capital,* published in 1965, former Chief of Staff of the German 3rd Panzer Group General C. Wagener noted that "on December 5 the troops in all the sectors of the Front stopped offensive operations independently, without orders from above". The Soviet Armed Forces had won the defensive battle. German shock forces had been heavily bled and lost the ability to continue the offensive. Between November 16 and December 5 the enemy near Moscow lost 55,000 men killed and more than 100,000 wounded and frost-bitten. Altogether, 777 tanks, 297 field guns and mortars and 244 machine-guns were put out of action, and as many as 1,500 aircraft were either shot down in air battles or destroyed on the ground.

Artillery was the main weapon against enemy tanks. The 16th Army's artillery crews knocked out 65 tanks in the period from November 16 to 20. Over Moscow the Soviet Air Force gained supremacy for the first time, giving the land forces reliable cover. A major contribution to Moscow's defence was made by General D. A. Zhuravlev's 1st Air Defence Corps and the 6th Fighter Corps under Colonel I. D. Klimov. Pilot

V. V. Talalikhin made history when he rammed an enemy aircraft in a night battle, while pilot A. N. Katrich was the first to ram an enemy plane at a high altitude.

The counter-offensives southeast of Leningrad and in the Rostov area, started at the most crucial period, were a big help for the defensive battle, preventing the enemy from bringing reinforcements to the Moscow theatre. General N. K. Klykov's 52nd Army and General K. A. Meretskov's 4th Army frustrated the German plan of throwing a second ring round Leningrad. Enemy movements in the area round Volkhov, Malaya Vishera and Tikhvin ceased and his assault force was hemmed in from three sides.

At the beginning of December the Soviet offensive southeast of Leningrad was joined by General I. I. Fedyuninsky's 54th Army. In the meantime, a Southern Front counter-offensive launched by the 37th Army under General A. I. Lopatin, part of the 18th Army under General V. Y. Kolpakchi (command of this army was assumed by General F. V. Kamkov on November 25) and the 9th Army under General F. M. Kharitonov culminated in a nazi defeat at Rostov and the city's liberation on November 29. The badly mauled enemy units rolled back to the Mius River. The German plan of a breakthrough to the Caucasus was frustrated by the troops of the Southern Front.

The German 11th Army's attempt to capture Sevastopol in November failed, too.

The victory at Rostov and the heroic defence of Sevastopol, where the German 11th Army was pinned down, had immense political and military repercussions. These operations strengthened the Soviet positions along the entire southern wing of the Soviet-German front and powerfully influenced the Red Army's summer-autumn campaign.

The campaign of the summer and autumn of 1941 lasted five and a half months. Furious fighting in which the Soviet troops were at a disadvantage raged on land, in the air and at sea. The enemy succeeded in besieging Leningrad, reaching the approaches to Moscow and occupying Kharkov, a considerable part of the Donets Basin and almost the whole of the Crimea. But the nazis' stake on a blitzkrieg came to nothing. The strategic initiative began to pass to the Soviet Armed Forces.

The failure of the two German offensives against Moscow was the major military development in 1941. Hitler's armies, which had struck terror into the European governments and peoples, were halted at the approaches to the Soviet capital when many military experts and politicians abroad thought its fall inevitable. The German Command was caught off balance. "Now it was suddenly realised even at Hitler's Headquarters," wrote nazi general G. Blumentritt, ex-Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, "that the war in the East was in fact only beginning." The setbacks at Moscow dampened the self-confidence of a great many German troops, from generals to rank-and-file soldiers.

The Red Army displayed tenacity, stamina and mass heroism. The bravery shown by all was supreme. The whole country paid tribute to the unexampled courage of the heroic Panfilovites, the civil guard divisions and the seamen's brigades. Many units of the ground forces and three air regiments of the Western Front had the title "Guards" added to their name. The medal "For the Defence of Moscow", awarded to over one million defenders of the capital, was instituted in 1944, and on the 20th anniversary of Victory Day Moscow was accorded the title Hero City and awarded the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star medal.

2. RED ARMY COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AT MOSCOW

At the end of November and in the beginning of December fierce fighting for strategic initiative was in progress in the vicinity of Moscow. Though the enemy had not yet gone on the defensive, he was no longer in a position to attack. The German forces needed a respite. By that time the balance of strength had changed along the entire Soviet-German front. On December 1 the Soviet armies in the field had nearly 4,200,000 effectives, up to 22,000 field guns and mortars, 580 rocket launchers, 1,730 tanks (30 per cent of which were new KV and T-34 tanks) and 2,495 aircraft (of which 57.3 per cent were new types). The German and satellite armies operating on the Soviet-German front had close to 5,000,000 effectives, 26,800 field guns and mortars, nearly 1,500 tanks and up to 2,500 aircraft. Consequently, the manpower ratio was all that remained practically unchanged compared with the period when the general offensive on Moscow was started. In October the enemy had a 2:1 superiority in field guns, but now this was reduced to only 1.2:1, while the Red Army gained a 1.2:1 advantage in tanks.

The general situation had changed. The Soviet successes at Moscow, Tikhvin and Rostov improved morale. It was clear that the Red Army would soon launch a counter-offensive from Moscow.

In planning the winter campaign the General Staff and GHQ considered that it was first necessary to remove the threat overhanging Moscow, restore communication with Leningrad and block the enemy's road to the Caucasus. To achieve these objectives the Red Army had first to destroy the enemy's strike groups threatening Moscow with encirclement and operating in the south and around Leningrad.

The main thrust was to be made in a westerly direction by the Kalinin, Western and Southwestern fronts, whose commanders had received GHQ orders to prepare for the offensive when the defensive fighting was in its closing stages. The military councils of the Western and Southwestern fronts submitted their considerations and these were subsequently used as the basis for the GHQ plan. The destruction of the enemy strike group (Map 3) was the immediate aim of the counter-offensive near Moscow. The Kalinin Front was to hit the 9th Army, liberate the city of Kalinin, crash through to the rear of the enemy Klin group and help the Western Front destroy that group. The latter front had the task of routing the enemy strike groups northwest and south of Moscow. The Southwestern Front was to tackle the Germans at Yelets and thereby help the Western Front's left wing destroy the enemy at Tula. The counter-offensive was to be started by the Kalinin Front on December 5 and it was to be joined by the Western and Southwestern fronts on the next day.

The counter-offensive was launched under extremely difficult conditions. Industrial output was at its lowest level for the entire period of the war. The troops had experienced the bitterness of setbacks in the battles of the preceding summer-autumn campaign. In the course of the preparations for the counter-offensive the Party, the Government, GHQ, the General Staff, the front commands and the political bodies conducted truly gigantic work in order to mobilise the maximum forces and means and direct them to the decisive sectors of the front and thereby bring about a fundamental improvement of morale among the troops.

At the close of November and the beginning of December reinforcements kept arriving. In addition to three armies (1st Strike, 20th and 10th), the Western Front was strengthened with nine infantry and

two cavalry divisions, and eight infantry and six tank brigades. The Kalinin Front and the right wing of the Southwestern Front were also reinforced. The air strength of the committed fronts was augmented with the air units of the Moscow Military District, the 6th Air Defence Fighter Corps and long-range bomber units of the High Command. As a result, the balance of strength somewhat changed in the Western sector. At the beginning of December the Red Army units operating in the vicinity of Moscow had almost 720,000 effectives,* 5,900 field guns and mortars, 415 rocket launchers, 670 tanks (including 205 heavy and medium tanks) and 760 aircraft (590 of which were of new design). The Germans had 800,000 effectives, nearly 10,400 field guns and mortars, 1,000 tanks and more than 600 aircraft. In other words, they retained their manpower, artillery and tank superiority, but yielded air superiority to the Red Army. The Soviet Command massed the bulk of its forces in the directions of the main thrusts, but due to insufficient strength it could not envisage encircling and destroying large enemy forces or achieving considerable advances in depth.

On the eve of the counter-offensive the Military Council of the Western Front called on the officers and men to co-ordinate their actions in battle and show the enemy no mercy. Morale was boosted, and every soldier felt responsible for the destiny of his Motherland and was confident that the enemy could be dealt a crushing blow.

The counter-offensive of the Kalinin Front and of the right wing of the Western Front began on December 5-6, before their strength had been fully deployed, along a sector more than 200 kilometres long. The fighting was fierce from the outset. General I. I. Maslennikov's 29th Army attacked the enemy southwest of Kalinin and, crossing the ice-bound Volga, wedged into the enemy defences to a depth of 1-1.5 kilometres. After three days of heavy fighting General V. A. Yushkevich's 31st Army tore through the German line along the Volga south of Kalinin, and straddled the Kalinin-Moscow railway towards the evening of December 9. The 30th Army, reinforced shortly before with six divisions, attacked the enemy in the morning of December 6, tore his defences to shreds and reached the approaches of Klin on December 9. Units of the 1st Strike and 20th armies liberated Yakhroma, Bely Rast and Krasnaya Polyana. After a fierce two-day battle, the 16th Army recaptured the town and railway station of Kryukovo, which the enemy had turned into a stronghold. The left flank pushed the German troops back to the Istra line, where they fought with the ferocity of doomed men. Yet they could not match the courage and determination of the Soviet troops. Despite the deep snow, which impeded manoeuvring, the latter pressed the enemy westward yard by yard.

A unit of the 1319th Infantry Regiment, 185th Division, was ordered to clear the enemy out of the village of Ryabinki, but despite repeated assaults the village remained in enemy hands. The unit's advance was obstructed by a machine-gun in a pillbox. Sergeant V. V. Vasilkovsky made an attempt to destroy the nest with a handgrenade. When this failed he rushed towards the pillbox and closed the firing slit with his own body. This act of selfless devotion was witnessed by all the men of the unit, who charged and gained possession of the village. Sergeant Vasilkovsky was posthumously decorated with the Order of Lenin.

The Soviet offensive northeast of Tula and in the Yelets area got off to

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* The figures for the 126th, 173rd and 239th infantry divisions are not available.

a good start as well. The assault forces of the 49th and 50th armies aimed strong blows at the 2nd Panzer Army from the northwest, the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps from the north and General F. I. Golikov's 10th Army from the east. On December 7 the 10th Army liberated Mikhailov and Serebryaniye Prudy, compelling the enemy tanks to roll back to the Upa River.

The withdrawal was spotted. The Soviet Command ordered the 50th Army to direct its thrust southward, hitting at Shchekino, and the 10th Army to advance on Bogoroditsk. Advancing Soviet troops contacted the enemy on December 10, contesting Yepifan and Stalinogorsk. The nazis resisted bitterly and units of the 2nd Panzer Army succeeded in breaking out of a pocket east of Tula, abandoning many weapons. At Yelets, the Soviet 13th Army and General F. Y. Kostenko's task force smashed the German 34th Army Corps and liberated the town on December 9. General Halder noted in his diary on December 12 that the situation in the German 2nd Army's zone was critical and that troop control had been lost.

The Soviet counter-offensive compelled the enemy to abandon a number of important towns. As the immediate result, Hitler issued an order on December 8 for the troops to go on the defensive along the entire Soviet-German front. Army Group Centre was instructed to hold areas of importance at all costs. The nazi Command hoped that after its losses were replaced, it would repulse the Red Army counter-offensive. But its hopes were dispelled.

Kalinin Front units continued their advance northwest and south of Kalinin. Slow but sure progress was made by units of the Western Front. Mobile tank and cavalry groups were formed for pursuit. On December 13, units of the 29th and 31st armies (Kalinin Front) cut the enemy's avenue of retreat from Kalinin. The German troops in the city were called on to surrender. They turned the offer down. The battle began on December 15. On the following day the ancient Russian town, now a regional capital, was cleared of the invaders. The enemy lost more than 10,000 officers and men killed, and a considerable amount of equipment. When the troops entered Kalinin they were welcomed by thousands of women, children and old men, who embraced and warmly thanked them for liberating them from nazi oppression.

On the right wing of the Western Front units of the 20th Army recaptured Solnechnogorsk on December 12. The enemy put up a stiff resistance along the Istra Storage Lake where powerful fortifications had been erected. The 16th Army commander decided to envelop the storage lake, forming infantry, tank and cavalry units into two mobile groups under Generals F. T. Remizov and M. Y. Katukov. On December 11 Soviet troops liberated the town of Istra. On the next day the mobile groups moved along the northern and southern shores of the lake compelling the enemy to withdraw westwards. On December 15, the 30th Army, supported by the 1st Strike Army, relieved Klin, smashing one panzer and two motorised divisions.

The armies of the Western Front's left flank made equally good progress. On December 11, units of the 10th Army and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps drove the Germans out of Stalinogorsk and three days later the 50th Army ousted them from Yasnaya Polyana. After a heavy three-day battle Soviet troops liberated the mining town of Shchekino near Moscow on December 17. The enemy's route of flight was marked by thousands of abandoned and smashed vehicles.

Pursuing the enemy, the troops saw with their own eyes what Hitler's

"new order" meant for the people. The home of composer Pyotr Chaikovsky was destroyed in Klin. The town of Istra was almost entirely levelled with the ground. Novy Iyerusalim Monastery, an architectural treasure built in 1654, had been blown up. The Lev Tolstoi Museum at Yasnaya Polyana was plundered and the great writer's tomb desecrated.

Reports about the initial results of the counter-offensive appeared in the press on December 13. The heartening news was hailed joyfully at home and throughout the world.

To make the most of the favourable situation in the Western direction, GHQ ordered a build-up of the offensive. The Kalinin Front was instructed to develop its success towards Rzhev. The 30th Army (Western Front) and the 39th Army (GHQ Reserve) were incorporated in it to give it more muscle. The Western Front had orders to increase pressure on the retreating enemy.

To secure fuller operational control, the 61st, 3rd and 13th armies (Southwestern Front) were reformed into the independent Bryansk Front under General Y. T. Cherevichenko (with Corps Commissar A. F. Kolobyakov as member of the Front Military Council). The new Front was to assist the Western Front in smashing the southern wing of Army Group Centre.

Pressure north and south of Moscow caused the enemy to retire hastily without High Command orders, creating alarm and confusion at the German Headquarters. The unexpected Soviet counter-offensive reminded the nazis of the fate suffered by Napoleon's armies, which dissolved into non-existence in the vast expanses of Russia. To save the situation, the nazis took savage steps to tighten discipline and restore order. The infuriated Hitler dismissed many commanders, including Guderian. On December 16, he ordered the Army Group Centre Command "to compel the troops to defend their positions with fanatical tenacity, disregarding the enemy breaking through on the flanks and into the rear of our Army". He hoped to retain possession of important communication lines west of Moscow and the highway junctions at Rzhev, Vyazma, Yukhnov, Sukhinichi, Kaluga and Bryansk, where large German Army depots were situated. The nazis turned these towns into strong fortified posts, hoping to stem the Red Army.

But the nazis were denied the chance of carrying out their designs in full. The Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts continued to develop their counter-offensive. To prevent the enemy from digging in along new lines, mobile groups were formed of tank, cavalry and infantry units.

By January 7, 1942, Kalinin Front units reached the Volga at Rzhev. Skirting the town from the west and north, they formed a pincer round the main forces of Army Group Centre, defeating six German divisions and capturing 956 field guns and mortars, 153 tanks, 25 aircraft, 3,250 motor vehicles, 844 machine-guns and large quantities of other equipment. The badly battered German 9th Army retreated across the Volga.

The right wing of the Western Front made rapid headway towards Volokolamsk and recaptured the city on December 20 after two days of heavy fighting. The invaders had no time to conceal the traces of their crimes. In one of the streets the liberating troops saw gallows with eight bodies, those of the Moscow Komsomol members K. F. Pakhomov, N. A. Galochkin, P. V. Kiryakov, V. V. Ordinartsev and N. S. Kagan of the Serp i Molot Factory, I. A. Manenkov of the Moskabel Factory and A. V. Gribkova and Y. Y. Poltavskaya, both of them girl students of the Kalinin School of Applied Arts in Moscow. They had been sent behind the enemy lines on November 4 to establish contact with the partisans,

were captured by the nazis and met their death courageously. All were posthumously decorated with the Order of Lenin.

The requisites for an assault on Gzhatsk were created when Soviet troops gained the rivers Lama and Ruza and liberated Volokolamsk. The 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps tried to force the Ruza on the march, but found enemy defences there very strong. The men dismounted and fought their way through the fortifications. Their popular commander, General L. M. Dovator, was killed in the battle. Posthumously, he was created Hero of the Soviet Union. Mobile groups under Generals M. Y. Katukov and F. T. Remizov, as well as infantry divisions of the 20th and 16th armies failed in their attempt to cross the Lama and Ruza and they came to a standstill by December 25. The Western Front Command ordered methodical preparations for breaching the enemy's fortified zone. This marked the end of the Front's offensive on the right wing. The results of the offensive were impressive: the main forces of the 3rd and 4th panzer groups had been routed, the surviving infantry units flung back 90-100 kilometres, the important Kalinin-Moscow Highway cleared and the threat to the capital from the northwest considerably relieved.

The armies in the central sector of the Western Front assumed the offensive on December 18. Lacking sufficient fire power, it took them eight days to breach the enemy line along the Nara River. Breaking down enemy resistance, the advancing troops liberated Naro-Fominsk on December 26 and Maloyaroslavets and Borovsk a few days later. Also engaged in the battle for the two towns was Colonel G. G. Paegle's Latvian 201st Infantry Division, which put more than 7,000 enemy men and officers out of action; in the Borovsk area alone they captured 22 field guns and mortars and other war materiel.

After bloody fighting on the left wing of the Western Front, Soviet troops regained possession of Kaluga on December 30, then liberated the towns of Belev, Meshchovsk, Serpeisk and Mosalsk. The Bryansk Front was also successful, its armies reaching the Belev-Verkhovye line by the end of December.

The counter-offensive ended early in January 1942. The Kalinin, Western and Southwestern (Bryansk from December 18) fronts fulfilled their mission despite deep snow and bitter cold. The fronts successfully fulfilled the first large-scale strategic offensive operation in the Great Patriotic War. Thirty-eight German divisions were defeated in the Battle of Moscow, with the panzer armies, cast by the nazi Command for decisive roles, suffering particularly heavy losses.

Former nazi generals now admit that the Soviet strikes at Moscow had driven their armies to the brink of disaster. General Siegfried Westphal, for example, confessed reluctantly that "the German Army, hitherto regarded as invincible, was within an ace of annihilation".

The Soviet troops liberated more than 11,000 towns and villages, including the regional centres of Kalinin and Kaluga, and eliminated the danger of encirclement facing Tula. The enemy was driven back 100-250 kilometres from Moscow. The immediate threat to the capital was lifted.

The impact of the Soviet victory, politically as well as militarily, was immense. It marked a decisive turn of the hostilities in favour of the Soviet Union and influenced the further course of the Second World War.

A factor of vital importance in the defence of the Soviet capital and the subsequent defeat of the German forces attacking it was that the State Defence Committee, the Party Central Committee, the Government, General Headquarters and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief J. V. Stalin remained in Moscow and from there directed the armed

struggle at the firing lines and the war effort in the rear. This is underscored by Marshal G. K. Zhukov, who writes in his reminiscences: "Stalin remained in Moscow organising the forces and means for the defeat of the enemy. One must do him justice—he headed the State Defence Committee and helped by the top echelons of the people's commissariats performed colossal work mobilising the necessary strategic reserves and material means. By his stern exactingness he achieved, one might say, almost the impossible."

While the counter-offensive at Moscow was at its height, operations were also mounted southeast of Leningrad and in the Crimea (Map 1). General Headquarters formed the Volkhov Front on December 17 to secure better control of the four armies operating east of the Volkhov River, with General K. A. Meretskov in command (A. I. Zaporozhets—member of the Military Council). The new Front was to co-operate with the Leningrad Front in lifting the blockade of Leningrad.

By the end of December the Volkhov Front pressed the enemy back to the Volkhov and seized several bridgeheads on the western bank of the river, liberating hundreds of inhabited localities, including the towns of Bolshaya Vishera, Tikhvin and Budogoshch. However, the nazi siege of Leningrad continued, although the original German plan of totally isolating it failed.

On December 17 while the fighting at Moscow and Leningrad was raging, the Germans mounted a second attack on Sevastopol. Seven infantry divisions and two mountain brigades were thrown against the city. Enemy advance units were brought to a halt at the main line of defence. They failed to crush the resistance of the embattled 79th Marine Brigade, the 25th Chapayev, 95th Infantry and 40th Cavalry divisions and the crews of the shore batteries, supported by the ships and aircraft of the Black Sea Fleet.

The second enemy assault on Sevastopol was repelled at the end of December. In the northern sector, it is true, the nazis advanced some 7-10 kilometres, but even this partial success cost them dearly. The Kerch-Feodosia landing operation (Map 1), which began on December 26, helped considerably to frustrate the attack. The main purpose of the landing was to recapture Kerch Peninsula and gain a springboard for liberating the Crimea. Engaged in this first large-scale landing operation were the 51st and 44th armies of the Transcaucasian Front under General D. T. Kozlov (member of the Military Council—F. A. Shamanin), the Black Sea Fleet, and the Azov Naval Flotilla under Admiral S. G. Gorshkov.

The landing was made in extremely complicated conditions. A storm raged at sea. A margin of ice had formed along the shore, preventing the vessels from approaching. The Black Sea Fleet and the Azov Naval Flotilla had no special landing vessels for heavy vehicles or for personnel. Transports and fishing boats had to be used instead. Nonetheless, they went ahead with the operation. A squadron of warships (the cruisers *Krasny Kavkaz* and *Krasny Krym*, the frigate *Kharkov*, seven destroyers, six mine-sweepers, 17 motor-boats and 14 transports), under Captain 1st Rank N. Y. Basisty, landed the main force of General A. N. Pervushin's 44th Army in the port of Feodosia. The landing force liberated the city and advanced northward.

Fearing encirclement, the German forces drew away from the shore, abandoning Kerch on December 30. The 44th Army had acted too slowly to prevent the Germans from escaping.

Although the objectives of the landing had not been fully achieved, the Red Army's position in the southern sector of the Soviet-German front

improved visibly. General Manstein, commander of the German 11th Army, thought at that time that the fate of his troops "hung by a thread".

The rout of the Germans at Moscow and the Red Army's successes at Rostov and Tikhvin boosted the people's morale. People saw the might of their Army, which had proved its ability to hammer and defeat a strong enemy. They gained added confidence in the organisational genius of the Leninist Communist Party, which had shouldered the responsibility for the country's future.

The economic rehabilitation of liberated territory was on the order of the day. The damage was staggering. In Moscow Region alone, the Germans had made inoperative 374 enterprises, more than 630 railway installations and the mines of the Moscow coal basin; they levelled with the ground 640 villages, partially destroyed another 1,640, and inflicted untold damage on the collective farms. The estimated losses to Moscow Region aggregated about 30,000 million rubles.

On the instructions of the Party Central Committee, the Party organisations of Moscow, Tula and Kalinin rallied the people to restore the war-ravaged collective and state farms, factories, cultural institutions, schools and dwellings. The Soviet Government rendered the regional authorities extensive assistance.

Territory liberated in December 1941 was only a fraction of what the nazis had overrun. The main objective, therefore, was to step up the war effort and make the most of the favourable situation.

3. RED ARMY GENERAL OFFENSIVE, WINTER 1942

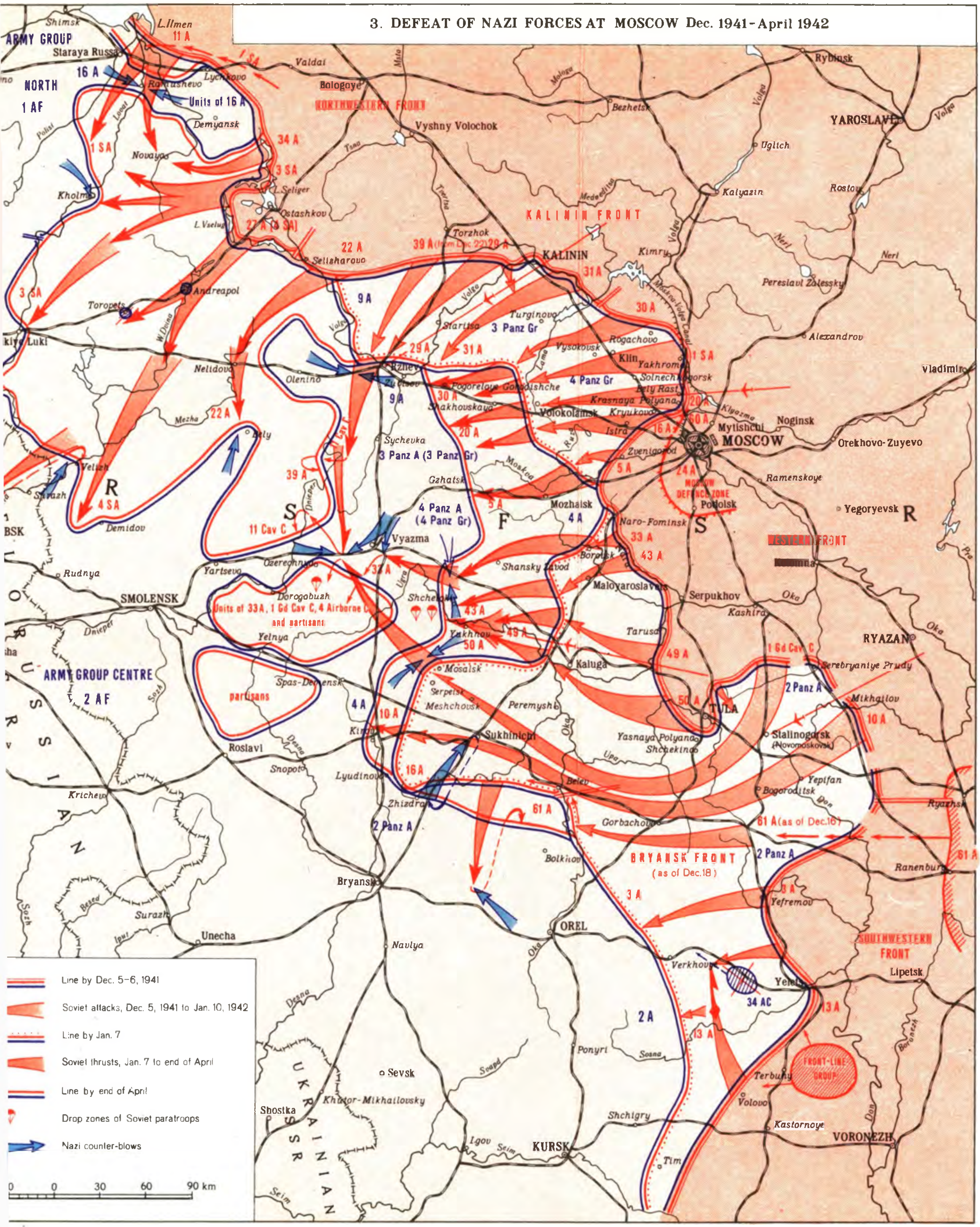
Each day brought news of Red Army victories. Offensive operations became more intensive. Morale ran high. Spurred by the successes of the Soviet fighting forces, the people increased production. In December the industrial curve, which had turned downward during the tragic early months of the war, stopped dropping.

Assessing the situation at the front and the state of the country at the beginning of 1942, GHQ decided to develop an offensive in three strategic directions. The Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, and the right wing of the Northwestern Front supported by the Baltic Fleet were to crush Army Group North and lift the siege of Leningrad. The Kalinin and Western fronts were to co-operate with the adjoining armies of the Northwestern and Bryansk fronts in encircling and smashing the main forces of Army Group Centre. In the meantime, the Southern and Southwestern fronts were ordered to attack Army Group South and liberate the Donets Basin, while the Caucasian Front and the Black Sea Fleet would clear the Crimea.

Very large strength was needed to achieve the set aims. Yet the balance of strength on January 1, 1942, had almost broken even. Nor had the Red Army built up any decisive advantage in the directions of the planned offensive, with personnel and equipment fairly evenly spread along the entire front. In the Western direction, for example, the balance of strength in infantry and artillery was 1:1; in tanks alone the Soviet forces had a 1.3:1 superiority. In the Southwestern direction, meanwhile, the enemy still had an advantage in artillery, especially in anti-tank guns.

In the winter of 1942 the German Command counted on holding its positions and gaining time in which to build up fresh reserves for a large-scale offensive in the spring of 1942. Hitler ordered his generals to fight "to the last soldier".

3. DEFEAT OF NAZI FORCES AT MOSCOW Dec. 1941-April 1942



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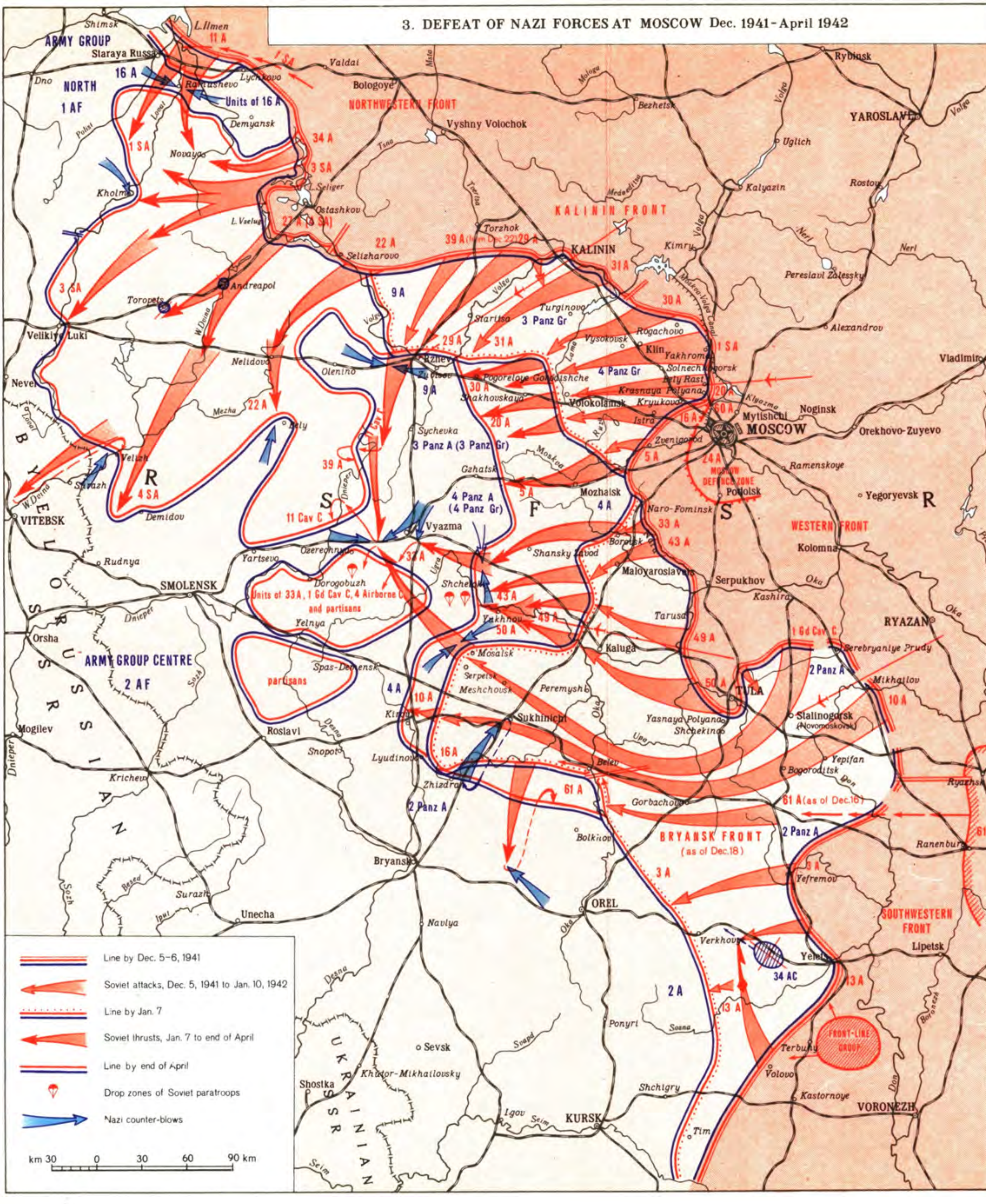

In the Northwestern direction, the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts fought an offensive engagement through January and April against the main forces of the German 18th Army, aiming to lift the enemy blockade of Leningrad. Though the enemy suffered appalling losses in men and arms, that mission was not fulfilled.

Apart from the above-mentioned balance of strength and the lack of strong assault forces in the main directions, the Red Army also experienced a shortage of ammunition, especially in the Leningrad Front sector. The industry of the beleaguered city could not supply as much as was needed. Shipments by the military motor road across the Lake Ladoga ice relieved an acute want to some extent, but it could carry so much traffic and no more.

In the Staraya Russa direction the Northwestern Front armies inflicted a defeat on the German 16th Army, smashing three and encircling seven of its divisions at Demyansk. But the mopping-up operation went too slowly. The nazi Command took advantage of this to deploy fresh forces, and in the latter half of April assaults from outside and inside the pocket breached the Soviet lines.

In the meantime, the fighting in the Western direction (Map 3) rose to terrific intensity. Between January and April 1942 the armies of the Kalinin and Western fronts, supported by the left wing of the Northwestern and the right wing of the Bryansk fronts, conducted offensive operations against Army Group Centre. Airborne troops were used extensively by the Western Front. Between January 18 and 22 two battalions of the 201st Airborne Brigade, and the 250th Infantry Regiment, totalling more than 1,640 men, were dropped 40 kilometres south of Vyazma near Zhelanye. By the end of the month the 8th Brigade of the 4th Airborne Corps, numbering more than 2,000 men, was airlifted to Ozerechnya. Advancing troops flung back the enemy 250 kilometres in the Vitebsk direction, 80-100 kilometres in the Gzhatsk and Yukhnov direction, and nearly 150 kilometres towards Roslavl. The 10th, 16th and 61st armies reached the Mosalsk-Kirov-Ludinovo-Belev line and straddled the Vyazma-Bryansk railway.

Flanking the left wing of Army Group Centre from north and west, Soviet troops created a threat for its main forces and interrupted its cooperation with Army Group North. The Germans sent in reinforcements —12 infantry divisions and two cover brigades—halting the Soviet advance. The German group escaped annihilation and retained possession of Rzhev, Gzhatsk and Vyazma. As a result, the Western and Kalinin fronts failed to make the planned contact in the Vyazma area.

All the same, the enemy was in great difficulties. Considerable forces of the Western and Kalinin fronts and strong partisan detachments operated in his rear. Nearly 29 enemy divisions were virtually encircled at Olenino, Rzhev, Sychevka and Yukhnov.

All in all, 16 German divisions and one brigade were smashed in the Western direction. According to nazi general Blumentritt, the 4th Army lost 97,000 officers and men or nearly half its strength, between January and March 1942. The German 9th Army suffered still heavier casualties. This caused consternation in the enemy camp. "Fear for their lives gripped not only part of the troops but also many members of the command," Blumentritt recalled. "The moral crisis in the ranks was augmented by the moral crisis among the commanders."

Advancing southwestward in the winter of 1942, the Bryansk Front fought in the Orel direction, the Southwestern towards Kharkov and the Southern towards Dnepropetrovsk (Map 3). In January-March, however,

no marked progress was made anywhere except in the Balakleya-Krasny Liman sector, where the adjoining wings of the Southwestern and Southern fronts breached the enemy lines in the latter half of January. Three cavalry corps sent into the breach enabled the Soviet troops to drive a 90-kilometre-deep wedge into the German positions towards the end of January and capture a large area in the Izyum-Lozovaya-Barvenkovo triangle. It was possible now to envelop the Kharkov and Donets Basin enemy groups. But the Soviet forces did not develop the offensive because the nazi Command moved in units of the 1st Panzer Army from the south and reinforced Army Group South by 16 divisions. The situation was stabilised by February.

The Caucasian Front fought heavy battles on the Kerch Peninsula in January 1942, and abandoned Feodosia. In February-April, the Crimean Front* made several attempts to mount an offensive and clear the Crimea, but none of these attempts were successful. This affected its position and delayed the liberation of the peninsula.

Thus, as a result of the Soviet general offensive in the winter of 1941-42, none of the main German groups were fully crushed, and the operations conducted for this purpose in all the main strategic directions were uncompleted.

The simultaneous offensive in all the key directions fragmented the strategic reserves. The nine armies in the GHQ Reserve were equally distributed among the fronts. Additional forces, which were non-existent, were needed to complete the encirclement and liquidation of the main forces of the enemy central group. Another vital factor was that the Soviet Command did not as yet have large motorised and tank formations or the necessary quantity of equipment and ammunition.

Hitler's Army was still strong. Suffice it to say, that on the Soviet-German front at the beginning of 1942 the Germans had 182 divisions, including 19 panzer and 15 motorised divisions, and 25 brigades. To smash this formidable host, the Red Army needed a considerable numerical advantage, which it lacked.

The reason for the incomplete success of the offensive in the winter of 1941-42 was that the Soviet Command did not yet have the experience of conducting large-scale strategic offensives. However, it must be emphasised that this offensive was conducted under difficult winter conditions and that the strength of both sides was almost equal. This convincingly demonstrates that Soviet military science had made enormous headway. The defensive fighting and operations, the counter-assaults, the counter-offensives and, finally, the general offensive show that Soviet commanders of all ranks mastered the experience of combat.

The Red Army's winter offensive yielded very substantial results. The German war machine experienced its first grave crisis from which it never recovered. "For the German Command," recalls Kurt von Tippelskirch, "the outcome of that winter had, in the long run, the most disastrous consequences." And British war historian General Fuller wrote that after its defeat in the winter of 1942 the German Army "never recovered the vigour it lost, and it was no longer the invincible army".

The Red Army's victories were facilitated by the heroic resistance behind the enemy lines. By the autumn of 1941 partisan detachments and sabotage groups were operating nearly everywhere in nazi-occupied territory, and particularly in the occupied parts of the Russian Federation,

* On January 28, 1942, units of the Caucasian Front operating in the Crimea were formed into the Crimean Front under General D. T. Kozlov.

in Byelorussia, the Ukraine and the Crimea. Towards the end of 1941 Kalinin, Smolensk, Moscow and Orel regions alone had more than 180 partisan detachments. They ambushed enemy columns, destroyed vehicles, food and ammunition transports, and blew up ammunition and fuel dumps, bridges and trains, and disrupted enemy communications. Also, they brought to justice traitors.

The partisans in Orel Region were in almost full control of the railway lines and roads from Bryansk to Orel, Sukhinichi, Kirov, Gomel, Novgorod-Seversky and Kursk. Underground groups under K. S. Zaslonov operated with great skill in the Orsha area. Between November 1941 and February 1942 they put out of action more than 200 locomotives, this being only one of the items on the list of their exploits. The partisans in Kalinin, Moscow and Tula regions helped defend the capital at its approaches, fighting along roads behind the enemy lines and even attacking and destroying enemy garrisons.

In the winter of 1941-42 the partisans cleared large areas, establishing "partisan territories" in Leningrad, Kalinin, Smolensk and Orel regions, in Byelorussia, and elsewhere. They re-established Soviet power and put back into operation collective farms, schools and hospitals. Among other things, partisans and farmers of the partisan territory near Leningrad sent a food convoy of 223 carts through the lines into beleaguered Leningrad in March.

In the rear of Army Group Centre partisans were especially active. In the winter of 1941-42 they derailed 224 trains, blew up some 650 bridges and 1,850 vehicles, and cleared areas larger than those of Belgium, Holland and Denmark combined.

The scale and importance of the partisan operations were lamented by Army Group Centre commander Günther von Kluge. In his report to the Chief of the General Staff on February 24, 1942, he wrote:

"Until now the partisans confined themselves to attacking rear communications, individual vehicles and barracks. At present, however, there is a tendency to form closeknit units which, under the vigorous command of Russian officers, well armed and organised, are trying to assume control over definite territory and conduct operations from there on a larger scale. Due to this, the initiative at many points is passing to the enemy; wherever he feels strong enough, he controls large areas, wiping out the German administration and preventing our economic activity."

4. FIRST MAJOR NAZI DEFEAT

The winter offensive of the Red Army in 1941-42, involving nine fronts actively assisted by three fleets, ended in April 1942. Its politico-strategic significance was enormous. In four months the Red Army drove the nazis back 100-350 kilometres. Moscow, Tula and Ryazan regions and parts of Leningrad, Kalinin, Smolensk, Orel, Kursk, Kharkov and Donetsk regions were cleared of the enemy. So was the Kerch Peninsula in the Crimea. The liberated area totalled 150,000 square kilometres with a pre-war population of nearly 5,000,000.

The Red Army routed some 50 enemy divisions.* According to the Chief of the German General Staff, the ground forces lost more than

* Here and elsewhere "routed divisions" indicates those that lost more than half their manpower and armaments.

400,000 officers and men. This was the first major German defeat in the Second World War. In the period from December 1941 to April 1942, in order to replace losses, the nazi leadership sent some 800,000 men of the reserve to the Soviet-German front. As further reinforcements it transferred 39 divisions and six brigades from the West. It was by thinning the lines in Western Europe, where no fighting was under way, that disaster was averted. Hitler removed 35 generals, including Fieldmarshal von Brauchitsch, commander-in-chief of ground forces*, and the commanders of all army groups.

The German generals who survived the winter of 1941-42 blame Hitler for the failure of Germany's strategic plans on the Eastern front in the winter 1941-42. They also say that much of the blame devolves on the Russian winter. The same is averred by some British, American and French war historians.

The winter was incontestably a severe one. And it was more than foolhardy on Hitler's part to commit his troops to a general offensive when they were inadequately equipped for winter action. But in the final analysis it was the advancing Soviet troops rather than the nazis, who were on the defensive, that were hampered by the winter conditions. What counted most was not the severe winter, but the fighting spirit and better preparedness for action in difficult conditions. Another factor was the nazi Command's misjudgement of the Red Army's fighting capacity.

The nazis interpreted the grave Soviet setbacks in the summer of 1941 as a triumph for their "blitzkrieg" strategy. Their mistaken appraisal of the summer campaign influenced the planning of their autumn offensive. For them the Soviet counter-offensive came as a complete surprise, sowing confusion and making them revise their strategic approach.

The winter of 1941-42 thus witnessed a turning point in the armed struggle on the Soviet-German front, and this affected the further course of the Second World War as a whole. To appreciate the impact of this first major nazi defeat, it will suffice to recall the developments in 1939, 1940 and 1941, when the German armies were victorious in all war theatres. Small wonder, therefore, that the German people were told nothing of this disaster for several weeks.

Soviet Information Bureau reports of the nazi defeats at Tikhvin, the approaches to Moscow, at Rostov, in the Donets Basin and in the Crimea evoked a surge of fresh strength. "A great people, or a strong system," wrote Henry C. Cassidy, a US journalist, "is one that can undergo such a test, know the danger and rise above it. That Moscow did."

The Moscow victory marked an important phase in the development of Soviet military science. With the beginning of the counter-offensive the initiative passed to the Soviet Armed Forces. This was evidence of greater combat skill and better troop control. Among other things, the Soviet Command succeeded in attaining the element of surprise, secured by good camouflage and good timing. It will be recalled that the counter-offensive near Moscow stemmed from the counter-assaults launched by the Red Army at the close of November and beginning of December 1941. This enabled the Red Army to go over from defence to counter-offensive without an operational pause and at a time when the enemy troops were still in an offensive group and had not yet dug in.

The Air Force had helped immensely. But the number of planes was small and the Soviet Command was compelled to use strategic aircraft and planes of the air-defence system. Nine out of every ten missions

* Hitler assumed personal command of the ground forces.

flown by the 6th Fighter Corps, which covered the capital, were in direct support of the advancing troops. To co-ordinate control, the Supreme Command hastily formed temporary air groups.

It was in the Battle of Moscow, too, that the artillery first employed the method of continuous fire support for attacking infantry and armour, shelling in depth. Progress was achieved in breaching hastily erected enemy fortifications on the march and developing breaches by special mobile groups. New ways were devised for air support, especially of night bombers, rocket launchers and armour-borne infiltration forces. The manpower and equipment shortage was compensated in a way by peerless bravery, superior skill and resourcefulness.

The offensive was highlighted by mass heroism. Thirty-six thousand officers and men were awarded Orders and medals. Whole units, too, distinguished themselves. The title of Guards was awarded to ten infantry, two motorised and five cavalry divisions, two cavalry corps, two infantry, two marine and four tank brigades, two motorcycle, nine artillery, four anti-tank artillery, two fighter and one air attack and one signals regiments.

The feat of the Western, Kalinin, Bryansk and Reserve fronts, the Moscow Defence Zone, the Civil Defence divisions, the marines, Communist battalions and Moscow Region partisans is inscribed in letters of gold in the annals of the war. The nation will never forget the names of the heroes of the Battle of Moscow: J. V. Stalin, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the renowned commanders of fronts and armies, and the front Chiefs of Staff: Generals G. K. Zhukov, I. S. Konev, V. D. Sokolovsky, L. A. Govorov, K. K. Rokossovsky, F. I. Golikov, A. I. Yeremenko, D. D. Lelyushenko, V. I. Kuznetsov, I. V. Boldin, M. G. Yefremov, F. Y. Kostenko, N. A. Sbytov; corps, divisional and brigade commanders I. V. Panfilov, V. I. Polosukhin, I. D. Klimov, D. A. Zhuravlev, A. I. Lizyukov, I. F. Petrov, K. N. Leselidze, L. M. Dovator, M. Y. Katukov, P. A. Belov, A. P. Beloborodov, I. A. Pliyev, P. A. Rotmistrov, P. G. Chanchibadze, K. S. Melnik, V. K. Baranov and many others.

The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to 110 men, including 28 of the 8th Guards Division, the fliers S. G. Getman, Y. M. Gorbatyuk, V. A. Zaitsev, A. N. Katrich, V. Y. Kovalyov, I. N. Kalabushkin, N. G. Leskonozhenko, A. I. Molodchy, V. V. Talalikhin and I. M. Kholodov, the tankman V. A. Grigoryev and the partisan V. A. Karasev.

The Red Army's success would have been inconceivable without the organisational and ideological work of the Communist Party. The troops were able to execute the strategic and operational planning of their Command because the Party cemented their ranks, inspiring them to feats of bravery and sustaining their faith in the strength of their people and in ultimate victory. Thirty-seven thousand political fighters were assigned to the Western Front and the Moscow Defence Zone. The title political fighter yielded them no privileges. It obliged them, however, to be models of discipline and courage. They were the first to go into battle, serving as an example for the rest of the troops.

The Party's political work was centred mainly on informing all men of the danger to the capital and impressing on them the responsibility each bore for the country's future. Political officers spread word about the prowess and fighting spirit of the picked troops and about the heroic feats of officers and men, strengthening confidence and morale. In a dark hour, the Army's Party organisations helped the Command stiffen resistance, then turn the tide.

The influence of communist ideals was immense. This was borne out by the unexampled tenacity of the Red Army and the patriotic desire displayed everywhere to join the Party. In the first six months of the war Army Party organisations admitted 145,870 new candidates, and as many as 471,253 in the following six months. The terms of admission for officers and men who had distinguished themselves in battle were somewhat relaxed by a Central Committee decision of August 19. On December 9, 1941, the Central Committee issued a new decision, reducing the 12 months' probationary period for candidate-members to three months.

The victories of the Soviet troops at Moscow changed the situation in the other war theatres. German historians note that it saved the day for the British Empire in the Mediterranean by causing a withdrawal of German forces.

The nazi defeat on the Soviet-German front had a sobering effect on the rulers of Japan and Turkey. Unfriendly towards the Soviet Union, they had been poised for armed action and waiting for a favourable time. After the nazi setback they changed their plans, putting off entry into the war until better times, which never came for them.

5. THE PEOPLES JOIN HANDS

Developments on the Soviet-German front were closely followed by the world. All people, especially in Europe, languishing under the nazi yoke, pinned their hopes on the Red Army. The retreat in the summer of 1941 created dismay. But every blow struck back at the invaders gave confidence that the end of nazism would come. Word of the Soviet victory at Moscow was received with joy, raising the Soviet Union's prestige and improving the international situation.

Soviet foreign policy was shaped to secure on the world scene the most favourable conditions for crushing the aggression and shortening the war. The enemy had to be isolated; the Soviet Union had to enlist as many allies as possible, unite the freedom-loving forces and build up a broad anti-fascist coalition. This coincided with the aspiration of all progressives.

When formulating this task, the Party and Government acted on Lenin's precept of using the contradictions between the imperialist states. What contradictions? To begin with, the desire of the German imperialists to acquire world power was a grave threat to Britain and the United States. London and Washington were aware that a nazi victory over the Soviet Union would put all Europe, the Middle East and Africa at the mercy of the fascist powers. Obviously, Germany would next try to conquer the British Empire, then the American continent. Japan, too, preparing for war in the Pacific, presented a grave threat. These profound contradictions between Britain and the United States, on the one hand, and Germany and her allies, on the other, explained British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's statement of June 22, 1941: "The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States." The situation in the world was such that despite their hostility for the Soviet Union, the ruling circles of the USA and Britain, who had done much in the prewar years to finance Germany and support her politically, now saw that the only way to preserve the political independence and national sovereignty of their countries was to form an alliance with the USSR.

The Soviet Union's aim of liberation, the peoples' hatred of fascism

and the profound imperialist contradictions formed the foundation for an anti-fascist coalition. The USSR's position as a great power and the main force in the struggle against nazi aggression predetermined its decisive role in forming the coalition.

Contradictions deriving from a different approach to the problems of war and the post-war arrangement were inevitable within the framework of such an alliance. The USA and Britain regarded Germany's defeat solely as a means of removing an imperialist rival, while the Soviet Union sought to eradicate the fascist regime in Europe and once and for all deliver the European peoples from the threat of further German aggression. Despite these contradictions, the situation demanded co-operation for the attainment of the main objective, which was the defeat of the common enemy. Military missions were exchanged between Moscow and London at the end of June. In addition a British economic mission arrived in Moscow.

At the beginning of July 1941, the Soviet Union offered Britain an alliance. On July 12 the two countries concluded in Moscow an agreement on joint action, which, though essentially a general agreement, laid the foundation for an effective alliance.

A second front in Western Europe was, from the first day of the war, the main problem in Soviet-British relations. On July 18 the Soviet Government raised the question of a second front in Northern France, stressing that it was in the interests of Britain and the common cause. However, the British Government rejected this proposal.

Soviet diplomats had to overcome many hurdles in improving relations with the United States. Despite its declaration of support for the Soviet Union, the United States adopted a wait-and-see attitude. The US imperialists hoped that the USSR would put out of action Germany and Japan, the most dangerous of their rivals. They hoped, too, that the Soviet Union would emerge weakened from the war, no longer a great power. These hopes were formulated most frankly and cynically by Senator Harry S. Truman, who subsequently became US President. "If we see that Germany is winning," he declared, "we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible."

John Moore-Brabazon, Britain's Minister of Aviation, spoke to the same effect. But there was division among the rulers, both in Britain and the United States, on the question of relations with the Soviet Union. Many top politicians, notably President Franklin D. Roosevelt, insisted on aiding the Soviet Union without delay.

Besides, the US and British governments had to reckon with the sentiment of their peoples, above all the workers, who demanded co-operation with the USSR. Meetings, demonstrations and conferences calling for instant aid and a close alliance with the USSR in the fight against fascism swept New York, London, Washington, Bristol, Chicago, Grantham, Boston, Newcastle, Detroit and Gateshall. One typical resolution (by the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers) said: "We assure our fellow-workers of the USSR that we are with them in this fight for freedom, that their struggle is our struggle."

The solidarity movement spread to all sections of society. Progressives knew that if the Soviet Union survived, the world would be saved, if not, mankind would face a bleak future. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury, said: "The destinies of the human race are staked upon this great battle. On the one side is light and progress, on the other the darkness and corruption of reaction, and slavery and death. Russia, in fighting for

her own socialist freedom, fights also for ours. In defending Moscow, it defends London."

Sumner Welles, US Assistant Secretary of State, described the campaign in support of the Soviet Union as nation-wide.

On August 2, 1941, the US Government announced that it would "render all practicable economic assistance designed to strengthen the Soviet Union in its fight against armed aggression".

The Soviet Government sought closer relations with the governments of nazi-occupied countries, offering the émigré governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia agreements, to be signed that month, in which the signatories undertook to assist each other against nazi Germany. Besides, the Soviet Government agreed to form on Soviet territory a Czechoslovak fighting force and a Polish army. The agreements paved the way for the liberation of the Czechoslovak and Polish peoples and the restoration of their independence. The peoples of these countries gained an opportunity to participate in the fight against fascism.

On August 5, 1941, the Soviet Union renewed diplomatic relations with Belgium. On August 7, diplomatic relations were restored with Norway, and on September 27 the Soviet Government declared that it would render the French people all-round assistance in fighting Germany and her allies.

Red Army resistance, the Soviet aim of liberation, and the foreign policy of the Soviet Union helped weld the freedom-loving peoples into a united front.

Seeing that Soviet prestige was quickly rising, the governments of the United States and Britain, too, decided to proclaim their aims in the war. Roosevelt and Churchill issued a declaration, known as the Atlantic Charter, in August 1941, stating that their two countries sought no territorial acquisitions and would not interfere in the internal affairs of other nations. It was essential, they declared, after nazi tyranny was destroyed to ensure universal security, work for economic co-operation among all countries and renounce power politics in international relations. But the Atlantic Charter did not define the purpose and aims of the anti-fascist coalition. It said nothing about mobilising all forces to speed up Germany's defeat and nothing about the ways of establishing a democratic post-war peace.

A conference of allies was convened in London in September 1941 to discuss the Atlantic Charter, attended by Britain, the Soviet Union, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, the Netherlands, Norway, Yugoslavia, Luxembourg and Free France. A Soviet declaration expressed agreement with the basic principles of the Atlantic Charter and formulated a concrete programme for the anti-fascist coalition: annihilation of the Hitler regime; liberation of the enslaved nations and restoration of democratic freedoms; equality of nations and territorial integrity; the right of every nation to choose its form of government; establishment of a post-war democratic peace based on international co-operation. The declaration emphasised that the task of the day was to concentrate all economic and military resources on crushing the common enemy and liberating the peoples languishing under the nazi boot.

The Soviet Government did its utmost to strengthen co-operation with the United States and Britain. A three-power conference in Moscow, September 29-October 1, 1941, was devoted to this problem. But agreement was hard to achieve. It took considerable effort to come to terms with the British and American delegations. Nazi troops had just gained considerable ground at Kiev and begun their offensive on Moscow. Some of the negotiators would not believe the Battle of Moscow could end in

a Soviet victory. There is "an amazing number of people here," wrote Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's closest advisor, "who do not want to help Russia and who don't seem to be able to pound into their thick heads the strategic importance of that front." Yet the international situation and the interests of the United States and Britain necessitated effective co-operation with the USSR. An understanding was finally hammered out. The US and British governments promised the Soviet Union arms, including more than 3,500 planes and 4,500 tanks and other strategic materials, in nine months from October 1.

The Moscow Conference had a strong international impact, taking a step towards an anti-fascist coalition headed by the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain. Also, it expedited the US decision to apply the Lend-Lease Act to the USSR.*

Subsequent events finalised the alignment of forces in the Second World War. On December 7 a Japanese naval force made a sudden attack on Pearl Harbour. On December 8, the United States declared war on Japan, and Britain followed suit. And on December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

In Washington, 26 countries of the anti-fascist coalition, including the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain, signed a declaration on January 1, 1942, undertaking to commit all their resources to the war against the aggressors, to co-operate in the war and not to conclude any separate peace. The formative stage of the anti-fascist coalition was thus nearing completion.

Although the number of countries in the coalition increased, the Soviet Union was still alone in its confrontation with Hitler Germany. Operations in Western Europe would have been most effective in aiding the USSR. The nazi defeat at Moscow and the entry of the US into the war provided a favourable opportunity for the British and United States forces to open a second front. But neither Washington nor London were in any hurry to do so, claiming that their operations in the Pacific and in North Africa were consuming much strength and resources.

In fact, however, Britain and the United States possessed enough power to conduct operations in Europe as well. According to Churchill, there were more than two million soldiers in Britain in September 1941. In addition, 1,500,000 men formed the home guard, 750,000 were in the RAF and 500,000 in the Navy. By the autumn of 1941, 33 British divisions and numerous support forces were concentrated in the British Isles. The US Armed Forces, which were still in the formative period, were 2,173,000 strong at the beginning of 1942.

War production in the two countries had increased greatly. Britain, for one thing, turned out in 1941 some 15,500 tanks, carriers and armoured cars, some 11,000 field, anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, more than 8,000 mortars and more than 53,000 machine-guns. In the case of some arms (especially warplanes) she was ahead of Germany. The German aircraft industry was putting out over 11,000 planes a year, while Britain produced more than 20,000. By the end of 1941, Britain's merchant fleet totalled 21,300,000 tons. The United States, too, was well equipped. From July 1940 to December 1941 it produced more than 23,000 planes, 12,000 tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles, 11,500 field guns, 9,500 mor-

* Lend-Lease was a system of lending or leasing to other states various materials essential for defence. The Act authorised the US Government to lend or lease to other states arms, ammunition and other materials essential for defence, provided such defence was, in the President's opinion, vitally important for the United States. The Lend-Lease Act was passed by the US Congress on March 11, 1941.

tars and large quantities of other arms. Consequently, neither country lacked the necessary resources. It was a matter of waiting for an opportune moment.

The foundations of British and United States strategy in the Second World War were laid down by the leaders of these two countries at the Washington Conference (December 22, 1941-January 14, 1942). They recognised that the European theatre was decisive and that Germany was enemy No. 1. However, action against this enemy was confined to blockade, air-raids and preparations for a landing in French North Africa. Thus, in the East the nazi hordes were to be confronted only by the Soviet Armed Forces. A revealing fact is that already then Churchill and Roosevelt agreed that cardinal political issues of the coalition war would be decided at conferences of British and US representatives, i.e., without the participation of the Soviet Union. The Washington Conference set up a joint committee of Chiefs of Staff and representatives of the two countries with headquarters in the American capital for the concerted direction of the war.

Neither Washington nor London was enthusiastic about supplying arms to the USSR. From October to December 1941, during the Moscow Battle, when the Red Army desperately needed more arms, they fell behind in their lend-lease commitments by 450 aircraft (including 295 bombers) and nearly 1,000 tanks. In the spring of 1942 shipments of war materiel diminished to a trickle. By failing to open the second front and curtailing supply shipments the United States and British rulers were, in effect, dragging out the war.

This went obviously against the interests of the peoples. The calls for drastic action, notably for a second front, became more insistent towards the end of 1941. The countless resolutions, letters, telegrams and petitions pouring in to Churchill and Roosevelt never failed to end with the following words: "Open the second front." Among them were petitions sent to Roosevelt by the 200,000-strong trade union council of Chicago, 30,000 automobile workers of Detroit, 25,000 engineering workers and 20,000 shipyard workers.

The campaign in support of the Soviet Union and for a second front became an important factor of politics in the two countries. The governments had to reckon with it. In April 1942, Roosevelt wrote to Churchill: "Your people and mine demand the establishment of a front to draw off pressure on the Russians, and these people are wise enough to see that the Russians are today killing more Germans and destroying more equipment than you and I put together." These demands strengthened the hand of the Soviet Government in pressing for better all-round use of war resources in the possession of the anti-fascist coalition and for concerted military efforts by the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain.

During the successful Red Army offensive in the winter of 1941-42, the necessity for a second front in the West was quite obvious. In November the Soviet Government, seeking to formalise and specify the principles of mutual military aid, suggested an alliance with the British, the ensuing negotiations culminating in the conclusion in London of a treaty against nazi Germany and her accomplices in Europe and on post-war co-operation and mutual aid, signed on May 26, 1942. The alliance was followed by a Soviet-US agreement "on the principles applying to mutual aid in the prosecution of the war against agression", signed a fortnight later, on June 11.

Despite Churchill's reluctance to undersign specific terms, the USA and Britain were compelled to promise a second front in 1942. The per-

tinent communique pointed out that complete agreement had been reached concerning its opening in Europe in 1942. But neither country, later events showed, had any intention of living up to its commitment. In a message to Stalin as early as June 18, 1942, Churchill wrote of the possibility of creating a "really strong second front in 1943". Five days later Stalin replied, declaring that "the Soviet Government cannot reconcile itself to a postponement of the second front to 1943". But in a memorandum of August 23 Churchill reaffirmed that the decision to open the second front in Western Europe in 1943 and not in 1942 was final. All the same, the treaty with Britain and the agreement with the United States were a triumph for the foreign policy of the USSR. They finalised the war-time alliance of the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain.

The way to the anti-fascist coalition was paved by the course of preceding events, which bore out the correctness of Soviet foreign policy. Though they had rejected collective action against the aggressor before the war, the Western powers had no choice but to accept joint conduct of the war. The emergence of the anti-fascist coalition bore out Lenin's proposition that states with different socio-economic systems were able to co-operate.

While uniting the freedom-loving peoples, the Soviet Union attached immense importance to the Resistance movement in the occupied countries which was part of the fighting strength of the anti-fascist coalition. The Resistance, a natural urge to smash the blood-stained "new order", had only just come into being before the summer of 1941, a difficult period of organisational consolidation. The bitter taste of defeat was still too raw. Many thought nothing on earth could smash the German Army.

Then the Soviet Union was brought into the war. A ray of hope appeared for the enslaved. True to proletarian internationalism, the Soviet Government announced early in the war that the people of the Soviet Union were fighting not only for their own freedom and independence, but for that of the nations suffering under the nazi yoke. This evoked a strong response in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, France, Greece, Albania, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands, whose people saw that they were no longer alone, that the 200 millions in the Soviet Union were on their side.

The unexampled heroism of the Soviet people, their patriotism and dedication, and their determination to win, inspired all anti-fascists. People squared their shoulders. The pessimism and uncertainty, which had afflicted the European nations, gave way to faith. To speed up victory, their resistance grew. The voice of the Communist and Workers' Parties calling for closer co-operation between the democratic and progressive forces in the fight for national liberation resounded more strongly.

The Resistance movement went from strength to strength. Shots were heard in the streets and squares of large cities. Trains carrying arms and supplies for the invader were blown up. Ships were sunk and ammunition depots demolished. More people took up arms. General Lionel Max Chassin, former Deputy Chief of the French General Staff, wrote:

"This magnificent resistance of the Russians who did not shrink from any sacrifice was the signal for a wave of revolts stretching across all the countries occupied by Germany."

A new stage began. The Resistance movement became more organised. In some countries there emerged national fronts—mass organisations embracing the patriotic forces. A National Liberation Front (EAM) ap-

peared in Greece, a United National Liberation Front in Yugoslavia, a National Liberation Front in Albania and an Independence Front in Belgium—all this between the end of 1941 and the autumn of 1942. A National Front was also formed in France. Various forms of spontaneous and organised struggle against fascism flared up in Poland, where the invaders had established a particularly brutal regime.

Armed struggle gained in importance. Risings flared up in Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Croatia in July 1941. Occasional, mostly spontaneous, armed clashes with the occupation troops in the early stage of Resistance gave place to planned operations. The number of partisans increased in Yugoslavia, France, Belgium, Greece and other countries. Towards the end of 1941, Yugoslavia, for example, had 44 partisan detachments, 14 separate battalions and one proletarian brigade—some 80,000 men all told. The quick growth of the partisan forces necessitated a single command. The end of 1941 saw the formation of People's Liberation Armies in Greece and Yugoslavia.

The Red Army's victories at Moscow, Rostov and Tikhvin stimulated the Resistance movement. It spread from nazi-occupied countries to Germany's satellites. The anti-fascist fight became more massive. The Communist and Workers' Parties won trust by their devotion to the people's interests and rightfully assumed a leading role in the movement. The national liberation struggle gave added strength to the anti-fascist coalition, and by striking at the German forces from the rear it rendered invaluable support to the Soviet Union.

Working for the solidarity of all freedom-loving forces, the Soviet Union did its utmost to prevent any expansion of the nazi bloc and the appearance of new flashpoints of aggression. The possibility of other states, notably Japan and Turkey, which bordered on the Soviet Union, entering the war on Germany's side was then fairly real. It was the setbacks suffered by the Germans in the winter of 1941-42 that made the Japanese and Turkish governments think twice.

The Soviet Government followed developments in Iran, where a tense political situation arose in the summer of 1941. The country was inundated with nazi agents. Arms and ammunition were being shipped in from Germany. Berlin stage-managed Iran's home and foreign policy. In defiance of national interests, the Government in Teheran was gradually turning the country into a springboard for an invasion of Soviet Transcaucasia. The Soviet Government thrice warned Iran about the consequences. Its demarches had the backing of the British Government. But the Iranian rulers turned a deaf ear to the warnings. With Britain's consent and at her suggestion, the Soviet Union acted in self-defence, invoking the right of temporarily stationing troops in Iranian territory stipulated in the 1921 treaty. At the same time, British troops entered the southern part of the country. The designs of the local reactionaries were thus foiled. Reza-Shah Pehlevi abdicated and fled the country. A new Iran Government promptly concluded a treaty with the Soviet Union and Britain on January 29, 1942, entering the anti-fascist coalition.

The defeat inflicted on Germany by the Soviet Armed Forces in the winter of 1941-42 was thus militarily and politically important. It was a turn in the progress of the war. Apart from its military successes, the USSR made marked headway in fusing the freedom-loving peoples into a united anti-fascist front and in preventing more states from entering the war on Germany's side.

Chapter Six

BATTLES IN THE SUMMER AND AUTUMN OF 1942

1. THE SITUATION AND THE PLANS

A relative lull settled on the Soviet-German front after the campaign of the winter of 1941-42. Both sides prepared for further battle.

The Soviet Armed Forces, which now knew not only the bitterness of retreat but also the joy of victory, started their second summer campaign as a more experienced and better organised fighting machine. By May 1942 their numerical strength had grown considerably and they were somewhat better supplied with armaments. The army in the field had 5,500,000 effectives, 43,640 field guns and mortars,* 1,220 rocket launchers, 4,065 tanks** and 3,160 aircraft.*** Long-range aircraft was organised and by May the formation of air armies ensued. Training went forward in all echelons. The Soviet Command energetically built up its reserve.

War production climbed steadily despite the losses sustained at the beginning of the war. In the first six months of 1942 output of submachine-guns and anti-tank guns was nearly sixfold that of the latter half of 1941, of mortars threefold, field artillery 80 per cent up and tanks 130 per cent up, though plane production had made no significant headway. However, the Red Army had not wrested technical superiority from the enemy; the nazis were still more mobile.

A jagged front-line in the spring of 1942 (Map 1) resulted from the Red Army's offensive. There were salients both ways, some wedging into the Soviet positions, others into the German. Obviously, the nazis intended to mount operations in the early summer, regain the initiative and defeat the Red Army. GHQ mistakenly inferred therefrom that the main battles of the summer period would again take place in the Central sector. Most of the Front commands thought likewise.

In the circumstances, the top echelon of the General Staff suggested strategic defence. With the Soviet Armed Forces still numerically and technically inferior in March 1942, the plan was to prepare for a decisive offensive to follow the period of strategic defence. GHQ acquiesced, but also decided to conduct several local offensive operations: at Leningrad, round Demyansk, in the Smolensk and Lgov-Kursk direction, at Kharkov and in the Crimea.

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* Excluding the artillery of the Moscow Defence Zone, the Moscow Air Defence Front and the 47th Army of the Crimean Front. Here and elsewhere the figure does not include 50-mm mortars.

** Including 1,995 light tanks.

*** Of these 1,050 aircraft were of obsolete design, and 320 P-5, P-zet and Mbr reconnaissance aircraft and 375 U-2 night bombers are not taken into account.

Unfortunately, strength and materiel were distributed more or less evenly along the entire Soviet-German front. As a result, the Red Army failed to build up an advantage in any sector.

Depending on the situation, the Soviet Command also planned operations against the enemy's naval communications.

While preparing the offensives, measures were taken to strengthen defence. In the belief that the main developments would occur in the Western direction, GHQ concentrated strength and arms accordingly.

The Western and Bryansk fronts were strengthened to the detriment of the Southwestern and Southern fronts, in whose sectors the enemy was planning to strike his main blow in the spring.

GHQ's decision to conduct simultaneous offensive and defensive operations did not conform to the situation. It made no provision for building up a powerful covering force against the large enemy group massed on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, where the main effort of the summer campaign was soon to be made.

In its planning the Supreme Command took into consideration the operation the United States and Britain had promised to undertake in Western Europe to draw off part of the German Army from the Soviet-German front. However, the rulers of the two countries were disinclined to extend effective aid to the USSR.

The nazi Command planned extensive offensive actions. As before, its objective was to crush the Red Army and end the war in 1942, hoping to attain its purpose by a succession of operations because it now lacked strength and resources to deliver simultaneous blows in the key directions. The main thrust was planned in the southern sector, where the German Command aimed at gaining possession of the Caucasus and the lower Volga. This, it thought, would cripple the Soviet economy, assure supplies of oil for the German Army and prompt Turkey to join the war on Germany's side. On the heels of that operation the nazis would regroup their troops for a coup de grace against Moscow.

Prior to the assault on the Caucasus, the nazis planned a series of operations on the southern wing: seizure of Kerch Peninsula and Sevastopol in order to relieve the 11th Army and use it for the main thrust from Kerch in the direction of the Taman Peninsula in the rear of the Soviet forces covering the approaches to the Caucasus. Moreover, the Germans planned to destroy the Soviet bridgehead at Barvenkovo on the Northern Donets.

At Leningrad and Novgorod the nazis planned to crush the 2nd Strike Army, capture its bridgehead northwest of Novgorod and gain a new springboard for a final assault on Leningrad. They also planned to capture the Murmansk Railway and deny the Soviet Union a gateway to the outside world via the northern ports. Operations were also planned against the Kalinin and Western fronts and the partisan forces at Dorogobuzh. This series of operations, Hitler hoped, would prepare the ground for a final decisive assault on Moscow.

But enemy planning, aimed at ending the war in 1942, was unrealistic. Despite a considerable increase in the number of troops, strength and equipment were insufficient. On the Soviet-German front Germany and her allies had 6,200,000 effectives, nearly 43,000 field guns and mortars; almost 3,230 tanks and assault guns and close to 3,400 aircraft.

Thus, at the start of the summer campaign, the Germans had superiority in manpower and aircraft, while the Red Army had a slight advantage in tanks and artillery.

2. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CRIMEA

In early May 1942 the situation in the Crimea—at Sevastopol and especially the Kerch Peninsula—deteriorated considerably. After several abortive offensives, the three armies of the Crimean Front (the 47th, 51st and 44th) went over to the defensive in April. GHQ indicated that liberating the Crimea still held priority and that in preparing for it the local command should build up adequate defences. These instructions went unheeded.

The nazis set out to capture Kerch Peninsula first, and then begin the storm of Sevastopol. After building up considerable numerical superiority over the 44th Army on the left flank, they attacked in the morning of May 8, their main force driving forward on a narrow five-kilometre sector along the shore of Feodosia Bay.

The Crimean Front Command lost control of its troops at the beginning of the battle, the armies rolled back eastward, and the enemy captured Kerch on May 19.

The setback in the Crimea, as indicated in a special GHQ order, was traceable chiefly to the local command's failure to co-ordinate the efforts of the armies and the ground and air forces. Losing control after wire communications were cut, Front and army commanders and their staffs did not revert to radio and other means of communication. No personal contact with the troops was in evidence. While issuing a stream of orders, the command had no idea about the actual situation at the battle-lines.

The loss of Kerch Peninsula was a disaster for Sevastopol. The enemy could now mass the entire 11th Army for an all-out assault. Twice before he had tried to seize the Black Sea base, and failed. In January-March 1942 Sevastopol Defence Area forces struck a series of counter-blows and pushed back the enemy at some points to positions he had held before the second offensive.

The Sevastopol Party organisation and the City Defence Committee began forming units of Communists and Komsomol members. The able-bodied population helped build fortifications.

After Kerch fell the Black Sea Fleet and Maritime Army were alerted. Meetings were held in units and on the warships. Help came from the mainland, though contact with Caucasian ports had become less reliable. Enemy planes, torpedo-boats and submarines and long-range siege guns blockaded the sea routes to Sevastopol. Only a trickle of reinforcements, arms, food and medical supplies reached the city. What supplies were brought in came aboard warships and submarines at great risk. The fleet suffered considerable losses. Yet naval support of the ground forces was indispensable. In June alone, more than 24,000 reinforcements and 15,000 tons of freight arrived, and 25,000 wounded and sick were evacuated from the beleaguered city.

When the new enemy offensive began, the Sevastopol Defence Area had more than 106,000 men and 600 field guns and mortars. But it had only 38 tanks, most of them obsolete, and only 53 aircraft. Ammunition ran low. Shells were used sparingly. Whereas the nazis had something like 204,000 officers and men, 670 field guns (75 to 420 mm), 655 anti-tank guns, 720 mortars, 450 tanks and 600 aircraft.

On June 2 the enemy artillery and air bombardment began, and did not cease for five days and nights. Enemy planes flew up to 1,000 sorties daily. The city was engulfed in flames when finally, on June 7, the attack was mounted. The main blow came from northeast of Sevastopol across Mekenzi Hills, with simultaneously a secondary attack via Sapun-Gora

against the southeastern outskirts of the city. The nazi Command hoped to cut up the defence line and destroy the isolated pockets piecemeal.

Resistance was orderly and dogged. Though cut off from the main Red Army forces, the troops held their ground against ferocious attacks. Nor did the fighting subside after dark. The air was torn by continuously exploding shells and bombs as the defenders fought unto death, clinging to that small but highly important piece of land. The Maritime Army and Black Sea Fleet covered themselves with glory. General T. K. Kolomiyets's 25th Chapayev Division, Colonel A. G. Kapitokhin's 95th and Colonel I. A. Laskin's 172nd, Colonel P. F. Gorpishchenko's 8th Marine Brigade and Colonel Y. I. Zhidilov's combined unit of the 7th Marine Brigade distinguished themselves. Many of Sevastopol's heroic defenders were women. The names of machine-gunner Nina Onilova, sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko and scout Maria Baida became known to the whole nation.

But strength gradually decreased. June 29 was especially grim. The surviving aircraft were deployed to airfields in the Northern Caucasus, anti-aircraft gunners fired their last remaining shells. Sevastopol lay wide-open to air attacks. The enemy intensified the bombardment. On June 30 he broke through. The defenders fought until they ran out of ammunition, food and water, then abandoned the ruins of what once was a flourishing city, retreating to the bays east of Sevastopol. On July 4, 1942, on receiving permission from GHQ, some were evacuated. The remainder joined the partisans or were taken prisoner. The Crimea was totally overrun by the enemy.

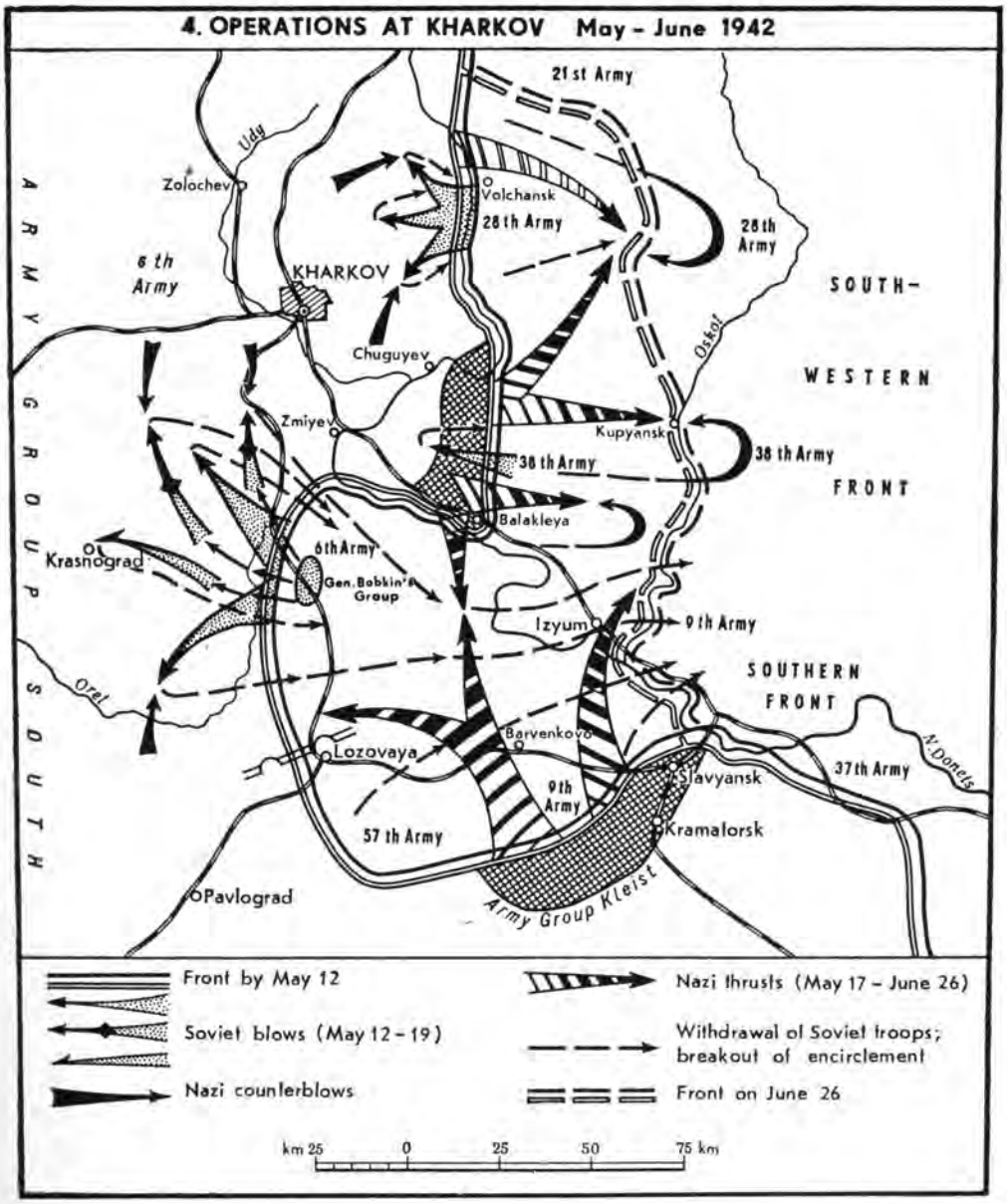
The heroic defence of Sevastopol lasted 250 days and nights. It was an exploit that matched that of the Russian troops who had held Sevastopol in the 1853-56 Crimean War. Thirty-seven of the bravest were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and the medal "For the Defence of Sevastopol" was awarded to over 39,000 people. Sevastopol itself was created a Hero-City.

The politico-military importance of the battle was considerable. The Sevastopol defenders had pinned down a large force of German and Rumanian troops, upsetting nazi plans. The German 11th Army had been bled white, and it took much time to restore it to full strength.

However, the loss of the Crimea affected the situation in the Black Sea area and on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front. The nazis were now in possession of the shortest route to the Caucasus via the Straits of Kerch. Turkey began violating her neutrality more frequently, allowing free passage through the Straits to nazi-bloc ships carrying arms, ammunition and other war materiel. The Black Sea Fleet, meanwhile, was poorly based and the Soviet Caucasus was threatened from the sea.

3. SOVIET SETBACK AT KHARKOV

While the fighting was at its height in the Crimea, hostilities gained in intensity also around Kharkov. The opposing armies had both prepared for an offensive. In the latter half of March 1942, the Military Council of the Southwestern direction (Commander-in-Chief—Marshal S. K. Timoshenko; member of the Military Council—N. S. Khrushchev) suggested to the Supreme Commander that the Bryansk, Southwestern and Southern fronts should mount an offensive to reach the line Gomel-Kiev-Cherkassy-Pervomaisk-Nikolayev. The suggestion was turned down, because trained reserves were lacking for so ambitious an undertaking. Then Timoshenko suggested reducing the scale of the operation. But the revised



plan, too, was rejected for the same reason. The Southwestern Command finally submitted a plan for a lesser operation, in whose success it trusted implicitly. GHQ granted their request.

The offensive was confined to the Southwestern Front,* which was to strike two converging blows in the general direction of Kharkov, surround and destroy the enemy force and liberate the city.

The main blow was to be delivered from the Barvenkovo salient (Map 4).

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* Command of the Southwestern Front was entrusted by GHQ to the Southwestern High Command.

General A. M. Gorodnyansky's 6th Army advanced against Kharkov from the south, while General L. V. Bobkin's Army Group struck at Krasnograd to cover the 6th Army's operation from the southwest. Another attack, from the area of Volchansk, was mounted by General D. I. Ryabishev's 28th Army and units of the neighbouring 21st and 38th armies. The troops were to flank Kharkov from the north and northwest.

Weakened in preceding battles, the Southern Front commanded by General R. Y. Malinovsky was given no active mission. General K. P. Podlas's 57th Army and General F. M. Kharitonov's 9th were instructed to defend the southern edge of the Barvenkovo area, giving cover to the strike force of the Southwestern Front. The offensive of the Bryansk Front in the north, planned by GHQ as an action supporting the Kharkov operation of the Southwestern Front, was called off on April 24.

The plan, as we see, was a far-reaching one. But it had marked defects. The point from which the main thrust was made was badly chosen, for the flanks and rear of the attacking troops were highly vulnerable. Besides, the enemy, poised to deliver the main blow in the south, gave top priority to eliminating the Barvenkovo salient and destroying the forces massed in it.

The nazis planned two thrusts at the salient—one from north of Balakleya in a southerly direction by the 6th Army and the other from Slavyansk, Kramatorsk and somewhat west of them in the general direction via Barvenkovo towards Izyum by units of Army Group Kleist (the 1st Panzer and 17th armies).

The balance of strength at the beginning of the operation was against the Soviet troops. Though the Southwestern Front sector had three men to every two nazis and two tanks to every German tank, the Southern Front was considerably weaker in tanks, artillery and planes. The total strength of the two fronts was 640,000 men, 1,200 odd tanks, 13,000 field guns and mortars and 926 planes, while the Germans had 636,000 men, more than 1,000 tanks, about 16,000 field guns and mortars and 1,220 planes.

In the morning of May 12 the Soviet troops attacked, anticipating the enemy by five days. In the first 72 hours they advanced 25 kilometres at Volchansk and 50 southeast of Kharkov. The situation was favourable for a thrust from the Barvenkovo salient. Mobile troops could go into the breach in the 6th Army sector and encircle the enemy group. But the commanders hoped for a still more suitable moment, waited all through May 15 and 16, and finally missed the opportunity. Enemy reinforcements consisting of several divisions arrived in Volchansk. Numerical superiority was lost and the 28th Army faltered. Strength was balanced in the sector manned by the 6th Army and General K. S. Moskalenko's 38th. Not until May 17, after considerable delay, did the Southwestern Front Command send its tank corps into battle, by which time the nazis had strengthened their rear and the Soviet mobile troops had to contend with well dug-in opposition.

The Front Command thought that after committing five panzer and infantry divisions, the enemy had no additional strength in the Kharkov area. However, on May 16 the enemy completed preparations for an offensive against the 57th and 9th armies (Southern Front).

The two armies were then holding a sector of some 180 kilometres, their defence based on a system of strongpoints some 3-4 kilometres in depth, but the Front Command lacked the resources to reinforce them.

On May 17 an enemy shock force suddenly struck in the 9th Army sector, advancing about 20 kilometres in the early part of the day and imperilling the rear of the 57th Army and the entire assault force of the Southwestern Front. The commander of the Southern Front assigned the 5th Cavalry Corps, a division and a tank brigade from his reserve to strengthen the hard-pressed 9th Army, while the Commander-in-Chief of the Southwestern direction put the 2nd Cavalry Corps at the disposal of the Southern Front and ordered a counter-blow. In the meantime, units of the 38th Army were taking up defence positions south of Izyum. This regrouping was not completed, however, because the Southern Front commander lost contact with the 9th Army Headquarters and the cavalry corps.

In the evening of May 17, GHQ was informed that the Southern Front needed considerable reinforcements to hold the Barvenkovo salient. Promptly, it allocated a force which, however, could not reach the distressed area until May 20-21. In the circumstances, the Southwestern Front offensive should have been halted; its forces should have obviously been sent to assist the Southern Front in closing the breach. Inexplicably, this was not done. S. K. Timoshenko merely shifted two tank corps and one division from the 6th Army sector for a counter-attack. This was insufficient to eliminate the threat. A. M. Vasilevsky, Acting Chief of the General Staff, called attention to the fact that no GHQ Reserves were available near the battlefield and suggested calling off the offensive. But after contacting the Southwestern Military Council, which declared its intention to continue the offensive on Kharkov and simultaneously to take steps to repulse the blow from the enemy Kramatorsk group, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief turned down the General Staff's suggestion. The situation in the Barvenkovo salient continued to deteriorate on May 18. A. M. Vasilevsky once again urged GHQ to halt the offensive, and once more his suggestion was declined after a consultation between the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and Marshal S. K. Timoshenko, Southwestern Front commander.

Not until the evening of May 19, when the 6th and 57th armies and General Bobkin's Group were in danger of being surrounded, did Timoshenko order the 6th Army to halt and dig in, disengage its main forces and join the 6th, 57th and 9th in a concentrical effort to eliminate the enemy breach.

GHQ endorsed the order, but too late. The enemy's northward advance could not be stopped.

On May 23 the German 6th Army and the Kleist Group driving in from the south made contact south of Balakleya. The 6th and 57th, and General Bobkin's Group, were thus totally enveloped.

From May 24 to 29 they fought superior enemy forces which, moreover, had complete control of the air. The Soviet troops were short of ammunition, fuel and food. Some units succeeded in breaking out of the ring and crossing to the eastern bank of the Northern Donets by dint of extraordinary courage and resourcefulness. The casualties were heavy. They included Generals F. Y. Kostenko, Deputy Commander of the Southwestern Front, K. P. Podlas, A. M. Gorodnyansky, L. V. Bobkin and other senior officers. The Kharkov operation, off to a seemingly good start, ended in failure with the Southwestern and Southern fronts suffering heavy losses in men and materiel.

There were two reasons for the failure at Kharkov. First, the incorrect assessment of the general strategic situation on the Soviet-German front —misjudgement of the enemy's intention and, hence, the incorrect distribution of forces and means in the key sectors. Second, the errors made

by the Command of the Southwestern sector in planning and conducting the Kharkov operation. The Southwestern Front Command wrongly assessed the situation, and when its troops found themselves in difficulties it did not discontinue the offensive in time. More, it insisted on continuing the operation. The decision to halt the offensive was adopted much too late, on May 19.

The Southwestern Front Command did nothing to protect the flanks of the strike group, had little information about the enemy and, in particular, underrated his possibilities for manoeuvring in the course of the battle.

The Soviet reverse at Kharkov tilted the scales on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front in favour of the nazis. By eliminating the Barvenkovo salient, they greatly improved their starting positions for a new offensive.

4. BATTLES AT VORONEZH AND IN THE DONETS BASIN

During the fighting at Kharkov the nazi Command completed preparations for the main operation on the southern wing. As a first step it planned to encircle and destroy the Soviet forces covering Voronezh in a dual attack—from Kursk against Voronezh proper and from Volchansk against Ostrogozhsk. On reaching the Voronezh area the 4th Panzer Army was to wheel south towards Kantemirovka while the 1st Panzer Army struck from Slavyansk at Starobelsk-Kantemirovka. The nazis would thereby envelop the Southwestern Front armies, gain possession of the right bank of the Don, break through to the Volga and straddle the middle reaches of that important waterway. After this, with the Don providing natural cover from the north, the tanks would advance on the Northern Caucasus (Map 1).

Something like 900,000 officers and men, 1,260 tanks, more than 17,000 field guns and mortars and 1,640 aircraft were assigned for this operation. To provide for more effective control, the nazi Command divided Army Group South into two groups—B and A. The first army group, advancing against and south of Voronezh, consisted of the 2nd and 6th field, 4th Panzer and Hungarian 2nd armies under the overall command of Fieldmarshal von Bock, with the 2nd Field, 4th Panzer and Hungarian 2nd armies comprising Army Group Weichs. Army Group A, commander Fieldmarshal von List, with orders to strike at the Northern Caucasus, consisted of the 11th and 17th field and 1st Panzer armies and of the Italian 8th Army that was still in the stage of concentration.

After the Kharkov setback, the Southwestern sector was the weakest of the Soviet forces. But it succeeded in delaying the enemy east of Oboyan-Volokonovka and west of Kupyansk-Slavyansk.

In July 1942, the Bryansk, Southwestern and Southern fronts comprised 655,000 men, 740 tanks, 14,200 field guns and mortars and 1,000 aircraft, conceding considerable strength (approximately 1:1.5) to the enemy.

On June 28, Army Group Weichs began its assault east of Kursk. Breaking through at the junction of the 13th and 40th armies of the Bryansk Front, it drove forward some 40 kilometres in two days. Control of the two Soviet armies broke down. In addition to reinforcements sent before the enemy offensive, General Headquarters dispatched another three tank corps (two from the Southwestern Front and one from its own Reserve)

on June 28. One more tank corps from the Bryansk Front's reserve was also moved to the breach area, the whole force massing around Volovo, Kastornoye and Stary Oskol. Now the Bryansk Front had strength enough to repulse the nazis and, it appeared, to crush Army Group Weichs. But it failed, because the command—General F. I. Golikov and member of the Military Council I. Z. Susaikov—missed the right time for a massive strike against the flanks of the main enemy force. Instead, Golikov withdrew his 40th Army to a new line: General Headquarters reprimanded him for it, also censuring inadequate communications with the 40th Army and the tank corps.

By the evening of July 2 the enemy had lengthened the breach to a depth of 80 kilometres. The situation brinked on disaster. General Headquarters responded by attaching new divisions to the Bryansk Front and dispatching Chief of the General Staff General A. M. Vasilevsky* to assist the Front command.

In the morning of June 30 the German 6th Army attacked the right wing of the Southwestern Front from Volchansk. Wearing down Soviet resistance, it covered 80 kilometres in three days, reaching the Stary Oskol and Volokonovka area. This closed the ring round part of the Bryansk Front units trying to retire eastward. A breach appeared at the junction between the Bryansk and Southwestern fronts, opening the way for the Germans to Voronezh.

To prevent the nazis crossing the Don, GHQ deployed three armies from its Reserve along the eastern bank between Zadonsk and Kletskaya. A tank army** was concentrated south of Yelets to hit the flank of the advancing enemy, while the Southwestern Front was ordered to ensure the defence of Ostrogozhsk. The enemy attempt to capture Voronezh on the very first assault was thus frustrated. But mobile units did reach the Don near Voronezh and captured a small bridgehead on the eastern bank. Although the Soviet troops managed to halt the Germans, the advance was considerable, with a gaping 300-kilometre breach about 150-170 kilometres deep resulting in the Soviet line.

Making the most of the situation, the German 6th Army pushed the defending Southwestern Front force out of the Ostrogozhsk area and continued southward, threatening the rear of the Southwestern and Southern fronts.

To counter the German threat, GHQ ordered the Southwestern and the right wing of the Southern Front to withdraw to Novaya Kalitva-Popasnaya, beginning the move at night, July 6-7. The Germans discovered it too late to organise pursuit before the afternoon of the following day. Rearguard actions held off the enemy, though by the evening of July 15 the Germans broke through between the Don and the Northern Donets along a sector 170 kilometres long and reached the big Don bend. Southern Front units in the Donets Basin faced encirclement. On GHQ orders they retreated to the Don. At the approaches to Rostov the enemy made an unsuccessful attempt to close the ring, and on July 24, abandoning Rostov, the Soviet forces withdrew to the eastern bank of the Don. Pursuing German troops captured a few bridgeheads.

To sum up, despite heavy fighting on the southern wing from June 28 to July 24, the Germans fell short of their objectives, having failed to

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* A. M. Vasilevsky was appointed Chief of the General Staff on June 26, 1942.

** In the spring of 1942 the Soviet Command began forming tank armies; they were of the mixed type, including tanks, motorised units and infantry.

encircle the main forces of the Southwestern and Southern fronts. Their success was considerable all the same: they captured the Donets Basin, reached the big bend of the Don and created an immediate threat to Stalingrad and the Northern Caucasus.

The reverses in the Crimea, at Kharkov, Voronezh and the Donets Basin reduced the battleworthiness of the Soviet troops. There were cases of cowardice, panic, slack discipline and insubordination, and these evoked anxiety. On July 28 the Defence Commissar issued Order No. 227 under the watchword: "Not a Single Step Back!" It debunked the idea that Soviet territory was big enough for the troops to continue retreating until they reached insuperable natural lines of defence, and declared war on cowards, panic-mongers and other offenders.

In view of the tense situation political propaganda had to be made more effective. As early as June 12, 1942, the Party Central Committee had passed a decision to secure a fundamental improvement of political work among the troops, with emphasis on verbal agitation and propaganda and on educational work among troops of non-Russian nationality. Groups of agitators were formed under the Main Political Administration and the political departments of fronts and armies, whose work was co-ordinated by the Council of Military Political Propaganda. The Central Committee of the CPSU(B) called on the Army press to improve its work. The printings of the central papers and magazines were increased, the extra copies going directly to the services. More high-ranking Party leaders were assigned to the Army.

These firm measures to stiffen discipline proved highly effective.

5. THE HEROIC DEFENCE OF STALINGRAD

In July 1942, when an enemy spearhead reached the big bend of the Don, the greatest battle of the Second World War began.

By mid-July it was clear to the Soviet Command that the enemy intended to make for the Volga at Stalingrad, seize that important strategic city, a major industrial area, and cut communications between the centre of the country and the Caucasus. The retreating Southwestern and Southern fronts were in no position to foil this plan.

The Party Central Committee and the Government acted quickly. Three armies, the 62nd, 63rd and 64th, deployed behind the lines of the Southwestern and Southern fronts, were integrated into a Stalingrad Front on July 12 and reinforced by the 21st Army and 8th Air Army. Marshal S. K. Timoshenko was appointed commander, with N. S. Khrushchev as member of the Military Council. Soon, the Front was augmented with the 28th and 38th armies, which had withdrawn to its sector with heavy losses, and by the Volga Naval Flotilla. By July 20, the Stalingrad Front consisted of 38 divisions, of which 18 were at full strength, six with 2,500 to 4,000 men (that is, at 25 to 40 per cent strength) and 14 were entirely ineffective, consisting of no more than 300-1,000 men each. Replacements and arms were desperately needed. General Headquarters assigned 10 air regiments to stiffen the 8th Air Army, the reinforcements amounting to 200 aircraft. The 1st and 4th tank armies were formed on the basis of the 28th and 38th armies, four tank corps from the GHQ Reserve and also several infantry divisions that had arrived from the Far Eastern Front.

The relatively weak Front held a sector nearly 530 kilometres long. Its task was rapidly to organise defence in the big bend of the Don and prevent a nazi breakthrough to the Volga (Map 5). In the evening of July 20 at a city-wide Party meeting Regional Secretary A. S. Chuyanov relayed a Central Committee directive concerning greater output of war material, especially tanks, and fortifying the approaches to Stalingrad. At the approaches to Stalingrad four defensive rings were erected: external, middle, inner and city, with 225,000 taking part in the building work. Volunteers poured into the civil guard, the anti-paratroop battalions and the local air defence groups.

Later developments showed that the German Command had overrated its success in the south. It had assumed that the Soviet forces there were on the brink of collapse and thought its 6th Army,* one of the most effective German formations (which had overrun Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium and Yugoslavia, leaving a trail of blood), could alone capture the lower Volga industrial area. From Kharkov the 6th Army advanced in a southwesterly direction, intending to reach the Volga by July 25.

The staunchness and heroism of the Soviet forward units on the Chir River compelled the enemy on the first day of the offensive (July 17) to transfer additional forces to the Don bend. Six days later the 6th Army was augmented with five infantry, three panzer and two motorised Army Group A divisions from around Voronezh, so that by July 23 the enemy had 250,000 men, about 740 tanks, some 7,500 field guns and mortars and 1,200 aircraft in the Stalingrad Front sector. Soviet strength totalled 187,000 men, 360 tanks, some 7,900 field guns and mortars, and 337 airworthy planes. The enemy's advantage was 1.4:1 in men, 2:1 in tanks and 3.5:1 in planes. But that was insufficient for a breakthrough to the Volga. The 4th Panzer Army was soon moved in from the Caucasus and the Italian 8th Army from the reserve, with the Rumanian 3rd Army on the way.

Forward elements of the 62nd and 64th armies came to grips with the enemy on the first day of the battle. Six days later, under pressure of superior forces, they drew back to the main defence line.

On July 23 the nazi 6th Army was ordered to attack the Soviet concentration on the western bank of the Don. Flanking assaults were planned from Perelazovsky and Oblivskaya against Kalach with the aim of encircling the 62nd Army, seizing Don crossings and breaking through to straddle the Volga. On reaching the Volga, the 6th Army was to continue against Astrakhan and halt river traffic. In accordance with this plan the enemy reached the Don at Kamensky three days later, attempting immediately to cross the river at Kalach. The desperate attempt was blocked. All the nazis accomplished was to somewhat push back the 64th Army. The Soviet Command committed the 1st and 4th tank armies, still being activated, under generals K. S. Moskalenko and V. D. Kryuchenkin, respectively.

Everywhere Soviet troops fought valiantly. Tank-destroyers P. Boloto, I. Aleinikov, F. Belikov and Samoilov of the 33rd Guards Division, 62nd Army, engaged 30 German tanks, knocking out 15 and putting the rest to flight.

Staunch resistance was offered along the entire sector. The German aim of breaking through to the Volga foundered. But the position of the 62nd Army was still precarious, because it was enveloped on both

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* General Paulus was appointed its commander in January 1942.

flanks. General F. I. Tolbukhin's 57th Army, arriving from the Front's reserve on August 1, was rushed in to reinforce the southern sector of the outer ring of defences, from Logovsky to Raigorod. By that time General Headquarters also placed General T. K. Kolomiyets's 51st Army under the Stalingrad Front command and it was deployed to guard the southwestern approaches to the city.

On August 5 the Stalingrad Front was divided into two fronts: the Stalingrad and Southeastern, the former consisting of the 63rd, 21st and 62nd armies, the 4th Tank Army and the 16th Air Army, which was still in the formative stage, and the latter of the 64th, 57th and 51st armies, the 1st Guards Army (from the GHQ Reserve) and the 8th Air Army. Later developments showed, however, that dividing the Front at the height of a furious battle had been ill-considered. On August 9 GHQ therefore rescinded the order, placing the Stalingrad Front under the Southeastern Front command (General A. I. Yeremenko).

After abortive attempts to force the Don at Kalach, the enemy regrouped, forming two assault forces: one consisting of the main forces of the 6th Army at Kalach and the other of the 4th Panzer Army at Tsimlyanskaya. They were expected to reach the Volga by successive thrusts from south and west. On July 31 the 4th Panzer Army attacked the Soviet 51st. Giving way, the latter fell back to the Salsk-Krasnoarmeisk railway.

On August 2 mobile enemy units entered Kotelnikovsky and on August 5 reached the Soviet outer defence belt at Abganerovo-Plodovitoye. On the following morning they attacked the left flank of the 64th Army, but met effective resistance. Soviet ground troops were ably assisted by airmen of both local and long-range units and the 102nd Fighter Division.

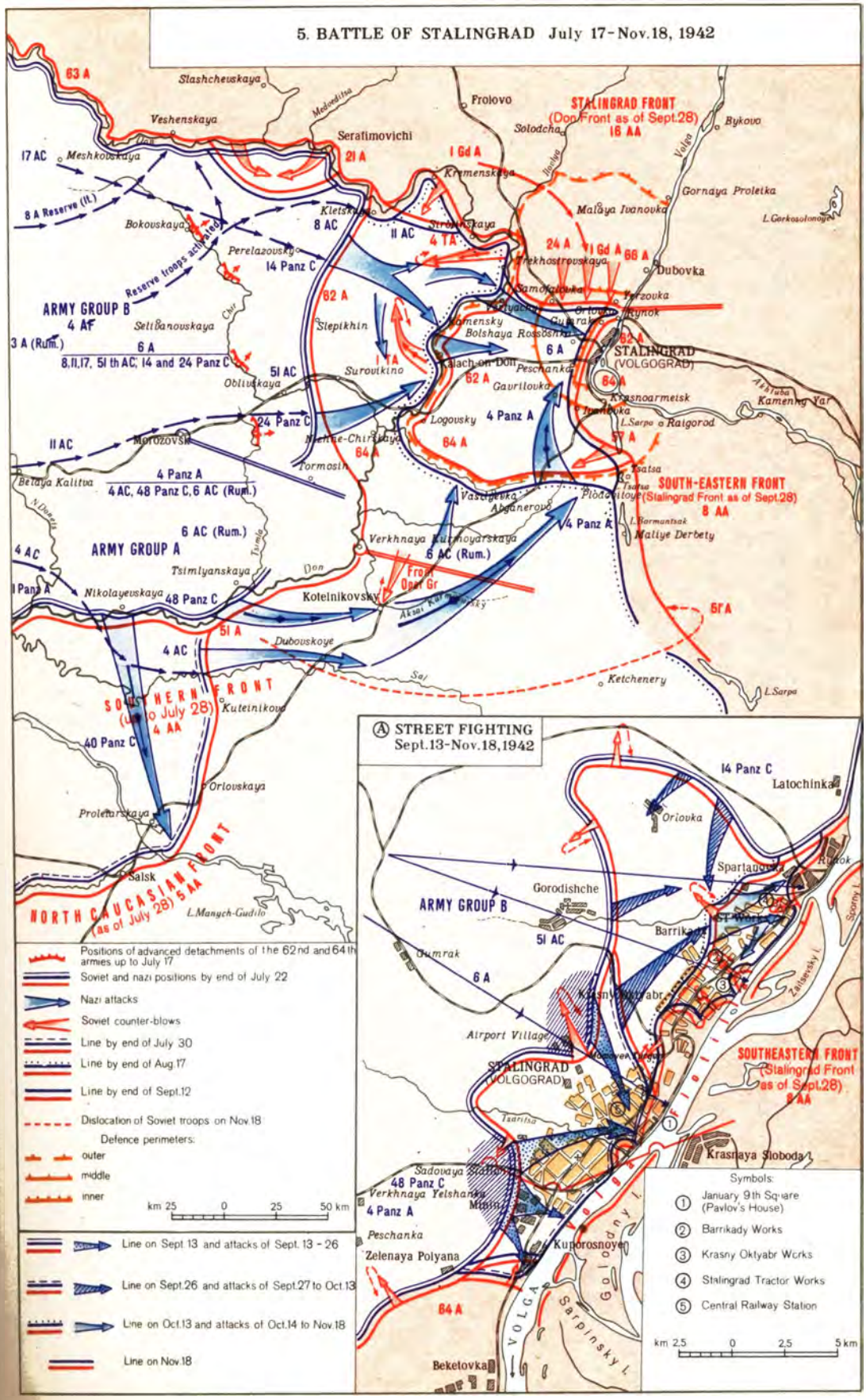
Tension increased meanwhile in the 62nd Army sector. On August 7-9, in a drive to the Volga from the west, the German 6th Army pushed the Soviet troops across the Don, while four 62nd Army divisions were trapped west of Kalach and held a perimeter defence until August 14, then breaking out in small groups. Three divisions of the 1st Guards Army were rushed in and delivered a strong counter-blow, halting the enemy.

In the middle of August the German 6th Army received orders to attack from Trekhostrovskaya against Vertyachy, cross the Don and thrust to the Volga while part of its forces struck from Kalach eastward and the 4th Panzer Army drove north from Abganerovo.

On August 15 the enemy superiority in the Stalingrad sector was 2.2:1 in field guns and mortars, 4:1 in tanks and 2:1 in aircraft. Naturally, in the direction of the main blows his superiority was even greater than this.

In view of the exceptional importance of the developments at Stalingrad, in the first half of August GHQ sent the Chief of the General Staff General A. M. Vasilevsky to that sector, and at the end of the month he was joined by General G. K. Zhukov, Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief. GHQ uninterruptedly reinforced the armies in the Stalingrad sector from its own Reserve. Particular attention was accorded to the approaches to Stalingrad. Part of the troops dug in along the middle line of defences. The regrouping of the artillery had to be completed in the course of the battle.

From August 17 the 4th Tank and 62nd armies fought fierce actions against the German forces that had seized a bridgehead near Vertyachy.


5. BATTLE OF STALINGRAD July 17 - Nov. 18, 1942
63 A
Slashcheuskaya
Veshenskaya
Serafimovichi
Frolovo
STALINGRAD FRONT
(Don Front as of Sept. 28)
16 AA
Solodcha
Bykovo
21 A
1 Gd A
17 AC
Meshkovskaya
8 A Reserve (it.)
Kremenskaya
Gornaya Proletka
Malaya Ivanovka
Bokovskaya
Kletskaya
8 AC
11 AC
4 TA
24 A
1 Gd A
66 A
Dubovka
Perelazovsky
14 Panz C
Reserve troops activated
62 A
Tinguta
Zarzovka
ARMY GROUP B
4 Af
Seltsanovskaya
Stepkhin
Samodurovka
Orlovka
Gumrak
3 A (Rum.)
6 A
8, 11, 17, 51 th AC, 14 and 24 Panz C
1 TA
Surovkino
Kalach-on-Don
Peschanka
62 A
6 A
STALINGRAD
(VOLGOGRAD)
51 AC
Oblivskaya
Gavrilovka
64 A
Krasnoarmeisk
Kamenny Yar
24 Panz C
Logovsky
4 Panz A
64 A
57 A
Raigorod
11 AC
Morozovsk
Nizhne-Chirskaya
Tormosin
Tsatsa
4 Panz A
4 AC, 48 Panz C, 6 AC (Rum.)
Vasilievka
Plodovitoye
SOUTH-EASTERN FRONT
(Stalingrad Front as of Sept. 28)
8 AA
Maliye Derbety
6 AC (Rum.)
ARMY GROUP A
Verkhnaya Kurmoyarskaya
6 AC (Rum.)
4 Panz A
4 AC
Tsimlyanskaya
Front Opal Gr
1 Panz A
Nikolayevskaya
48 Panz C
Kotelnikovsky
Aksai
57 A
51 A
4 AC
Dubovskoye
Sal
Ketchenery
SOUTHERN FRONT
(up to July 28)
4 AA
Kuteinikovo
40 Panz C
Orlovskaya
Proletarskaya
Salsk
NORTH CAUCASIAN FRONT
(as of July 28)
5 AA
L. Manych-Gudilo
Positions of advanced detachments of the 62 nd and 64 th armies up to July 17
Soviet and nazi positions by end of July 22
Nazi attacks
Soviet counter-blows
Line by end of July 30
Line by end of Aug. 17
Line by end of Sept. 12
Dislocation of Soviet troops on Nov. 18
Defence perimeters:
outer
middle
inner
km 25 0 25 50 km
Line on Sept. 13 and attacks of Sept. 13 - 26
Line on Sept. 26 and attacks of Sept. 27 to Oct. 13
Line on Oct. 13 and attacks of Oct. 14 to Nov. 18
Line on Nov. 18
A STREET FIGHTING
Sept. 13 - Nov. 18, 1942
14 Panz C
Latochinka
Orlovka
Spartanovka
Rynok
Gorodishche
ARMY GROUP B
51 AC
Barrikady
Gumrak
6 A
Krasny Oktyabr
Zaitsevsky I.
Airport Village
Moscow Suburb
STALINGRAD
(VOLGOGRAD)
SOUTHEASTERN FRONT
(Stalingrad Front as of Sept. 28)
8 AA
Tsaritsa
Krasnaya Sloboda
Sadovaya Station
48 Panz C
Verkhnaya Yelshanka
Minina
4 Panz A
Peschanka
Zelenaya Polyana
Kuporosnoye
Gorodovoy I.
64 A
VOLGA
Sarpinsky I.
Beketovka
Symbols:
1 January 9th Square (Pavlov's House)
2 Barrikady Works
3 Krasny Oktyabr Works
4 Stalingrad Tractor Works
5 Central Railway Station
km 2.5 0 2.5 5 km

Endeavouring to expand its springboard there, the German Command sent in a large 6th Army force and in five days overcame Soviet resistance, reaching the bank of the Volga at Latoshinka-Rynok towards the evening of August 23. As a result, the 62nd Army was cut off from the Stalingrad Front's main force. Straining to widen their bridgehead on the Volga, the nazis bombed the city heavily from the air. This was meant to strike panic into the troops and population and disorganise troop control. Air-raids continued throughout the following day: in 24 hours the Luftwaffe made some 2,000 sorties. The city was aflame. Factories, dwellings, hospitals and schools were wrecked. Soviet pilots shot down 90 enemy aircraft, and subsequent air attacks were heroically repulsed by fighters of General T. T. Khryukin's 8th Air Army, the 102nd Fighter Division under Colonel I. I. Krasnoyurchenko and aircraft of the Stalingrad Air Defence Corps under Colonel Y. A. Rainin.

Fierce fighting raged also in the vicinity of Samofalovka and Bolshaya Rossoshka. Troops under Generals K. A. Kovalenko and A. D. Shtevnev struck blows at the enemy in converging directions. After heavy fighting they reached Bolshaya Rossoshka, where the 87th Division was engaged in defensive battles. The enemy group that had reached the Volga was cut off from the main body. The enemy carved out a corridor and restored the situation only after bringing in fresh forces. This cost him heavy casualties. The tank-destroyers won undying glory in these battles. The group was led by Junior Lieutenant G. A. Strelkov. It held a height near Bolshaya Rossoshka. On August 24 a large detachment of German tanks surrounded the height and attacked the men, cutting them off from the regiment. The unequal battle raged for two days. The men broke through the ring after destroying 27 enemy tanks.

A machine-gun company of the 35th Guards Division under Ruben Ruis Ibarruri, son of Dolores Ibarruri, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain, distinguished itself in the fighting for Kotluban Junction. Inspired by their gallant commander, the machine-gunners effectively prevented German tanks from reaching the junction. Ruben Ibarruri was mortally wounded. For the valour and courage displayed in action he was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union.

The hardest hit was the northern outskirt. The Soviet Command hastily strengthened the defences there with two divisions and two brigades, the cadets of the Politico-Military School, all available air defence forces, a unit of sailors and a few reserve units deployed to cover the Tractor Plant. Enemy tanks and motorised infantry reaching the outskirts of the city came under withering fire from the 1077th Anti-Aircraft Regiment. Seventy tanks and several aircraft were destroyed in a day's fighting. The City Defence Committee sent civil guard units and anti-paratroop battalions to close the breach. The Military Council helped it fit out tanks repaired at the Tractor Plant. A northern defence sector was formed, which repulsed the 14th Panzer Corps. On August 24-25 more than 2,000 volunteers, chiefly Communists and Komsomol members, were sent into action. Then 8,000 more responded to the Defence Committee's call. Three infantry brigades converged to the Tractor Plant from other sectors of the Stalingrad Front and helped push the enemy out of Rynok, driving him north eight kilometres.

Sporadic fighting continued north of the Tractor Plant until the end of the month. All Soviet attempts to wipe out the enemy group that had

reached the Volga failed. Neither did the Germans succeed in capturing Stalingrad on the march, as they had planned. The enemy offensive stalled for a few days.

However, the situation in Stalingrad remained extremely tense. Day and night the city was bombed. So were the river crossings. Flame and smoke enveloped the entire area. Oil reservoirs and river tankers were set afire. Burning oil flowed down into the Volga, covering its surface. Stalingrad's water supply faltered. Electric power was cut off. Civilians sought shelter in the basements of buildings and in pits. But the factories worked on. By the end of August the population still exceeded 400,000. To avoid more casualties, the City Defence Committee organised evacuation. From August 24 to September 14 some 300,000 people and much of the factory equipment were evacuated across the Volga. This evacuation is legitimately described as an organisational feat credited to the local Communists, rivermen, the naval flotilla and the rear units of the Stalingrad and Southeastern fronts.

As August drew to a close the situation deteriorated still further. The enemy massed large forces across the Don. On August 25 units of the German 6th Army left Kalach and headed for the Volga. An attempt by the 4th Panzer Army to break through to the river bank from the south, from Plodovitoye, was halted by the 64th and 57th armies. On August 29, the nazis struck again, this time from Abganerovo. They attacked the defence lines of the 64th Army and by the evening entered Gavrilovka in the rear of the 62nd and 64th armies. The Soviet Command had to withdraw the two armies back to the middle ring of defences. But before they could dig in they were pushed to the inner perimeter, which they reached towards nightfall on September 2. The 62nd Army manned the defences along the line Rynok-Orlovka-Gumrak-Peschanka, and the 64th from Peschanka to Ivanovka.

GHQ closely followed the struggle on the Don and the Volga and took urgent steps to help the forces committed in these sectors. In order to relieve enemy pressure on the 62nd and 64th armies it ordered the 21st and the 1st Guards armies to redouble their efforts. The 24th and 66th armies were transferred to the Stalingrad Front.

By September 4 the main forces of the 24th, the 1st Guards and the 66th armies* were spread along a line running from Samofalovka to Yerzovka, and attacked the following day with the objective of smashing the enemy group on the Volga bank, restoring the junction with Southeastern Front units and diverting enemy forces from Stalingrad. Bitter fighting continued until the end of September. The 24th, 1st Guards and 66th armies, though attacking continuously, failed to bring their missions to fulfilment. However, their effort was not wasted for the enemy had to wheel a large force northward, relaxing pressure on the 62nd and 64th, which were defending the city, and thus failed to widen his bridgehead on the Volga. Once again the nazi Command was compelled to regroup its forces.

Towards the evening of September 12 the Germans were all but hugging the walls of the Tractor Plant. Being no more than three or four kilometres from the centre of the city, they were poised for the final assault, the capturing of the northern and central city districts. Two powerful blows were planned simultaneously to cut the 62nd into strips and destroy them piecemeal, and then reach the Volga from two directions. This was to be accomplished by two groups: one consisting of

* The 24th and 66th armies were from the GHQ Reserve.

four divisions east of Gumrak and another of three divisions at Verknaya Yelshanka.

The 62nd and 64th armies, shielding the city from the west, had been badly mauled in the preceding fighting. The 62nd Army, for example, which had met the enemy's main blow, had no more than 50,000 men left by mid-September. The confronting enemy force, meanwhile, was some 170,000 strong, with about 3,000 field guns and mortars and 500 tanks, and supported by up to 1,000 aircraft.

On September 13 the nazis unleashed their all-out assault on Stalingrad, aiming their main blow at Mamayev Kurgan and the railway station. The following day their pressure increased. It was one of the hardest days in the months-long defence of the city. The enemy crowded six divisions into a narrow sector, supported by hundreds of aircraft. Fighting shifted to the city streets. Tension mounted by the hour. Towards evening the Germans gained possession of the railway station and emerged on the Volga bank at Kuporosnoye. The 62nd Army was cut off from the 64th. However, units of General A. I. Rodimtsev's 13th Guards Division disembarked at the central river crossing, going into action as they stepped ashore and driving the enemy out of the city centre. On September 16 Mamayev Kurgan was also recaptured.

The fighting for the railway station, however, continued until September 27. The station building changed hands 13 times. The streets and squares of the city witnessed deadly clashes, the fury of which did not abate until the end of the Battle of Stalingrad. In the proximity of January 9th Square, for example, where the 42nd Regiment, 13th Guards Division, was dislocated, the duel grew into a continuous pounding that lasted well over two months. The brick houses there, the house now known as Sergeant Y. F. Pavlov's and another, known as Lieutenant N. Y. Zabolotny's, and Flour Mill No. 4 were held against heavy odds despite furious enemy attacks.

On September 28, GHQ formed a new Front, the Don Front, to which almost all the armies of the Stalingrad Front (save the 62nd) were transferred.* General K. K. Rokossovsky was placed in command and A. S. Zheltov was appointed member of the Military Council. Part of the Southeastern Front, which fought in the city and south of it, was converted into the Stalingrad Front. Both were responsible directly to GHQ.

Towards the close of September the fighting raged round the settlements of the Krasny Oktyabr and Barrikady factories, and by October 4 the fighting shifted to the factories' grounds. By mid-October the enemy had massed some eight divisions there, poised for the final stroke. October 14 was a day of trial for the defenders. In the morning, after a heavy pounding from the air, nazi ground troops attacked, one wave of attackers succeeding another. The main enemy force thrust towards the Tractor Plant, seeking to dissect and rout the 62nd Army. The fighting was of unparalleled intensity, developing mostly into hand-to-hand clashes and continuing day and night. On October 15 the enemy captured the Tractor Plant and broke through to the Volga. Troops north of the Tractor Plant cut off from the rest of the 62nd Army were put under the command of Colonel S. F. Gorokhov and assumed a perimeter defence in the Rynok-Spartanovka District, which they held until the end of the battle.

* Its line followed the bank of the Don from Pavlovsk to Kachalinskaya and along the Volga up to Yerzovka.

After capturing the Tractor Plant, the nazis calculated on crushing the main force of the 62nd Army, badly depleted by that time (with just a few dozen men surviving in some of its divisions). Reserves were all used up and replacements were desperately needed. Colonel I. I. Lyudnikov's 138th Division, transported across the Volga by Admiral D. D. Rogachev's flotilla, arrived on October 17 and went into action immediately.

To relieve the pressure on the 62nd Army, the Don Front attacked from somewhat north of the city on October 19, compelling the enemy to shift some of his troops to meet the threat. In the meantime, the 64th Army delivered a counter-blow at Kuporosnoye-Zelenaya Polyana, where it finally made contact with the 62nd Army. In the bitter fighting that continued until November 1, distinction was gained by Lieutenant-Colonel N. Z. Galai's 93rd Brigade, Colonel F. P. Berezhnoi's 96th and General V. V. Tikhomirov's 97th. The Soviet advance amounted to a mere three or four kilometres, but compelled the enemy to relax his effort against the factory district for a few days.

The Germans exerted themselves, but to no avail. Their attacks were effectively parried by Gorokhov's northern group and the defenders of the Krasny Oktyabr and Barrikady factories. On November 11 they made another frantic attempt to gain possession of Stalingrad. They broke through to the Volga along a narrow strip near the Barrikady Factory and cut off the 138th Division. However, this was the last Stalingrad "victory" for the nazis. Soviet staunchness outmatched German armour.

Towards the end of the defensive battle the 62nd Army was holding the area north of the Tractor Plant, Barrikady Factory and the north-eastern streets in the city centre, while the 64th Army stood at the approaches to the southern part of Stalingrad.

In the long and bloody fighting the defenders of Stalingrad beat back the enemy's furious onslaught, displaying unparalleled courage, heroism and valour. The nation reveres the names of the heroes of Stalingrad. A worthy place in the chronicle of the battle is occupied by the men who won glory in defending Pavlov's House; by artilleryman V. Y. Boltenko, who engaged 15 enemy tanks and forced them to flee; by signalmen V. P. Titayev and M. M. Putilov, who, though mortally wounded, restored communication by holding the ends of a telephone wire in their teeth; by snipers V. G. Zaitsev, V. I. Medvedev, and a host of others. Pilots I. S. Polbin, I. I. Kleshchev, N. P. Tokarev, V. G. Kamenshchikov and M. D. Baranov distinguished themselves in the sky over the Volga. Among Stalingrad's defenders were 100,000 marines. Soviet people will not forget the name of Komsomol member M. A. Panikakha of the Pacific Fleet. During an engagement with enemy tanks he was about to throw an incendiary bottle, when it was pierced by a bullet. A great sheet of flame enveloped the marine. Leaping out of his trench with another bottle in his hand, he ran to an enemy tank and threw it into the engine compartment, setting the machine on fire.

Skill, initiative and courage were displayed in the fighting at Stalingrad by N. F. Batyuk, D. N. Bely, V. A. Gorishny, S. F. Gorokhov, L. N. Gurtyev, V. G. Zholudev, I. I. Lyudnikov, A. I. Rodimtsev and many other renowned commanders.

The top commanders, too, acquitted themselves splendidly. They included A. I. Yeremenko, G. F. Zakharov, N. I. Krylov, R. Y. Malinovsky, S. I. Rudenko, F. I. Tolbukhin, T. T. Khryukin, V. I. Chuikov and M. S. Shumilov.

The troops at the firing lines were effectively assisted by rear and supply units, medical personnel, railwaymen and other troops. Sailors of the Volga Flotilla and the Lower Volga Shipping Line played an exceptionally important role in the defensive battles. Under enemy fire they transported tens of thousands of troops, and thousands of tons of ammunition and food from the eastern bank. Gunboats of the Volga Flotilla gave the infantry units fire support.

The thoughts of the nation were focussed on the Battle of Stalingrad. Replacements, arms, ammunition, food and medical supplies streamed in. In the Stalingrad factories, workers stayed at their work-benches until the last moment, making arms, then joined the troops and fought back enemy attacks.

The young people, especially Komsomol members, performed feats of dedication. Thousands joined the Army. Eight hundred girls and young women volunteered to the 64th Army alone as nurses and wireless operators, while 200 Komsomol members helped reconnaissance squads. The city's Komsomol organisation received the Order of the Red Banner for its contribution to the war effort.

The defenders of Stalingrad fulfilled the main tasks set by the Supreme Command. In the fierce July-November fighting between the Volga and the Don, the enemy lost nearly 700,000 men killed and wounded, more than 1,000 tanks, upwards of 2,000 field guns and mortars and over 1,400 aircraft.

The moving spirit was the Communist Party, which was at the heart of everything and inspired the army and people to heroism. The Communists went to the hottest points and their example of fearlessness and devotion was a model for all. Their bravery added to the prestige of the Party among servicemen, as evidenced by the influx of new members. In the 62nd Army alone, some 4,600 officers and men joined the Party in September-November 1942, and the total for the Stalingrad Front in the same period was 14,500 applications.

The defensive battle lasted 125 days and nights. The whole world followed it with bated breath. The extraordinary courage of the Soviet soldier won the admiration of all progressive people. Stalingrad was a milestone on the road to victory, paving the way for a Red Army counter-offensive.

6. BATTLES IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

The eastern bank of the Don was manned along a 330-kilometre sector from Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya to the river's mouth by the 51st Army of the North Caucasian Front and the 37th, 12th and 18th armies of the Southern Front. The battle-scarred 56th Army was transferred to the second echelon. All of the fronts' five armies had suffered heavy casualties. By July 25, 1942, this force totalled a mere 112,000 men, 121 tanks,* and 2,160 field guns and mortars. In addition, the Southern Front had the 4th Air Army of 130 aircraft.

The eastern shore of the Sea of Azov, the Kerch Straits and the Black Sea coast up to Lazarevskoye was held by Marshal S. M. Budyonny's North Caucasian Front. Besides the 51st Army, it had the 47th Army, the 1st Separate Infantry Corps, the 17th Cavalry Corps and the 5th

* Of this number 104 tanks arrived in the 51st Army at the end of July.

Air Army. Operationally, the Front's Military Council also controlled the Black Sea Fleet and the Azov Naval Flotilla.

General I. V. Tyulenev's Transcaucasian Front defended the coast from Lazarevskoye to Batumi and guarded the Soviet-Turkish frontier. Part of its troops were in Northern Iran along the Persian-Turkish frontier.

The German troops which had pushed into the Lower Don area in the second half of July were ordered to encircle and destroy the units that had retreated across the Don south and southeast of Rostov, then gain possession of the Northern Caucasus. One army group was to bypass the Main Caucasian Range from the west, capturing Novorossiisk and Tuapse, and another from the east, capturing Grozny and Baku. Another force would climb the central passes and reach Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Sukhumi. Once the Transcaucasus was overrun, the nazis expected to make contact with the Turkish army, 26 of whose divisions stood poised along the Soviet border. Also, the nazis would be ready to invade the Middle East.

In planning the Caucasian operation, the German Command banked on alleged discord among the Caucasian peoples. The enemy did not take into account the radical changes that had occurred in this area after the Revolution. Army Group A, reinforced on July 13 by the 4th Panzer Army, was assigned to the capture of the Caucasus with 167,000 men, 1,130 tanks, 4,540 field guns and mortars and nearly 1,000 aircraft. The numerical advantage over the Soviet forces was 1.5:1 in men, 2:1 in artillery, more than 9:1 in tanks and nearly 8:1 in planes.

The German forces started from the Don bank on July 25. The panzer armies (1st and 4th) struck at Salsk and Voroshilovsk (Stavropol) and the 17th Army at Krasnodar. Soviet divisions gave way, especially where hit by tanks, and withdrew south and southeast. The enemy advanced 80 kilometres in two days.

To improve control, on July 28 GHQ incorporated the Southern in the North Caucasian Front under S. M. Budyonny. GHQ set the Front the task of crushing and hurling the enemy group back to the western bank of the Don.

The Transcaucasian Front, meanwhile, was ordered to build fortifications along the rivers Terek and Urukh and along the passes over the Main Caucasian Range and deploy troops there. Deep defences were to be built along the line Grozny-Makhachkala. To give the Front additional strength, General Headquarters dispatched several infantry units and some artillery and tank units from its own Reserve.

The threat of a nazi breakthrough into the Caucasus loomed large. Local government and Party bodies formed national army units and partisan detachments and prepared for a Party underground. Transcaucasian factories were quickly converted to the production of mortars, submachine-guns, ammunition and other equipment. Tens of thousands of people helped build fortifications and buttress coastal inhabited localities. Teams of air wardens were formed at the bigger industrial enterprises. Caspian merchant ships and naval vessels shipped considerable state property to safety.

Large-scale political work was conducted among the ranks. Members of military councils and many political officers visited the units. In July-August 1942 local Party organisations sent more than 3,000 Communists to the Army.

At the end of July and in early August the fighting in the North Caucasian Front sector gained momentum in a rapidly changing situation.

Making the most of their mobility, the nazi armies reached Proletarskaya-Salsk-Belaya Glina at the end of July and drove on towards Voroshilovsk and Kropotkin. To avoid encirclement the Soviet forces were withdrawn across the Kuban River.

On failing to encircle the Soviet units north of that river, the nazi Command wheeled the bulk of the 1st Panzer Army southwest to Maikop and Tuapse, co-ordinating its moves with the 17th Army, the objective being to destroy the Soviet forces in the Krasnodar-Novorossiisk-Tuapse triangle. Only one panzer corps proceeded in the Grozny direction.

Fierce fighting broke out in the Maikop sector in the first two weeks of August. The powerful enemy force battled doggedly. On August 6, enemy tanks forced the Kuban at Armavir and entered Maikop on August 10. The following day, Soviet troops abandoned Krasnodar.

For more efficient troop control, GHQ on August 8 formed a Northern Group of the Transcaucasian Front, consisting of the 44th and 9th armies, under General I. I. Maslennikov, reinforcing it three days later with the 37th Army of the North Caucasian Front. The Northern Group was ordered to cover Grozny.

Troops in the Tuapse direction were also given supplementary missions. General G. P. Kotov's 47th Army, retreating from the Taman Peninsula, arrived in Novorossiisk. On August 10, General Headquarters ordered the North Caucasian Front to block the route to the sea with General F. V. Kamkov's 18th Army and the 17th Cossack Cavalry Corps. In the meantime, General A. A. Grechko's 12th Army was deployed to cover the junction of the 18th with General A. I. Ryzhov's 56th Army.

These moves stiffened resistance in the latter half of August, compelling the nazis to regroup. The 1st Panzer Army, driving to Krasnodar-Tuapse, wheeled sharply southeastward, striking from Pyatigorsk-Prokhladny against Grozny-Baku. The 17th Army, meanwhile, was to break through from Krasnodar to the Black Sea and advance along the coast southeastward to Batumi. The 42nd Corps of the 11th Army, stationed in the Crimea, was to cross the Kerch Straits and assist the 17th Army in taking Novorossiisk. The Caucasian passes were to be dealt with by the 49th Mountain Infantry Corps, whose ultimate objective was Sukhumi.

On August 18 the enemy opened action against the Northern Group, flinging back its forward units and capturing Mozdok on August 25. GHQ countered by moving in the 58th Army from Makhachkala. As a result, the 1st Panzer Army's thrust from Mozdok-Prokhladny against Grozny collapsed. However, the nazis forced the Terek and captured a small bridgehead. Here stiff resistance was put up by General K. A. Koroteyev's 9th Army.

In the meantime, fierce fighting broke out in the central part of the Main Caucasian Range. Soviet defences were poorly organised, for the Command had underestimated the enemy's strength. Between August 17 and September 9 the nazis bored through the 46th Army and captured nearly all the passes. At some points, moreover, they drove 10-15 kilometres south of them. Sukhumi was in peril and additional Soviet forces were rushed in.

Party organisations in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia worked overtime. Special mountain units were formed of local volunteers and sent to the passes, and local transport facilities were mobilised to move in supplies. This helped stem the nazi drive. The Germans never reached the Transcaucasus.

The situation at Novorossiisk was tense. After bitter street fighting, the Soviet troops abandoned the city in the night of September 9, retaining possession of the eastern shore of Tsemess Bay. However, the enemy was prevented from developing his success along the shore to Tuapse. The German Command had no choice but to halt the offensive. The nazis were also denied use of the port of Novorossiisk for shipping in supplies, because gun, mortar and machine-gun fire ensured Soviet control of the bay.

Towards the end of September tension eased in the Northern Caucasus. The nazis were halted in all directions.

Fighting costly rearguard actions in extraordinarily difficult conditions, the Soviet forces withdrew to the foothills of the Mam Caucasian Range, abandoning to the enemy Rostov Region, the Kalmyk Autonomous Republic and the Krasnodar and Orjonikidze (Stavropol) territories. The nazis also pushed into Kabardino-Balkaria, Northern Ossetia and Checheno-Ingushetia. However, the five-months-long Soviet resistance foiled the nazi plan of capturing the Transcaucasus and the Grozny and Baku oilfields and halted the enemy.

Soviet ground forces were ably assisted by naval ships, shore artillery, aircraft and marines. Warships transported replacements, arms, ammunition, fuel and food. More than 200,000 men and 250,000 tons of materiel were shipped in by sea in the latter six months of 1942.

The partisans, too, gave a good account of themselves in the battle for the Caucasus. As many as 142 partisan detachments operated behind the enemy lines in Krasnodar and Orjonikidze territories, the units of Maikop oilworkers displaying particularly great prowess. The five detachments operating in the area drove the enemy out of several villages and retained control of them from October 1942 to January 1943.

The nazi plan of sowing national discord and provoking conflicts between the peoples of the Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasus fell through. National army formations from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia fought shoulder to shoulder. The passes of the Main Caucasian Range were manned by General K. N. Leselidze's 46th Army raised in the Transcaucasus. The 44th Army, which covered the approaches to Azerbaijan and Georgia, also contained units from the Transcaucasian republics and the Northern Caucasus. The all but inaccessible mountain areas were defended by special mountain units formed of the local population.

Enemy successes did not shake the people's faith in final victory and only spurred them to heroic effort. The soldiers fought the enemy to a standstill. They inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and pinned down his forces. The German Command was unable to transfer any considerable part of its forces to Stalingrad when the Red Army began its counter-offensive.

Let us briefly review the results of the campaign of the summer and autumn of 1942.

Concentrating its main effort in the Stalingrad and Caucasian directions, the German Command started a large-scale offensive in these sectors. The Germans seized the Donets Basin, broke through to the Volga, captured the rich agricultural areas of the Don and the Kuban and reached the North Caucasian oilfields. But they fell short of their principal objective, that of finally destroying the Soviet Armed Forces and ending the war against the USSR in 1942. By ordering, on October 14, 1942, all the German forces on the Soviet-German front to go over

to the defensive, Hitler and his generals admitted the total failure of the cardinal aim of their strategic plans.

The Soviet Armed Forces faced a stern test in the campaign of the summer and autumn of 1942. But the efforts of the whole Soviet people and the great sacrifices made by the Red Army were not wasted. In the fierce battles that raged from mid-May to the latter half of November 1942 the Red Army withstood the furious pressure of the enemy, exhausted his strength and now prepared to go over from defence to a decisive offensive. United round the Leninist Party, the Soviet troops were determined to smash the enemy and hurl him far to the West.

Chapter Seven

MOBILISATION OF THE REAR IN 1942

1. BUILD-UP OF AN EFFICIENT WAR ECONOMY

The reorganisation of the economy continued in the first half of 1942 at a swift pace. Industry, agriculture, transport, science, literature and art served the needs of the war. Available plant was used to the utmost, new iron-and-steel mills were put into operation, especially in the Urals and Siberia. In Magnitogorsk, blast furnace No. 5, built in just under eight months where before the war it took 30 months to build one, produced its first smelt in December, and henceforth produced a daily 1,400 tons. The new furnace, the equipment for which was manufactured at Soviet factories, was the biggest in Europe. Construction of the Chelyabinsk iron-and-steel combine began.

Metal, the main material of war production, was in demand. Responding to this demand, the country in 1942 produced 4,800,000 tons of pig iron, 8,100,000 tons of steel and 5,400,000 tons of rolled stock. Production of alloy steel was started. In the eastern areas alone grade rolled stock output increased 6 per cent over the 1940 figure for the whole country. To illustrate the war-time role of the eastern areas it will suffice to recall that in 1942 the Urals and Western Siberia produced 97.4 per cent of the country's pig iron, 81.8 per cent of its steel and 84 per cent of its rolled stock, while Kazakhstan alone produced more than 85 per cent of all the lead and more than 50 per cent of the copper ore.

The fuel industry encountered great difficulties in the early period of the war. Yet fuel is the bread of industry. The difficulties were caused by the transfer of factories to the east, the long enemy occupation of the Donets Basin, then the main Soviet coal area, and the occupation of the Moscow coalfields. Though the nazis were in control of the latter for less than a month, they inflicted untold damage, flooding nearly all the mines and burning down the miners' homes. At the end of 1941 coal production was down to zero. In January 1942, soon after it was cleared of the enemy, the Moscow Basin produced as little as 590 tons of coal a day. The workers of Moscow and Tula repaired the damage quickly. By May 1942 coal output went up to 22,400 tons a day, and to 35,000 tons in October, exceeding the pre-war level.

Coal output was also increased in the Kuznetsk Basin, Karaganda, the Southern Urals (Bashkiria, the Chelyabinsk and Chkalov regions) and the Extreme North (Vorkuta-Inta coal basin). As a result, the Urals yielded 37 per cent and the Karaganda Basin 12 per cent more coal than in 1940. However, the country's coal output declined sharply, amounting in 1942 to 75,500,000 tons or 46 per cent of the 1940 figure.

Despite the efforts of the Baku and Grozny oilmen, the country also experienced oil shortages. The Grozny oilfields, threatened by the enemy, were partly dismantled and their equipment shipped east. To offset this, steps were taken to increase oil output in Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, Bashkiria and the Volga area. Timber felling was also boosted to meet part of the fuel shortage. Tens of thousands of Communists, Komsomol members and other citizens responded to the emergency and volunteered to work at the timber camps.

Electric power, too, was in big demand, especially in the east, where a shortage of it had existed even before the war. New power stations were built therefore. In 1942, total Soviet power output was 29,100 million kwh, or 60 per cent of the pre-war level. Non-industrial power consumption was drastically restricted.

All this helped to boost output of war material and, consequently, eliminate the enemy's technical advantage. In December 1942 manufacture of aircraft was 230 per cent over December 1941 and manufacture of aircraft engines 440 per cent over. In the latter half of 1941, the Air Force was supplied monthly with about 1,750 new planes; in 1942 the figure climbed to 2,260. The number of aircraft built in 1942 aggregated 25,436, or 60 per cent in excess of 1941. Manufacture of Il-2 attack planes, as good as any German plane of the same class, increased 470 per cent. Production also increased of other new Soviet aircraft—the Yak-7 and La-5 fighters and Pe-2 bombers. The experimental and designing bureaus headed by A. S. Yakovlev and S. V. Ilyushin were decorated with Orders for developing new types of aircraft.

The tank industry also increased output, supplying the Army with considerably more tanks than were lost at the front. In 1942, as compared with the preceding year, the production of tanks of all types went up 270 per cent. That year saw the production of 24,688 tanks, 50.8 per cent of which were medium T-34s. In January 1943, as compared with January 1942, the Red Army had over 4.5 times more tanks at the firing lines and in the reserve. In December 1942, 4.6 times more tank diesels were produced than in the same month in 1941. It now became possible to end the enemy's tank superiority. In 1942 nazi Germany produced only 9,300 tanks, which were in many ways inferior to Soviet tanks.

Arms output climbed steadily. In 1942 the Red Army was supplied with 3,237 rocket launchers, while output of 76-mm and bigger guns increased to 29,561. All in all, gun manufacture in December 1942 exceeded that of the year before by 80 per cent, and of machine-guns by 90 per cent. Although the main Tula firearms factories had been evacuated, output of rifles rose 55 per cent, while output of 120-mm mortars nearly tripled. The field guns and firearms made in 1942 could fully equip 535 infantry and cavalry divisions, 342 artillery regiments and 57 airborne units, a fitting testimonial for the workers and engineers in boosting war production.

The eastern regions became the main war-industrial base. In the Urals, war production in 1942 was more than 5-fold that of 1940, in Western Siberia 27-fold, and in the territory adjoining the Volga 9-fold. In March 1942 the eastern regions matched the war production of the entire Soviet Union at the beginning of the war.

Georgia's war industries expanded rapidly. So did Azerbaijan's and Armenia's. Investments were increased and new enterprises were built. The output of the engineering and iron-and-steel plants spiralled, with many switched to arms and ammunition production.

The 1942 summer offensive of the nazis created new economic difficulties. Some enterprises had to be evacuated a second time. Yet the people redoubled their effort. When the Stalingrad Tractor Works, making the medium T-34 tanks, was threatened, the Urals Engineering Works swiftly switched to the manufacture of these tanks in October, though it had not been originally scheduled to begin producing them until much later. One more example. Seeking to straddle the Volga, the enemy cut the main railway lines carrying oil and oil products from the Caucasus. Shipping oil across the Caspian Sea was difficult. But the oilmen found a way of storing the precious fuel: they pumped it into mountain crevices, so it could be used at a later day. A way out was also found when Saratov's big industries, which supplied arms to the troops at Stalingrad, experienced acute fuel shortages. Despite enemy bombing, a gas pipeline was laid in record time from Yelshanka.

To make matters worse, the labour shortage became more acute. On February 13, 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, therefore, issued a decree mobilising for the duration of the war able-bodied civilians to work in industry and building. Hundreds of thousands came to the war factories, the building sites and the transport industry. But many, especially the women, who then comprised 52 per cent of the industrial labour force, and teen-agers, were untrained. Training proceeded directly at factories, at work-benches, individually and in teams. Besides, factory schools, vocational schools and railway schools were expanded. An important economic problem in wartime, the mass training of skilled workers for industry, was successfully solved.

The effort in the rear ironed out many of the difficulties of 1942; under the nation-wide socialist emulation movement people worked hard to boost the productivity of labour, to find new potentialities at all factories. The movement to attain maximum smelts per square metre of furnace launched at the end of 1941 at the Kushva and Verkh-Issetsk steel mills was joined by steelmen elsewhere in the country. Those who had been yielding double norms, began yielding three per shift. Some workers developed techniques allowing them to put out from five to ten norms per shift. The first of the latter was turner D. F. Bosyi, who arrived in Nizhny Tagil with a factory evacuated from Leningrad and fulfilled his shift assignment 1,480 per cent and his five-months' assignment in 15 days. Bosyi was awarded the State Prize. A new method of boring was devised and employed by A. I. Semivolos, of Krivoi Rog, and I. P. Yankin, of the Urals, who were also awarded the State Prize.

New forms of emulation appeared: pre-schedule fulfilment of shift assignments, even hourly assignments, and learning ancillary trades. Competition among individual workers, shops and factories grew into competition between industrial centres.

The Party Central Committee welcomed the suggestion of an all-Union competition for steel and aviation workers, and the tank industry.

Challenge Banners of the State Defence Committee, the Party Central Committee, the Trade Union Council and the People's Commissariats were instituted. Funds were allocated for bonuses to workers, engineers and office staff. Contests were started in various trades for the title of best foreman, and so on. Komsomol and youth teams competed among themselves, many winning the cherished title of Front-Line Team.

Winners were presented awards by representatives of Red Army Guards units at special ceremonies which, too, served as an incentive and strengthened bonds between the Army and the people.

The dedicated labour brought final victory closer. In 1942 labour productivity rose 18 per cent, and in engineering as much as 34 per cent over 1941. The down curve in industrial production ceased as of December 1941. As of March of the following year, it began climbing steeply. The 1942 war-economic plan was fulfilled in gross by 92 per cent, the total output of the war industries and engineering in December 1942 being more than double that of the previous December and 50 per cent higher than that of December 1940.

Collective farmers and state-farm workers likewise worked without stinting their strength. The effort to produce more grain, meat, vegetables and cotton became a victory effort. Most of the men had gone to the war and their places were taken by women, teen-agers and old men. Women learned to operate harvester-combines, tractors and other machinery. At machine-and-tractor stations women comprised more than 40 per cent of the tractor drivers, 43 per cent of the combine operators, 36 per cent of the lorry drivers and some 10 per cent of the tractor team leaders in 1942, while in 1940 the figures were respectively 8.5, 8, 7 and 1 per cent. Able-bodied town people not employed in industry or transport were also enlisted to do farm work, and temporarily so were part of the office workers. What made things worse was that summer and autumn ploughing had not been completed in 1941 due to the reduced number of tractors and other machines. Furthermore, fuel, lubricants and spare parts ran short.

In the new circumstances, labour on the collective farms, machine-and-tractor stations and state farms had to be organised along new lines. A team and sub-team system was introduced. Machine-and-tractor station personnel were paid bonuses for fulfilling and overfulfilling assignments, and premiums were paid to tractor drivers and collective farmers operating trailer-type farm machinery.

A nation-wide socialist emulation movement, along the lines of that in industry, was launched in agriculture.

Emulation among livestock-breeders was begun on the initiative of the collective farmers of Kugalin District, Alma-Ata Region, Kazakhstan. And the staff of the Bolshe-Rakovskaya Machine-and-Tractor Station, Kuibyshev Region, suggested emulation among machine-and-tractor station workers, while the girl tractor drivers of Orjonikidze Territory initiated a country-wide contest for tractor teams.

These movements produced their own heroes. People got to hear of the leader of a women's tractor team, D. Garmash, of the Rybnovskaya Machine-and-Tractor Station, Ryazan Region. She had so organised the shifts that the tractors were in the field 21-22 hours daily during the sowing. The team fulfilled its annual plan in June and one more seasonal assignment before the end of the year.

That the emulation movement was an effective production booster was confirmed by the spring sowing in 1942. Cultivated land in unoccupied territory increased from 63,400,000 hectares in 1940 to 67,000,000 in 1942, the grain area increasing by 2,200,000 hectares—an achievement equivalent to winning a battle at the front.

The farmers were badgered by numerous difficulties when harvesting. To bring home the harvest with the minimum loss, they used sickles and scythes, as well as harvester-combines and other machinery. A mass movement was launched to supply grain over and above the plan. Many collective farms joined in the drive to place the 1942 harvest entirely at the disposal of the Red Army. The Central Committee and the Government responded by instituting a Red Army grain fund of 2,320,000 tons.

The sowing of winter crops became a priority task. War had spread to many of the grain-producing areas, greatly reducing the country's grain stocks. This had to be made good with winter crops in excess of the target. Their area was increased by 2,600,000 hectares over 1940: specifically, in Siberia by 64 per cent and in Kazakhstan and Central Asia by 47 per cent. More industrial crops, too, were sown, the area under sugar-beet, sunflowers and other crops being expanded by more than 350,000 hectares.

Animal husbandry was in difficulties. Due to the occupation, the livestock population at the end of 1942 was 48 per cent less than at the end of 1940. The eastern regions became the main suppliers of meat, of which they produced 22 per cent more than in 1941.

Despite the strenuous efforts of the collective and state farms, however, the vast loss of cultivated land and of the livestock population was not made good in 1942. The aggregate grain harvest was lower than in 1940, shrinking to less than one-third—from 95,500,000 tons to 29,700,000 tons. This drop was due not only to the invasion, but also to the decline to half in the yield owing to war-time difficulties: the labour shortage, the shortage of machines, poorer soil cultivation, lack of fertilisers, and so on. The crop of cotton, flax, sugar-beet, sunflower seeds and potatoes dropped. State stores of food and raw materials decreased, affecting supplies in town and country. However, rigid rationing assured almost unintermittent supplies for the Army and nation. The vitality of the collective and state farm system and the patriotic devotion of the peasants enabled the country to cope with the war-time difficulties. The Soviet peasant, brought up by the Party, spared no effort. Conscious of the need, he turned over at a sacrifice to himself all available stores of food to the state.

Transport was hard hit. By the beginning of 1942 some 39 per cent of the country's railways were in enemy-occupied territory. The number of river and sea-going vessels decreased. So did automobile traffic. Manufacture of locomotives and railway cars dropped to nearly nil, while shipments by rail and waterway shrank.

Drastic measures were taken. Many heroic chapters were written into the annals of the war by the railwaymen and engineer troops. With unexampled bravery, they restored war-damaged lines and laid new tracks, often under enemy fire. In January and February 1942 alone, they put back into operation 3,043 kilometres of railway.

The German 1942 summer offensive brought fresh hardships. To ensure an unintermittent flow of ammunition and food to the front, the railwaymen laid a line parallel to the Volga (Saratov-Panshino) and another from Kizlyar to Astrakhan. This feat was little short of a miracle. The enemy did his best to disrupt the railways in areas adjoining the Volga and to disorganise water-borne traffic. Yet he failed, because the railway workers and rivermen performed their duty staunchly despite continuous air attacks.

The relocation of factories doubled the importance of the railways between the Urals, Siberia and Central Asia. Especially in the Urals and Western Siberia, the lines carried more traffic than seemingly possible, with some freights getting the same priority as military trains.

A socialist emulation movement was started in transport, just as in industry and agriculture. It was initiated by the Moscow branch of the Lenin Railway, which suggested doubling aid to the front. Workers competed in progressive methods. Among other things, they organised non-stop traffic, locomotives making two or three successive trips before

calling at the main depot, and crews competed in repairing locomotives en route and in the depot by the N. A. Lunin method.

Coping creditably with the war-time difficulties, the railwaymen increased average daily freight handling up to 45,500 cars in the third quarter of 1942, surpassing the first quarter mark by 25 per cent. The plan for military freight was exceeded by 3 per cent.

The river fleet, the merchant marine and the civil air fleet worked selflessly, too. They carried freight, and landed forces under enemy fire, participating in armed actions. In 1942, the civil air fleet increased passenger carriage by 12 per cent over 1940.

The many millions employed in communication gave a good account of themselves in the economy and on the battlefield. In 1942, communication was expanded in the eastern regions and direct telegraph and telephone connections were swiftly established with Kuibyshev, to which many Government offices had been removed from Moscow. A cable was laid from Krasnovodsk to Baku across the Caspian Sea, and powerful radio centres were set up in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Kuibyshev and Irkutsk. The telephone exchanges in many of the cities were expanded, and tens of thousands of radio relay points built.

The second half of 1942 witnessed the steady growth of the Soviet war industry. The war economy began to operate smoothly, providing the Armed Forces with all the necessary supplies. German General Butlar wrote that in starting the war against the USSR Hitler "had hoped that by capturing the rich farm areas along the western bank of the Dnieper in the Ukraine and cutting the Russians from the Caucasian oilfields, the Germans would paralyse the Russian economy for a long time". History blasted these wild hopes. Subsequently, General Tippelskirch wrote: "The newly-built war industry on the far side of the Urals and also the plants rebased there now operated at full capacity and supplied the Army with sufficient quantities of artillery, tanks and ammunition." That in fact describes the situation. Together with the Red Army the Soviet people laid the foundation for the coming victory. Here the decisive part was played by the working class, which accomplished a colossal and unparalleled labour feat. A large contribution was made by the collective farmers, state-farm workers and the people's intelligentsia. Under the wise leadership of the Communist Party they worked as a monolithic body, building the economic foundation which turned the tide of the war.

2. SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ART AND LITERATURE

Many research institutes were relocated to the east in the early months of the war. The difficulties they encountered in their new sites were enormous. But Soviet researchers surmounted the difficulties. The 76 research institutions of the Academy of Sciences, transferred to the far rear, were staffed by 118 Academicians, 182 Corresponding Members and thousands of ranking researchers.

The Academy of Sciences was the organisational centre, its Presidium, evacuated to Sverdlovsk, setting the new war-imposed tasks. A general meeting of the Academy was convened in Sverdlovsk in May 1942 to discuss the challenges and set the guidelines.

The planned nature of the socialist economy enabled scientists to follow comprehensive, fruitful trends. Researchers in various branches of science and technology joined hands, maintaining close contact with

industry. The bond between theory and practice, a keynote in Soviet research, was particularly strong during the war.

In December 1941, scientists submitted their recommendations of how to expand the key industries in the Urals. Somewhat later, a Committee headed by Academician Y. A. Chudakov produced a programme for the Volga area and the Kama territory. A. Y. Fersman, K. I. Satpayev, and other geologists helped discover new deposits of iron ore in the Kuznetsk Basin and the Urals, new oilfields in Bashkiria, large deposits of bauxite on the eastern slopes of the Urals and deposits of molybdenum in Kazakhstan.

Scientists conducting research in metallurgy collaborated with engineers to develop high-speed smelts in open-hearth furnaces and methods of producing high-grade steel and rolled stock. Many researchers were busy finding substitutes for critical materials, quick-cutting steel and designed new appliances and instruments for aircraft, artillery and ships, and means of protecting weapons. New methods were devised for making mortar tubes.

Designers, researchers and engineers did much to further military science. Designer S. V. Ilyushin, Hero of Socialist Labour, improved his Il-2 attack plane, dreaded by the Germans, who christened it "Black Death". Designer S. A. Lavochkin, Hero of Socialist Labour, developed the single-seater high-speed La-5 fighter, which was the terror of German pilots flying Messerschmitts. Designer A. S. Yakovlev, Hero of Socialist Labour, produced the Yak-3 fighter. As early as 1940 designers A. I. Mikoyan and M. I. Gurevich produced the MiG interceptor, which was the fastest fighter aircraft of its day. Designers N. A. Kucherenko, M. I. Koshkin, A. A. Morozov and Z. Y. Kotin developed the T-34, KV-1 and other tanks. Inventors produced the famous Katyusha rocket launchers, armourpiercing shells, new types of automatic firearms and anti-tank rifles. G. S. Shpagin designed a first-class submachine-gun and the veteran designers V. A. Degtyarev and F. V. Tokarev, too, produced excellent automatic arms. A. P. Alexandrov, B. A. Gayev, I. V. Kurchatov, A. R. Regel, P. G. Stepanov and many others solved for the Navy the problem of fighting mines. In besieged Sevastopol, Kurchatov shared war-time hardships with the sailors, helping demagnetise the ships of the Black Sea Fleet. His method proved highly effective against the German magnetic mines. Chemists produced new types of raw materials and improved synthetic rubber and explosives.

Considerable progress was registered in biology, agriculture and medicine. Researchers found new industrial uses for farm products and helped increase yields of food and industrial crops. Sugar-beet was sown in the eastern regions for the first time, new methods having been developed for its cultivation.

Academicians N. N. Burdenko, A. N. Bakulev and L. A. Orbeli and professors S. S. Yudin and A. V. Vishnevsky, along with many others, developed new medical techniques. Surgery made spectacular headway, putting more soldiers back on their feet in less time.

Mathematics, too, as well as physics and chemistry, advanced, impelled by the attainments of mathematicians P. S. Alexandrov and S. N. Bernstein, physicists S. I. Vavilov, A. F. Ioffe, P. L. Kapitsa, I. V. Kurchatov, L. I. Mandelstam and chemists N. D. Zelinsky and I. V. Grebenshchikov.

Fruitful work was done on the problems of atomic fission, laying the foundation for the future breakthroughs in rocketry and aeronautics.

Shorter training at university level establishments and technical schools was imperative for the war effort. More students were admitted to

technical faculties, and the student body included many more young women. Admission for post-graduate work was also enlarged.

Ideological work was carried out on a large scale. The Party slogan, "All for the Front, All for Victory!" was a watchword for the entire nation. Mass political work in town and country was based on Lenin's teaching concerning the defence of the socialist motherland, cultivating in every citizen a sense of socialist patriotism and personal responsibility.

Talks and newspaper readings and other forms of agitation proved to be the most mobile and flexible in reaching the people. In 1942, the Party had 3,000,000 agitators and propagandists, the exponents of its policy and ideas. Ten groups of competent Party workers, researchers and military men were formed in 1942 under the Propaganda and Agitation Administration of the Party's Central Committee.

The Soviet Information Bureau and the various anti-fascist committees (All-Slav, Jewish, Soviet Youth, Soviet Women), established in the early period of the war, carried on considerable political and ideological work.

Factory and office Party organisations worked in the community and in air-raid shelters. Agitation centres, clubs, reading rooms, libraries, museums and exhibitions were extremely well attended, and information bulletins and various forms of graphic media had a large public.

The central and local press helped immensely to rally the people for the war effort. Publishing houses issued literature exposing the man-hating ideology of the nazi invaders, especially their racial mania. Books were produced about the glorious past of the peoples of the USSR, the heroes in battle and in the rear, about the Red Army in the Civil War. In 1942 the Institute of Marx-Engels-Lenin, at the CC CPSU(B), produced new editions of the Marxist-Leninist classics on war and the army.

Writers, poets, composers and artists worked wholeheartedly with the rest of the people. Their novels, poems, music, paintings and graphic art roused love of country and confidence in victory, exposed the man-hating nazi ideology.

Articles and feature stories proved a good form of propaganda. They were imbued with a fighting spirit centred on defending the socialist land, on its grandeur, its glorious history, the fine qualities of the Soviet man, and the socialist gains that had flung open the floodgates for social progress. In a *Pravda* article, "What We Are Defending", Alexei Tolstoi wrote:

"My land, my native soil, my fatherland—nothing can be more ardent, more profound and sacred than my love for you."

The bestiality of nazism, its racist ideology, was exposed in many articles, notably by Ilya Ehrenburg. Mikhail Sholokhov's "Science of Hating" poured wrath on the nazis. In 1942 a series of articles appeared about the civilian war effort. Novelists F. V. Gladkov, A. A. Karavayeva and M. S. Shaginyan wrote about the people of the Urals making the weapons of war. Wanda Wassilewska described the life of the Ukrainian villagers and their resistance to the nazis in her novel, *The Rainbow*.

Poets dedicated their verse to patriotism and to the friendship of the peoples of the USSR. Alexander Tvardovsky wrote his superb *Vasily Tyorkin*, which first appeared in 1942, producing an unforgettable image of the Soviet soldier, optimistic, clever, adroit and brave. Nikolai Tikhonov's poem, "Kirov Is with Us", about the iron nights of Leningrad, Margarita Aligher's "Zoya" about the courageous 18-year-old partisan girl Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, and Demyan Bedny's verses, tempered the nation's will-power and endurance.

Soviet composers did their bit, too. Dmitry Shostakovich produced his Seventh Symphony, dedicated to the courage of the people of beleaguered Leningrad and to victory over nazism. Completed in the grim September of 1941, it was first performed the following summer while shells were bursting in the city and death lurked everywhere for the fatigued and half-starved Leningrader.

The Soviet cinema, too, centred its interest on the war. Twelve documentaries were produced in the first 12 months about the country's heroic past, the nation's resistance to foreign invaders, and about the villainous atrocities of the nazis on Soviet land. The film "Defeat of German Troops at Moscow" illustrated the strength of the Red Army, which smashed the myth of nazi invincibility. The feature films of 1942, "District Committee Secretary", "Alexander Parkhomenko" and "Kotovsky", made a deep impression.

Pencil and brush, the artist's tools and weapons, attacked the enemy fiercely. Soviet stage performers did their invaluable bit. Apart from theatres, they performed in hospitals, factories and collective farms, and went to the front, where they appeared before the soldiers in the field between battles. More than 150,000 such front-line concerts are on record in only one year.

3. WAR-TIME LIVING

The Party and Government did their utmost to meet the needs of the people. Terrible hardships had arisen from the beginning of the war. Horrifying scenes of grief were witnessed on the roads. An endless stream of refugees moved east. In close to 30 days more than 300,000 children and nearly 100,000 adults were evacuated from Leningrad and somewhat less than half a million children and almost a million adults from Moscow. These people, especially the women and children, had to be cared for.

Decrees were issued governing the transportation of evacuees, nourishment en route and on arrival, housing and employment, medical services, and the like. Along the route from war-affected areas to Eastern Siberia more than a hundred key food distribution centres were organised, each issuing at least 3,000 free meals a day. Milk kitchens were set up for infants. The Komsomol organised transport of food and water to trains at the smaller stations.

People lost touch with their relatives and friends. They had to be helped to find them. For this purpose, a Central Inquiry Office was established in Buguruslan, a Volga town.

The population of the eastern towns increased as the evacuees streamed in. Housing had to be provided, and schools, technical schools, universities, hospitals and service establishments expanded. The supply of food and commodities was another important challenge, with more catering establishments to meet the grown demand.

People coped courageously with the war-time hardships. In the towns, bread and other staples were rationed as of July-November 1941. In 1942 some 62 million people were supplied bread by the state. The bulk received a mere 400-500 grams daily, and dependents as little as 300-400 grams. The issue of meat and fats was meagre. Yet the efficient system of rationing, imposed by war-time shortages, assured the essential distribution of food and prime commodities. To improve supplies enterprises set up supply departments for their staffs. Individual and collective

kitchen gardening became widespread. More than 7,000,000 factory and office workers grew their own potatoes and vegetables.

Benefits were accorded to soldiers' families and war invalids. Employment opportunities were created for them. War-orphaned children received government care. Children's institutions were expanded. The public was invited to adopt orphans. At the suggestion of the Krasny Bogatyr Factory women-workers, families were urged to take in orphans and destitute children. This was welcomed and assisted by the Government.

Though preoccupied with economic matters, the authorities did their utmost to improve public education and health. Universal schooling for children continued throughout the war despite overcrowding in schools and textbook shortages. Schoolchildren participated in useful work, doing stints at farms, learning to drive tractors and combines, and taking the place of their fathers and brothers, gone to the war, at the work-benches. An invaluable contribution was made by schoolteachers.

The medical service worked under great strain. Doctors fought with dedication for the lives of soldiers and averted many an epidemic behind the lines. Sanitary control centres were set up, new bathhouses and disinfection stations were built, the flow of medical supplies increased. Health posts were organised at factories. New medical personnel was trained to take the place of doctors enlisting in the Army. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Society did much useful work. Among other things, it trained thousands of nurses and campaigned for blood donations. One of the donation centres, at the Botkin Clinical Hospital in Moscow, for example, received 200 donors daily, sending 40-50 litres of blood to front-line hospitals every day.

The concern shown by the Party, Government, the trade unions and the Komsomol for the vital needs of the population firmed up morale.

In 1941-42 the hostilities in the other war theatres—Africa, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and Pacific—could not compare in scale, intensity or results with the titanic battles on the Soviet-German front.

In Africa hostilities were started by the Italian fascists in July 1940, soon after Italy entered the war. Italy was bent on enlarging her colonial possessions there at the expense of Britain and France. Fighting broke out in two areas—East Africa and North Africa. In East Africa Italian forces occupied British Somaliland and entered Kenya and the Sudan. But in May 1941 they suffered total defeat and were driven out of these territories and also out of Ethiopia. In North Africa—Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco—the fighting went on for nearly three years.

In September 1940, the Italian forces in Libya numbered 215,000 men, with an Air Force of some 300 planes. The British, who had not braced themselves for the encounter, had only two divisions and two brigades, comprising the Nile Army, along the Egypt-Libya frontier. This force had 36,000 men and an Egypt- and Palestine-based Air Force of 205 planes.

On September 13 the Italian 5th Army (six divisions and eight tank battalions) under General Graziani crossed into Egypt, advancing east along the Mediterranean coast towards Alexandria and the Suez Canal. The British rolled back 200 kilometres without even a token of resistance. On September 16 the Italians occupied Sidi Barrani and halted. The reason for this was that Italy was preparing to invade Greece and believed that the British would inevitably be drawn into the hostilities there and that this would divert them from Egypt. Once that happened the Italians would have little trouble seizing the Suez Canal.

But the Italians miscalculated. A crushing defeat was administered to them in Greece in November 1940, and that enabled the British to transfer their forces to Egypt. By December the Nile Army was two divisions stronger and, taking advantage of Italian inactivity, launched an offensive on December 9. The combatworthiness of the Italian 5th Army was so low that its six divisions of 75,000 men were quickly dispersed by two British divisions—one infantry and the other armour. In January 1941 British troops occupied important strongholds, the ports of Tobruk and Benghazi, in northeast Libya. On February 10, reaching El-Ageila, they stopped their advance. Instead of driving the enemy out of North Africa, the British Command deployed some of its forces to Greece in anticipation of a German assault.

The defeat in Greece, followed by that in Africa, generated discontent in Italy. Mussolini pleaded for German help, and in February 1941 Hitler complied by sending an expeditionary corps to Libya. Over-all command in North Africa was assumed by General Rommel, who on March 31 delivered a sudden blow against the British. By mid-April the German-Italian force had blockaded Tobruk and gained the Libya-Egypt border. At that point the advance halted. Hitler had no time for Egypt, being busy preparing his perfidious attack on the Soviet Union.

The situation in North Africa congealed. The Germans could not mass enough strength to gain a decisive victory there before the end of their planned "lightning war" against the Soviet Union, and postponed further action until the autumn of 1941, hoping to capture Tobruk by storm and march triumphantly to the Suez. As we know, their plans did not materialise. Rommel was denied reinforcements. What is more, in September 1941 some of the Air Force based in Sicily had to be shifted to the Soviet-German front.

To gain freedom of action in the Mediterranean and prevent Germany from using the French Navy, the British sank or captured nearly all of France's warships stationed in African ports in July 1940. In November, the RAF struck at the Italian fleet in Taranto, crippling the Italian supply line to Africa. To help their allies, the nazis redeployed 250 aircraft to Sicily, but without the desired result. Although the Luftwaffe inflicted considerable damage to British shipping, the situation in the Mediterranean remained unchanged. In March 1941, the British Navy inflicted another defeat on the Italians south of Crete. However, the considerable British losses complicated communications. In May the British abandoned Crete and the situation deteriorated. All the same, by mid-1941 the British Navy was still dominant in the western and eastern Mediterranean.

Developments on the Soviet-German front compelled nazi Germany and her allies to limit operations in the Mediterranean, creating a favourable situation for the British. By the summer of 1941 the RAF in Malta was reinforced and launched fresh operations against enemy communication lines. In August 1941, for example, a mere 10 per cent of the Axis freight shipped across the Mediterranean was sunk by British planes, while in November the figure mounted to 45 per cent.

In North Africa, too, the situation of the British troops improved somewhat after the Italians were defeated in East Africa. The British Command was now able to move some of its troops to the north. In the autumn of 1941 the 8th Army (formerly Nile Army) under General Cunningham had seven divisions and five separate brigades, 655 tanks and more than 700 aircraft facing an Italo-German force consisting of the nazi Afrika Korps (two panzer and one light infantry division) and three Italian army corps (five infantry, one tank and one motorised division) with 500 tanks and 280 aircraft.

Making the most of their advantage, the British mounted an offensive on November 18, 1941. By January 10, 1942, they lifted the blockade of Tobruk and captured Cyrenaica. The Axis lost some 33,000 men and 300 tanks, while British losses numbered some 18,000 men and 280 tanks. However, British troops were dispersed over a large area, which allowed Rommel to strike a retaliatory blow within a short space of time.

On January 21, 1942, the Italo-German force struck, its assault continuing at intervals until July 4, pushing the British out of Cyrenaica and advancing to El-Alamein, some 100 kilometres from Alexandria. The

situation in Egypt became precarious. But the badly depleted Axis forces were unable to develop their advance. Rommel pleaded for reinforcements, which Hitler denied him because almost all his strategic reserves were tied up against the Soviet Army.

British setbacks, though near disastrous, fell short of total defeat. The Axis objective was not attained, because the main nazi forces were engaged against the USSR. For the Germans, operations in the Mediterranean and in North Africa were of but secondary importance.

Naval action in the Atlantic was fairly intensive. Though a naval colonial power, Britain was not sufficiently equipped to protect her communication lines. Before the war, the German Command had deployed in the Atlantic two battleships and 18 submarines, which, when the war broke out, continuously harassed British and other shipping. Moreover, the Germans augmented their naval force, and also struck massively from the air. From September 1939 until the end of 1941, the German Navy and the Luftwaffe sank 2,423 Allied and neutral vessels totalling some nine million tons.

The Germans intensified their air attacks on Britain, allocating more than 2,100 aircraft for this purpose. The struggle against these massive attacks is known in British literature as the Battle of Britain, which was particularly hard fought in the period from August 1 to the close of October 1940. Both sides suffered heavy casualties: the Germans lost 1,400 aircraft, and the British about 800. During these three months nearly 34,600 civilians were killed in Britain. However, when Germany began active preparations for her invasion of the Soviet Union, the air attacks on Britain petered out. The nazis failed to demoralise the British people. In 1940 when Hitler adopted his decision to attack the USSR Operation Sea Lion, the German plan for the invasion of Britain, was shelved.

After Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the situation changed. The British Navy was now able to send strong forces to protect the Atlantic communications. British and United States efforts in 1941-42 reduced Allied shipping losses, though they still remained high. From the beginning of the war up to and including October 1942 total Allied tonnage sunk topped the 14 million mark.

Developments on the Soviet-German front had a strong bearing on the plans of the Japanese imperialists. As they saw it, Germany's attack on the Soviet Union offered them a favourable opportunity for territorial expansion. An imperial conference in Tokyo on July 2, 1941, decided that Japan would open hostilities once the war in Europe had sapped Soviet strength. A plan was worked out, code-named *Kantokuen*, envisaging the capture of the Soviet Far East and much of Siberia. The Japanese began building up their army in Manchuria, doubling it between July and August and bringing it up to a total of 600,000.

While waiting for the most propitious moment to attack the Soviet Union, the Japanese militarists decided on action in the south to gain possession of the Pacific Islands and of Southeast Asia. For this, they had to capture the possessions of the United States, Britain and the Netherlands, and consummate their war in China.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Air Force, operating from aircraft carriers, struck suddenly at Pearl Harbour, the US naval base in Hawaii. The US Pacific Fleet was 18 large warships less when the smoke cleared. That extended the Second World War to the Pacific, drawing more millions of people into its orbit. In starting the war against two great powers, imperialist Japan banked on nazi Germany to make short work

of the Soviet Union and pin down the Armed Forces of the United States and Britain in other theatres.

The blow to the USA at Pearl Harbour tilted the balance of strength at sea in Japan's favour, allowing her to develop ambitious operations in Southeast Asia and in the Pacific. From December 1941 to June 1942 the Japanese imperialists had captured Hongkong, British Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines, New Ireland, New Britain, the Solomon Islands, the western and central parts of New Guinea and the islands of Guam, Wake, Kiska and Attu. The area of their acquisitions added up to 3,800,000 square kilometres with a population of 150 million.

In China, the Japanese had to cope chiefly with the People's Liberation Army and the partisans. The occupation force endeavoured to wipe out the liberated areas. Bitter fighting proceeded in the Shansi-Kwangsi-Ningsia border area, where the 8th People's Liberation Army fought valiantly. No large operations were conducted against the forces of Chiang Kai-shek.

One of the main reasons for the successes of the Japanese imperialists was that America's and Britain's rulers had been earlier carried away by their policy of encouraging Japan to attack the Soviet Union. They had been certain that Japan would act against the USSR first. As a result, their defences in the war-affected region were weak.

On attaining their basic political and strategic aims in the Pacific, the Japanese militarists assumed strategic defence. They endeavoured to sink roots in the newly-captured territories, while continuing to prepare for the attack against the Soviet Union, which they intended to launch after the nazis captured Stalingrad.

Japan's attack on the Pacific possessions of the United States, Britain and the Netherlands showed that the Anglo-American rulers had failed in their aim of directing Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union; moreover, they lost all their colonial possessions in the Pacific. To recover in the Pacific, the Americans and British concentrated on building up their armed forces in that region. Naturally, this reflected unfavourably on the struggle against the main enemy, German nazism.

THE FIRST PERIOD OF THE WAR

A BRIEF SUMMARY

The first period of the Great Patriotic War, the hardest for the people and the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union, lasted 17 months. The Red Army withstood the onslaught of the most powerful war machine of the capitalist world, repelling two strategic offensives. In the winter of 1941-42 the Red Army wrested the strategic initiative from the enemy and inflicted on him his first major defeat in the Second World War. However, at the time the Red Army started its counter-offensive it had not yet replenished its losses and the rear had not yet mustered all its resources and built up a smoothly functioning war economy. For that reason the Red Army was unable to consolidate and follow up its successes.

In the first period, the Red Army fought three campaigns.

In the 1941 summer-autumn campaign, under the impact of the sudden nazi attack, the Soviet troops withdrew deep into the country, fighting for every inch of ground. The enemy advanced 850-1,200 kilometres, overrunning vast areas. Leningrad, Moscow and the Donets Basin, all vitally important centres, were in peril. But the nation stood firm. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the Soviet people turned the country into an armed camp, an inexhaustible source of strength and materiel. Soviet troops wore down the enemy by a combination of staunch defence and increasingly powerful counter-blows, sapping his offensive capacity and foiling Hitler's plan of a lightning war. At the beginning of December 1941 they forced the enemy to go on the defensive along the entire front.

In the 1941-42 winter campaign a Soviet counter-attack gradually developed into a general offensive, turning the tide. The propaganda myth of German invincibility was dashed. However the Red Army was unable to encircle and destroy the main enemy forces, though it smashed 47 German divisions, two corps groups and five brigades. Hitler's armies rolled back westward 100-350 kilometres.

In the 1942 summer-autumn campaign the nazis managed to recapture the strategic initiative. This time, lacking resources for an all-out attack, the German Command mounted an offensive on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front. Breaking through, the enemy advanced 500-650 kilometres, reaching Voronezh, the Volga and the Caucasian foothills. The territory overrun by November totalled 1,795,000 square kilometres, inhabited before the war by nearly 80 million people or 41.9 per cent of the population, and accounting for one-third of the country's peacetime industrial production. The iron-and-steel industry lost some 71

per cent of its capacity for iron, nearly 60 per cent for steel and much of the equipment making rolled stock. Before the war, the captured territory produced 10 million tons of steel. The cultivated land seized by the enemy amounted to 47 per cent of the total arable and 43 per cent of the grain area. No capitalist state could have survived this loss. The threat to the country entailed the maximum strain on the Soviet peoples. The Communist Party called on the nation and the Armed Forces to halt the enemy at any price. Replacements and reserves, arms and ammunition flowed to the front-lines from all over the country. And the enemy was finally halted at the Volga and the Caucasian Range.

The invasion cost the nazis dearly. In the period from June 22, 1941, to mid-November 1942 the German and satellite armies lost nearly 2,000,000 officers and men. To grasp the magnitude of these losses for nazi Germany, we may recall that in World War I (1914-18) German casualties added up to 1,936,897 dead. But the Soviet forces, too, suffered heavy losses. To replace them, troops were trained behind the lines and sent to the front in the latter half of 1941.

All arms of the service were hard pressed, but the main burden fell on the ground forces, which carried out all the tasks confronting the armies in the field. In heavy defensive battles they repulsed the attacks of numerically superior forces, striking counter-blows and launching counter-attacks, wrecking the plans of the nazis and inflicting telling casualties. In offensive operations they broke through the enemy's defensive positions, surrounding and destroying large groups and unremittingly pursuing the nazis despite the shortage of mobile forces.

The Air Force, which had fewer new types of aircraft than the enemy, operated intrepidly in an unfavourable situation marked by a rapid change of bases and constant enemy attacks on the airfields. Soviet airmen helped the ground forces to exhaust and decimate the enemy, destroying enemy planes in dogfights and at enemy airfields, bombing his administrative, political and industrial centres, naval bases and road junctions.

An increasing part in the fighting was played by the Anti-Aircraft Defence units, which steadily grew in number and equipment. By their heroism they prevented the enemy aircraft from destroying Soviet towns and factories, railway junctions, strategically important bridges and hydrotechnical installations. The Navy also shouldered immense responsibilities. Soviet warships fought at sea to keep possession of naval bases, covered the shore flanks of ground troops and supported the latter with their guns, coastal batteries, air arm and landing parties, effecting lethal strikes at enemy warships and transports and escorting shipping. The Navy sank 174 enemy transports totalling some 420,000 tons and 118 warships and auxiliary vessels.* Many sailors fought shoulder to shoulder with the infantry.

During the initial period of the war the logistical system of the Armed Forces was reorganised and centralised, making it possible to supply the army in the field more effectively with ammunition, fuel and food and quickly to evacuate the wounded.

Partisans assisted the Red Army effectively, especially during the Moscow and Stalingrad battles and in defending Leningrad and the Caucasus. In the early months of the war it was mainly small disjointed groups that operated behind the enemy lines. But their number increased

* Casualty figures here and elsewhere are those officially announced. The investigations of actual enemy losses have not been completed but they show that casualties were far greater than indicated so far in Soviet historiography.

due to the work conducted by the Party; their organisation was bettered and their operational capability grew. By the summer of 1942 the partisan movement had a central headquarters as well as headquarters in republics and regions. The small groups expanded into large partisan units, each of several hundred, even thousand, well-armed men. At the beginning of 1943 the strength of only the registered groups and units under the command of the partisan headquarters totalled 120,000. The actual figure was far greater.

Partisans blew up railways, denying the enemy freedom of troop movement, pinning down his forces. In the latter half of 1942 large partisan units carried out long-distance raids behind the enemy lines. Considerable damage was done to the nazis by sudden partisan assaults in the western regions of the Russian Federation, Byelorussia and the Ukraine. The appearance of large raiding forces restored faith among the population in early deliverance from nazi tyranny and put life into underground communist organisations. As many as 24 nazi divisions were committed to combating partisans in the summer and autumn of 1942.

The Soviet Armed Forces relied on a strong hinterland. The war changed the orientation of the Soviet economy. Led by the Communist Party, the people strained to meet the war's needs, to rebuild the economy and expand the war-industrial base in the eastern regions. None but a socialist state could have coped with the immense relocation of the productive forces in the difficult war-time conditions.

The Volga area, the Urals, Western Siberia and Kazakhstan held top prominence in the war economy, being the main centres of the ferrous, non-ferrous, coal and oil industries, and also the main arms suppliers. Suffice it to recall, that in 1942 Western Siberia alone increased output of war material 27-fold over pre-war 1940. The Central Asian republics, too, gained weight in the economy, with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenia and Kirghizia developing textile, light and food industries alongside cotton-growing and animal husbandry. New industries grew in the Transcaucasian republics, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan increasing production for the war.

As a result of the immense organisational effort of the Party and the Soviet Government, the country had a well-knit and rapidly growing war economy, providing striking evidence of the advantages of the socialist economic system in the harrowing conditions of the first period of the war. At the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union, Germany and the nazi-occupied and satellite countries surpassed the USSR in the production of some key products by 50-150 per cent. Already in 1942, however, Soviet industry produced more weapons and arms than Germany and her satellites: the surplus amounted to 10,300 planes, 14,200 tanks and 22,000 field guns (76 mm and up).

Hitler's clique expected the other capitalist countries to join it in a crusade against the Soviet Union, the socialist state, which would then be fully isolated. However, it miscalculated. The Soviet Union was not isolated. On the contrary, it initiated a powerful anti-fascist coalition. Although this coalition consisted of countries with different socio-economic systems, it was a workable alliance and sufficiently durable. The Soviet Union's international prestige increased greatly. The peoples recognised it as the force that could crush nazi Germany and end the "new order" in Europe. The Resistance movement in the nazi-occupied countries gained momentum.

The position of nazi Germany and her allies, on the other hand, deteriorated. This was the beginning of the fascist bloc's political isolation.

In 17 months, 16 countries declared war on Germany, with another 10 breaking off diplomatic relations.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party, the State Defence Committee and GHQ concentrated on strengthening the Soviet Armed Forces. In face of the serious reverses suffered by the Red Army at the beginning of the war, the build-up claimed top priority. The country needed an army many millions strong, equipped with the latest weapons, with efficient ordnance, supplies and medical services. The officers' corps, most of it drawn from the reserve, had to be trained quickly, learn effective battle control. The reserve units received special attention.

The top-echelon command was reorganised in the summer of 1942. Theatre high commands were abolished. G. K. Zhukov was appointed First Deputy of the People's Commissar for Defence and Deputy Commander-in-Chief in August.

The offensive experience gained by the Red Army showed that the corps system had to be restored. Twenty-eight corps administrations were set up in 1942. The formation of Guards infantry corps was begun early in the year and by the summer there were 10 of these corps in action. Guards armies, which were much stronger than the combined armies, began to be formed at the same time, while the combined armies received more artillery, chiefly anti-aircraft regiments.

Drastic changes were introduced in the infantry divisions. Their fire power, particularly anti-tank fire power, was considerably enhanced.

The formation of tank and motorised corps, followed by tank armies that could exploit successes in strategic depth, began in 1942. Air armies for the fronts were first formed in the spring of 1942. Air operations became more massive. The artillery also was modernised. Anti-aircraft regiments and divisions, anti-tank regiments and brigades, rocket launcher regiments and units and Supreme Command Reserve artillery divisions were formed. Engineer units, too, were raised. Cumulatively, this indicated that an Armed Force capable of the major military tasks facing the country was being rapidly built up.

The first 18 months of the war were a school of military science. Co-operation between ground, air and naval forces was improved. Combat experience obtained at the battle-lines was summed up and generalised for the benefit of newly-trained commanders.

Strategic defence was one of the most difficult tasks of the time. Twice, in 1941 and 1942, the Soviet Command was compelled to employ it.

During the campaign of the summer and autumn of 1941 the Red Army did not in all cases have prepared lines of defence. Besides, the existing defensive lines were not sufficiently echeloned in depth. In 1942, taking the shortcomings of this campaign into consideration, the Soviet Command widened the depth of the rear defences in the most dangerous sectors and, wherever possible, manned them beforehand. This made them more reliable.

In the winter of 1941-42 the Red Army mounted large-scale offensives. Although numerical superiority was insignificant, the Soviet troops attained good results and, what is most important, learned to deal with strong enemy concentrations.

Soviet operational skill improved. Front and army operations, offensive as well as defensive, were more effective. Combat experience acquired by front-line units was studied, summed up and relayed back to the lines in the shape of GHQ orders and instructions. This helped the commands at Front, Army and General Staff levels to draw the right conclusions concerning co-operation and employment of service arms,

troop control in battle, massive use of tanks, artillery and air in depth, and build-up and use of second echelons. Tactics for defence and attack were also more advanced.

Political work in the ranks helped knit the Soviet Armed Forces and raised their combat efficiency. The mottos were: "Stand your ground!", "Not a step back!", "Death to the German invader!". The Central Committee of the CPSU(B) worked hard from the first days of the war to reinforce the Party and Komsomol organisations in the Army and Navy. Numerous Party cadres were sent to work with the troops. In 1942 the Army and Navy had more than 2,000,000 Communists, or half the Party membership, in their ranks.

Agitation was the basic method of political education, with the Communists' example in battle as the most effective form. Their inspired speeches, bravery and courage won the Communists immense popularity and prestige. The printed word, too, was important. The printings of central newspapers and journals were increased. Besides, the Armed Forces published three of their own central newspapers, 13 Front and more than 60 Army newspapers by the end of 1942. This was supplemented by a vast number of leaflets, posters and brochures.

With the officers gaining valuable experience in troop control and maturing politically, the Party was able to abolish the institution of military commissars and re-establish one-man command in the Armed Forces in October 1942. All power and authority were concentrated in the commander. The political officers were able to devote more of their attention to Party and political work.

Communists conducted extensive political work at the factories, building sites and in rural localities. This helped rally the nation still closer round the Communist Party. In those grim days, the nation's finest sons were eager to join the ranks of the CPSU(B) and to do their bit in the war effort. As many as 1,566,463 people were admitted as candidate members to the Party in the early period of the war, with 1,319,137 of them in the Army. This fusion of people and Party was the earnest of the victory to come.

Yet in the summer and autumn of 1941 and in 1942 the situation was precarious. At a Kremlin reception for Red Army commanders in May 1945, Stalin recalled:

"Our Government made mistakes, and there were desperate moments in 1941-42, when our Army retreated, abandoning towns and villages ... abandoning them because there was no other way out. Some other nation may have said to its Government: 'You have not lived up to our expectations, we don't want you, we shall have another Government.' "

Despite the incredible difficulties of the first period of the war, the peoples of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party coped with the situation. The Party had always spread Lenin's all-conquering ideas among the people and this was one of the salient reasons why the nation did not flinch. Furthermore, the Party worked out a programme for victory, organised the masses, and led them into the battle. The war-economic potential of the country and the strength of its Armed Forces grew steadily. The rapidly expanding war economy produced the requisites for turning the tide in the war. That, indeed, was the main outcome of the first period.

Part III

THE TIDE IS TURNED

Chapter Eight

THE STALINGRAD VICTORY

1. BEFORE THE OFFENSIVE

While the big defensive battle between the Volga and Don rivers was still at its height, the Soviet Command worked on the plan of smashing the enemy. The main purpose in the impending 1942-43 winter campaign was to capture the strategic initiative, inflict a major defeat and thereby turn the tide in the war. The main effort was planned in a southwesterly direction against Army Group B, one of the largest and most active enemy concentrations.

The prerequisites for attaining this objective had been created by the people. By November 1942 a relative balance of strength had been achieved, in other words, the situation had improved for the Soviet armies. The fronts and separate armies in the field had 385 infantry, motorised infantry and cavalry divisions, five motorised and 10 tank corps, 145 infantry, motorised infantry and ski brigades, 89 separate tank and motorised brigades and 21 fortified areas. In the GHQ Reserve (including the Moscow defence zone) there were 33 infantry divisions, 17 infantry and motorised infantry brigades, 11 tank and one motorised corps and 21 separate tank and motorised brigades. In this period the army in the field had 6,124,000 effectives, 72,500 field guns and mortars (excluding 50-mm mortars), 1,724 field rocket launchers (BM-8, BM-13), 6,014 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 3,088 combat aircraft (excluding Po-2 spotter planes). On the Soviet-German front the Germans had 258 divisions and 16 brigades, including 66 divisions and 13 brigades from the satellite countries. Altogether, this force comprised 6,270,000 effectives, 70,980 field guns and mortars, 6,600 tanks and assault guns, and 3,500 combat aircraft.

The enemy had lost his former superiority in arms, and his almost 2:1 superiority in manpower. A balance had been struck. The Red Army kept growing, but the nazis, too, were still strong.

In the autumn of 1942 the front stretched from the Barents Sea to the Main Caucasian Range (Map 6). Almost no change had occurred on the seas. Despite losing Sevastopol and Novorossiisk, the Black Sea Fleet still held an edge over the enemy and threatened the enemy's shore flank.

The Soviet winter campaign was to open with a counter-offensive at Stalingrad, aiming to destroy the elite German troops there. All subsequent operations depended on the success of that counter-offensive. In November 1942 the Soviet Southwestern,* Don and Stalingrad fronts

* The Southwestern Front was formed on GHQ orders dated October 22, 1942.

were faced by part of the Italian 8th, the Rumanian 3rd and the German 6th and 4th Panzer armies, consisting of 49 divisions, including four motorised and five armoured divisions, and two brigades, with the main enemy group—the 6th and 4th Panzer armies—deployed between the Volga and Don rivers and supported by the 4th Air Fleet.

The nazi Command had no decisive aims for the 1942-43 winter campaign. It hoped to cling on until the spring of 1943, then, making a final effort, assume the offensive and crush the Soviet Union. The Germans felt sure that after the sanguinary summer battles the Red Army would undertake no large-scale offensives in the southern sector, and that was where they miscalculated.

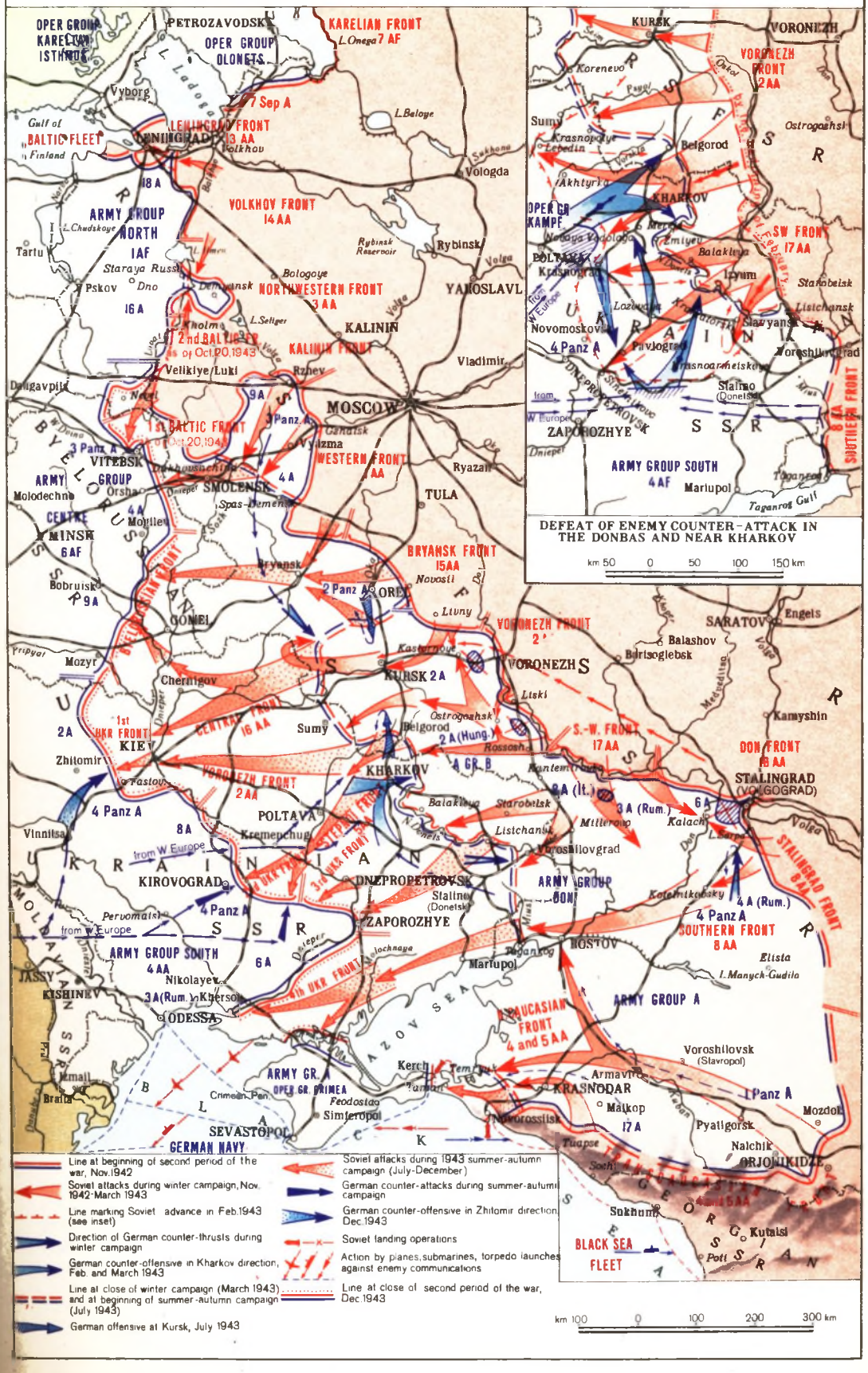
Stiff resistance by the Soviet 62nd and 64th armies had compelled the enemy to deploy his reserves to Stalingrad. As a result, his main force was pinned down outside the city, with flanks stretched and insufficiently secure, being covered by the less battleworthy Rumanian and Italian units, among whom discontent was rife against the exhausting and hopeless war started by their rulers to conquer foreign land.

The Red Army counter-offensive was forged in the rear, as well as at the front. The people laboured with devotion. The war industry supplied the front with a steady stream of arms, ammunition and equipment. In the latter half of 1942 the Soviet Union produced 15,800 aircraft as against the 9,600 in the first six months. Production of tanks rose from 11,000 to 13,600, and of 76-mm and bigger guns from 14,000 to 15,600. The flow of automatic arms and anti-tank guns increased as well.

While building up strength and means for the counter-offensive, GHQ drew up its operational plan (Map 7). Generals G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevsky were dispatched to the vicinity of Stalingrad in mid-September to determine whether the troops were capable of switching from defence to attack. They were to estimate, too, the supplementary strength and resources needed for the coming operation. At the end of September, GHQ discussed their findings and drew up an outline plan. This plan was set down on a map signed by General G. K. Zhukov, Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and General A. M. Vasilevsky, Chief of the General Staff, and endorsed by J. V. Stalin, Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The detailing was left to the General Staff, assisted by the commanders of the service arms and the Red Army Air Force. The accent was laid on artillery and air. General N. N. Voronov, the top artillery commander, General A. A. Novikov, the top Air Force commander, and the latter's deputy, General G. A. Vorozheikin, visited the firing lines to study the state of artillery and air and estimate supplementary needs. Early in October the military councils and staffs of the fronts operating at Stalingrad were invited to participate in the final touches. They were instructed to chart, in accordance with GHQ's overall concept, a plan of operations for the troops subordinated to them. In the meantime, staffs worked on problems involved in the employment of artillery and aircraft.

The ultimate strategic plan for the Stalingrad offensive was, thus, the product of a large collective of Soviet generals—the Supreme Command, the General Staff, representatives of General Headquarters, the command and staffs of the service arms, and the military councils of the fronts. GHQ and the General Staff, naturally, played the decisive role in planning and ensuring this operation. Code-named Uran, the plan was based on a realistic assessment of the situation and balance of strength. The plan for the counter-offensive was finally approved on November 13 by the State Defence Committee, presided over by Stalin, after reports were

6. MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE WAR Nov.1942–Dec.1943



delivered by G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevsky. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief, who had devoted a great deal of time to the preparations for the operation, listened attentively to the arguments put forward by Zhukov and Vasilevsky before the sitting.

The Southwestern Front was to breach enemy defences from Serafimovich-Kletskaya with a rapid advance to Kalach-Sovietsky, the Stalingrad Front driving simultaneously from the Sarpin Lakes. The convergent blows would cut off the nazi armies operating between the Volga and Don rivers. The Don Front would make two thrusts—one from Kletskaya southeastward and the other from Kachalinskaya along the eastern bank of the Don southward. A. M. Vasilevsky, representing General Headquarters, would co-ordinate the three fronts.

Preparations began at the beginning of October. Heavy fighting was in progress then against the advancing enemy. The difficulties of organising a counter-offensive were aggravated by the heavy terrain. Railways were scarce, complicating deployment of reserves, and the autumn rains had made the roads impassable. Troops, arms and equipment were shipped via the Volga and Don.

Despite this, the Soviet Command built up a well-equipped force, striking a numerical balance with the enemy.

Strength at the Beginning of the Counter-Offensive

	Soviet	Enemy	Ratio
Troop strength	1,015,300	1,011,500	1:1
Tanks, self-propelled guns	979*	675	1.4:1
Field guns and mortars	13,535**	10,290	1.3:1
Aircraft	1,350	1,216	1.1:1

* This figure includes heavy and medium tanks only.
** Excluding 50-mm mortars.

The Red Army had an almost 1.5 to 1 advantage in armour, its advantage in artillery was mainly in mortars for it had fewer 76-mm and bigger guns; besides, the enemy was slightly inferior in air power. However, in the main effort areas the Soviet Command built up a 2:1, and even a 3:1 advantage. This was achieved by skilful regrouping, testifying to the greatly improved combat experience of the commanders. Concentration of strike troops, ingeniously carried out to escape detection by the enemy, ensured the element of surprise. General Jodl, Chief of Operations at Hitler's Headquarters, admitted later that German reconnaissance had fallen down on its job. "Its biggest failure," he said, "was in November 1942, when we had no inkling at all of the deployment of large Russian strength along the flank of our 6th Army (along the Don)."

Simultaneously with the counter-offensive, GHQ planned offensive operations in the Western strategic sector and in the Caucasus in order to pin down the enemy forces in those areas and thereby prevent their transfer to the Stalingrad theatre.

On the eve of the counter-offensive partisan operations were activated. A partisan headquarters was set up early in November. The high density of enemy troops in the occupied part of the region, and the sparsely populated steppeland ruled out large-scale partisan operations. People conversant with local conditions were therefore formed into small mobile groups. They harassed enemy communication lines, blew up depots and

attacked smaller garrisons, keeping the enemy in a state of tension night and day.

The people of Stalingrad Region, as well as of the neighbouring regions, afforded the troops extensive aid, supplying the Army with food, equipment and manpower, servicing tanks, planes and other weapons. Despite the fighting in the vicinity, the collective farmers brought home almost the entire harvest. The region provided the country with 368,000 tons of grain, more than 15,000 tons of vegetables and 53,400 tons of meat. Almost all these stocks were turned over to the Armed Forces. Many of the workshops at the state farms and machine-and-tractor stations helped repair arms and combat vehicles. The population did road work and built air strips, river crossings and bridges, and helped to transport ammunition. As much as 500 kilometres of new road was laid.

2. THE RING CLOSES

At 07.30 hours on November 19 Soviet artillery opened up in the Don steppe, ushering in the second phase of the Battle of Stalingrad. This was the signal for the Southwestern and Don fronts to attack. Their powerful thrust cut through the forward edge of the enemy defence line.

The main thrust of the Southwestern Front, commanded by General N. F. Vatutin (member of the Military Council—A. S. Zheltov), was made by the 5th Tank and 21st armies, which attacked at several points with the support of General S. A. Krasovsky's 17th Air Army and General K. N. Smirnov's 2nd Air Army. The enemy mounted counter-attacks. His resistance was especially dogged against the 5th Tank Army (General P. L. Romanenko), where he operated from strongly fortified villages. Manoeuvring skilfully and avoiding frontal clashes, the Soviet troops compelled the enemy to abandon his positions and fight in the open field. However, breaching the enemy lines was harder than expected. It was not until a mobile group consisting of the 1st and 26th tank corps was sent into action that the situation changed. The two corps attacked and broke through by 14.00 hours. Then the tanks pushed on at high speed southward, followed by the infantry, which destroyed surviving centres of resistance and captured the remnants of the nazi troops.

By the morning of November 20 General A. G. Rodin's 26th Tank Corps had wiped out part of the Rumanian 1st Tank Division and reached the village of Perelazovsky, where it routed the headquarters of the Rumanian 5th Army Corps, capturing many prisoners, then veered southeast in the general direction of Kalach-Sovietsky. The following day the corps neared the Don at Kalach; General Rodin ordered a small detachment under Lieutenant-Colonel G. N. Filippov to capture a bridge across the river under cover of darkness. Headlights blazing, the Soviet tanks sped to the crossing. Mistaking them for their own armour, the nazi guards allowed the tanks to cross, whereupon the bridge post was disposed of and the bridge captured. The 26th Tank Corps could cross the Don and come to grips with the enemy, contesting the possession of Kalach, which was liberated in the afternoon of November 23.

By this time part of General A. G. Kravchenko's 4th Tank Corps had crossed to the eastern bank of the Don. Entering the breach made by General I. M. Chistyakov's 21st Army and developing its success, the tanks drove forward to the vicinity of Sovietsky, where they were to make contact with the motorised units of the Stalingrad Front.

Heavy fighting began in the attack sector of the Don Front. The 65th Army under General P. I. Batov, on the right flank, operating in close contact with the 21st Army (Southwestern Front), crashed through and advanced southeast. General I. V. Galanin's 24th Army started off three days later, on November 22, striking from north to south along the eastern bank of the Don. But it ran into strong resistance and failed to breach the German line. The 65th Army and 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps (Southwestern Front) reached Blizhnaya Perekopka-Bolshenabatovsky on November 23. Air support was furnished by General S. I. Rudenko's 16th Air Army.

The Stalingrad Front under General A. I. Yeremenko (member of the Military Council—N. S. Khrushchev) started on November 20. A dense shroud of fog lay over the land: the armies went into action one by one as the fog lifted in their sector, instead of simultaneously as originally planned. At 08.30 hours, after an artillery barrage, General N. I. Trufanov sent his 51st Army into action. The 57th Army under General F. I. Tolbukhin attacked more than two hours later, and the 64th (General M. S. Shumilov) two hours later still. Those were the three armies of the Stalingrad Front delivering the main blow. In the meantime, General V. I. Chuikov's 62nd Army diverted enemy strength in the city area, while preparing to attack. The ground operations were supported by General T. T. Khryukin's 8th Air Army.

The enemy defence line was breached on the first day. The 13th, 4th Motorised and 4th Cavalry Corps were sent into the breach to widen it. Their rate of advance increased and, quickly, they began enveloping the main German group between the Volga and the Don from the south. General V. T. Volsky's 4th Motorised Corps crushed enemy resistance and fought its way to Sovietsky, where it was to contact tank units of the Southwestern Front. At the close of the second day, the 4th Motorised Corps arrived at Verkhne-Tsaritsinsky-Zety, this meaning that half the prescribed distance had been covered. In the meantime, the 4th Cavalry Corps under General T. T. Shapkin captured Abganerovo station and straddled the railway supplying the enemy from the south. At the same time, part of the 51st Army advanced southwest, creating an outer ring of encirclement. At midday, November 23, Lieutenant-Colonel P. K. Zhidkov's 45th Tank Brigade, 4th Tank Corps (Southwestern Front), arrived at Sovietsky, effecting a junction with Lieutenant-Colonel M. I. Rodionov's 36th Motorised Brigade, 4th Motorised Corps (Stalingrad Front) and closing the ring round the nazi forces in the Don-Volga area.

Infantry divisions advanced in the wake of the mobile troops, widening the breaches. More and more, they tightened the ring, producing a dependable inner front. The outer front was also being built up.

Operating in close co-ordination, the three fronts brilliantly fulfilled their mission. In four and a half days they inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and encircled the main nazi force in the Don-Volga area. The 6th and the 4th Panzer armies, consisting of 22 divisions and 160 separate units, a force totalling 330,000, were trapped in a pocket.

General Paulus, commander of the German 6th Army, decided to break out in a southwesterly direction. However, Hitler countermanded his plan, ordering a perimeter defence until relief would arrive from outside.

The Soviet Command was aware that the enemy would try to break out of the pocket. To avert this, the Don and Stalingrad fronts were instructed to start the assault and destroy the enemy group after completing the envelopment. At the same time, GHQ decided to push the outer ring westward some 150-200 kilometres to prevent the nazis from

relieving the trapped force. The Southwestern Front and the left wing of the Voronezh Front were, therefore, ordered to prepare for a new offensive operation. They would deliver two convergent blows—one from Verkhny Mamon southward in the general direction of Rostov and the other from east to west towards Likhaya. Their objective was to smash the Italian 8th Army and German units that had retreated and dug in along the rivers Chir and Don. Also, they would extend the general front of advance. This operation, code-named Saturn, was scheduled to begin in mid-December.

To relieve its encircled divisions, the German Command formed a new group of armies—Army Group Don. It consisted of all units operating south of the middle reaches of the Don up to the Astrakhan steppe, plus the encircled forces. To give it strength, the nazi Command transferred 10 divisions from Western Europe and from other points along the Soviet-German front at the end of November through December 1942. Excluding the encircled force, Army Group Don had some 30 divisions commanded by Fieldmarshal Manstein, who assured Hitler that his forces would crash through the outer ring, effect contact with Paulus's army and restore the situation on the Volga and the Don. Two large groups were being rapidly concentrated for this purpose—one at Kotelnikovsky and the other near Tormosin.

On December 12 the nazi forces attacked from Kotelnikovsky towards Stalingrad. Achieving a big advantage in strength, they crushed the resistance of the 51st Army, depleted in the November operation, and drove northward. Three days later Manstein reached the Aksai-Yesaulovsky River and crossed it.

The fighting reached a peak.

Leaving corpses piled high along its route of advance, the nazi group reached halfway to the encircled forces. On attaining the Myshkova River the second enemy group was to attack from Tormosin. However, on the fifth day of the enemy advance the situation changed drastically. After a powerful artillery and air bombardment, units of the Southwestern and the left wing of the Voronezh fronts attacked in the Middle Don sector on December 16. Countermanding Operation Saturn, the Southwestern Front directed its main effort southeast instead of south, towards Nizhny Astakhov and Morozovsk. The main idea was to envelop the Bokovo-Morozovsk enemy group and destroy it in a crushing assault simultaneously from the east and northwest. General P. L. Romanenko's 5th Tank Army and General D. D. Lelyushenko's 3rd Guards Army were to hit from the east and General V. I. Kuznetsov's 1st Guards Army from the northwest. In the meantime, the Voronezh Front (commander—General F. I. Golikov; member of the Military Council—General F. F. Kuznetsov) would cover the operation from the west, with General F. M. Kharitonov's 6th Army advancing on Kantemirovka. The operation, revised in view of the enemy advance at Kotelnikovsky, was renamed *Maly Saturn* (Lesser Saturn).

What happened in the Middle Don is told by an eye-witness, Italian Major D. Tolloi, who was a member of the 8th Army Headquarters. He writes in his book, *With the Italian Army in Russia*:

"On December 16 the Soviet troops crashed into the Italian Army line. On December 17 the front fell to pieces, and on December 18 the ring closed south of Boguchar, securely tightened by the forces operating from the west and east.... Many of the staffs lost all contact with their troops. Units attacked by tanks tried to save themselves by scattering.... Artillery and vehicles were abandoned. Many officers tore off their

insignia, the soldiers abandoned machine-guns, rifles, equipment; all communications were cut."

After breaking enemy resistance on the Chir and the Don, the Soviet troops dispersed the Italian 8th Army and Operational Group Hollidt, located on the left wing of Army Group Don. Reaching Tatsinskaya and Morozovsk on the ninth day, they threatened the left flank and rear of the nazi group at Kotelnikovsky, which had by then gained the Myshkova River. Special distinction was won by the 24th Tank Corps, which advanced 240 kilometres in five days, inflicted immense losses in men and equipment on the enemy and, capturing Tatsinskaya, cut the Likhaya-Stalingrad railway. The 25th Tank and 1st Mechanised corps, which broke into the Morozovsk area, and the 17th and 18th tank corps, which closed in on Kantemirovka and Millerovo, won special mention. To stem the Southwestern Front's advance, the German Command committed all available divisions earlier intended for the Tormosin group. In addition, they quickly shifted the 6th Panzer Division, the strongest of their Kotelnikovsky force, from the Myshkova River. Indeed, they managed to surround the 24th Tank Corps in Tatsinskaya, and attempted to destroy it. But their assault was repulsed, and on orders from the Command the corps broke out of the enemy ring. For its bravery, discipline and good organisation, and for the heroism shown by its men, it was renamed the 2nd Guards Tatsinskaya Tank Corps. By December 24 the enemy succeeded in halting the Southwestern Front units. But this was the day when a new, unexpected blow was struck.

In face of the offensive by Manstein's group from Kotelnikovsky, GHQ had put off the operation of destroying the surrounded German forces. General R. Y. Malinovsky's 2nd Guards Army, which had been assigned for this job, was hastily moved to the Myshkova River. Its elements arrived on the scene on December 19 and joined in the fighting immediately. They inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in co-operation with the 51st Army, stemming the nazi advance. On December 24, reinforced by the 5th Strike Army from the GHQ Reserve, the 2nd Guards Motorised Corps, the 7th Tank Corps and the 6th Motorised Corps, Malinovsky's troops and the 51st Army began an all-out offensive. They wore down German resistance, their forward elements reaching the Aksai-Yesaulovsky River the following day. The German panzer divisions withdrew in confusion to the far bank. Advancing Soviet troops rolled forward at high speed towards Kotelnikovsky and captured it on December 29. The German forces there were smashed, surviving units fleeing to Rostov. A considerable part was played in this victory by Soviet airmen, who gave the ground forces invaluable support.

Thus, the German attempt to relieve the surrounded force failed totally. Now, the outer perimeter of the ring was 200-250 kilometres from the beleaguered force.

This was a triumph for Soviet military science, proving its superiority over that of the nazi generals. The Germans, too, had succeeded in surrounding large Soviet forces. But the enemy had operated in far more favourable conditions. At that time the nazis held the strategic initiative, wielded greatly superior strength both in men and equipment, and their air force was in almost complete control of the air, while the Soviet troops fought heavy rearguard actions (summer and autumn 1941). Moreover, there had been cases when the enemy surrounded Soviet units when the general balance of strength was in his favour, while the defending Soviet forces had been greatly weakened by preceding battles (May 1942). The German Army at Stalingrad was encircled rapidly, with the strength

of both sides balanced evenly, when at the time of the Soviet counter-offensive the strategic initiative was still in the hands of the enemy. The Soviet operation between the Volga and the Don was carried out against a strongly armed elite force, probably the most combatworthy in the Wehrmacht, a force that had overrun many West European countries and possessed immense battle experience.

The operation took a mere six weeks, in which the Red Army totally annihilated 11 and routed 16 enemy divisions, liberating some 1,600 towns and villages. As a result, another 22 enemy divisions were enveloped in the Volga-Don area, with the ring tightening steadily. The Soviet forces captured considerable war booty. The nazi defeat at Kotelnikovsky and in the Middle Don created a favourable situation for a general Red Army offensive along the entire southern wing of the Soviet-German front.

The Soviet Command came into complete possession of the strategic initiative.

3. WIPING OUT THE SURROUNDED ENEMY

After its unsuccessful attempts to relieve the surrounded nazi force, the German Command decided to hold the Stalingrad area at all costs, seeking to pin down large Red Army forces along the Volga and thereby allow its own forces in the Northern Caucasus to withdraw towards Rostov.

The surrounded Germans were in an unenviable position. They were methodically bombed by Soviet aircraft, attacked by infantry and shelled by artillery. Food supplies ran out and mortality soared. Transport aircraft endeavoured to bring in supplies and fly out at least some troops. But Soviet aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery foiled these attempts. Only a small number of wounded was brought out of the pocket. The Soviet air blockade deprived the beleaguered German force of outside support and reduced its battleworthiness. Enemy resistance became more senseless by the hour. Fieldmarshal Paulus was offered to surrender on January 8, 1943, but turned down the offer.

Maxim Gorky, the eminent writer and humanitarian, once wrote: "If the enemy refuses to surrender, he is destroyed." That was what the Soviet forces then began to do. But it was a task of immense proportions. The enemy was still strong enough to put up a desperate resistance. Forty-eight days after the encirclement Paulus still had about 250,000 effectives, 4,130 field guns and mortars and almost 300 tanks. They had dug in effectively, fortified their positions and organised a system of fire.

General K. K. Rokossovsky's Don Front (Military Council member—General K. F. Telegin) was ordered to destroy this formidable nazi force. On January 1, 1943, the Don Front had 218,000 men, 5,610 field guns and mortars, 169 tanks and some 300 planes. The balance of strength was not, in practical terms, favourable for the Soviet troops. They were weaker numerically, had fewer tanks and only a 1.3:1 advantage in artillery.

The plan for the operation, code-named *Koltso* (Ring), was drawn up by the end of December, setting the aim of destroying the enemy first in the western and then the southern halves of the pocket, then mopping up the remaining forces and bringing the battle to an end.

With an almost equal force, the Soviet Command managed to build up a 3:1 advantage in infantry, 1.2:1 advantage in tanks and a more than 10:1 advantage in artillery in the direction of the main effort.

On January 10, 1943, after a devastating artillery pounding and air strike, the Soviet troops began their attack. The nazis counter-attacked ferociously, operating with strong artillery and tank support. However, their desperate efforts could not halt the Soviet offensive. The Soviet troops fought selflessly. Sergeant N. F. Serdyukov, machine-gunner of the 15th Guards Division, displayed supreme heroism on a frosty day in January. Wounded in the leg, he closed the firing slit of an enemy bunker at a crucial moment of the battle and allowed an infantry company to press home its attack. Sergeant Serdyukov was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union.

The enemy could not stand up to the mass heroism and under the pressure of Soviet troops retreated hastily. Units, even groups of units, surrendered. And on January 31, General von Paulus, commander of the 6th Army, just promoted by Hitler to the rank of Fieldmarshal, surrendered as well. On February 2 the entire enemy group ceased to exist. As many as 147,200 enemy dead were picked up and buried on the battlefield. As many as 91,000 prisoners, including more than 2,500 officers and 24 generals headed by Fieldmarshal Paulus, were taken.

Among the war prisoners were many wounded and sick, whom, certain reactionary West German historians now claim, the Soviet Command was reluctant to help with the result that the mortality rate among them reached a high level. This is a black lie. Soviet Army doctors worked night and day. "The doctors and the Red Army Command," Paulus wrote later, "did everything humanly possible to save the lives of the prisoners." General O. Korfes, commander of the German 295th Infantry Division, pointed out in his memoirs that two Soviet doctors and 14 medical nurses died of infectious diseases caught from German war prisoners. The blame for the death of those who were beyond saving, and for all the killed, does not lie with the Soviet Command. The guilt lies with the German High Command and those who rejected the humane Soviet offer of surrender.

4. IMPACT OF THE STALINGRAD VICTORY

The greatest battle of the Second World War ended with the destruction of the strategic group in the area between the Volga and Don. In this battle the Red Army crushed two German, two Rumanian and one Italian army. Altogether the enemy lost 32 divisions and three brigades; moreover, 16 divisions lost their capacity to fight. From November 19, 1942, to February 2, 1943, the enemy's losses were more than 800,000 effectives, almost 2,000 tanks and assault guns, over 10,000 field guns and mortars, nearly 3,000 combat and transport aircraft and over 70,000 lorries. This blow shook the whole of nazi Germany's military machine.

The German defeat at Stalingrad ranks among the biggest politico-military developments of the Second World War. Crowned by the encirclement and total rout of an elite force, the battle signified a radical turn in the Great Patriotic War, and the Second World War as well. The Soviet Armed Forces displayed their great power and their superiority over the nazi war machine.

It was a triumph for Soviet military science, and a disaster for the German military doctrine. The strategy, operational art and tactics of the Soviet Armed Forces stood the severe test. For results the operation had nothing to equal it in the entire history of wars. From July 17, 1942, to February 2, 1943, the Axis armies lost nearly a quarter of their strength engaged on the Soviet-German front. Some 1,500,000 men (including Luftwaffe casualties) were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Soviet operational art was augmented by the classic model of fully encircling and annihilating the enemy. Problems related to the breaching of a front's fortified line and developing offensive operations in large depth continuously were successfully solved.

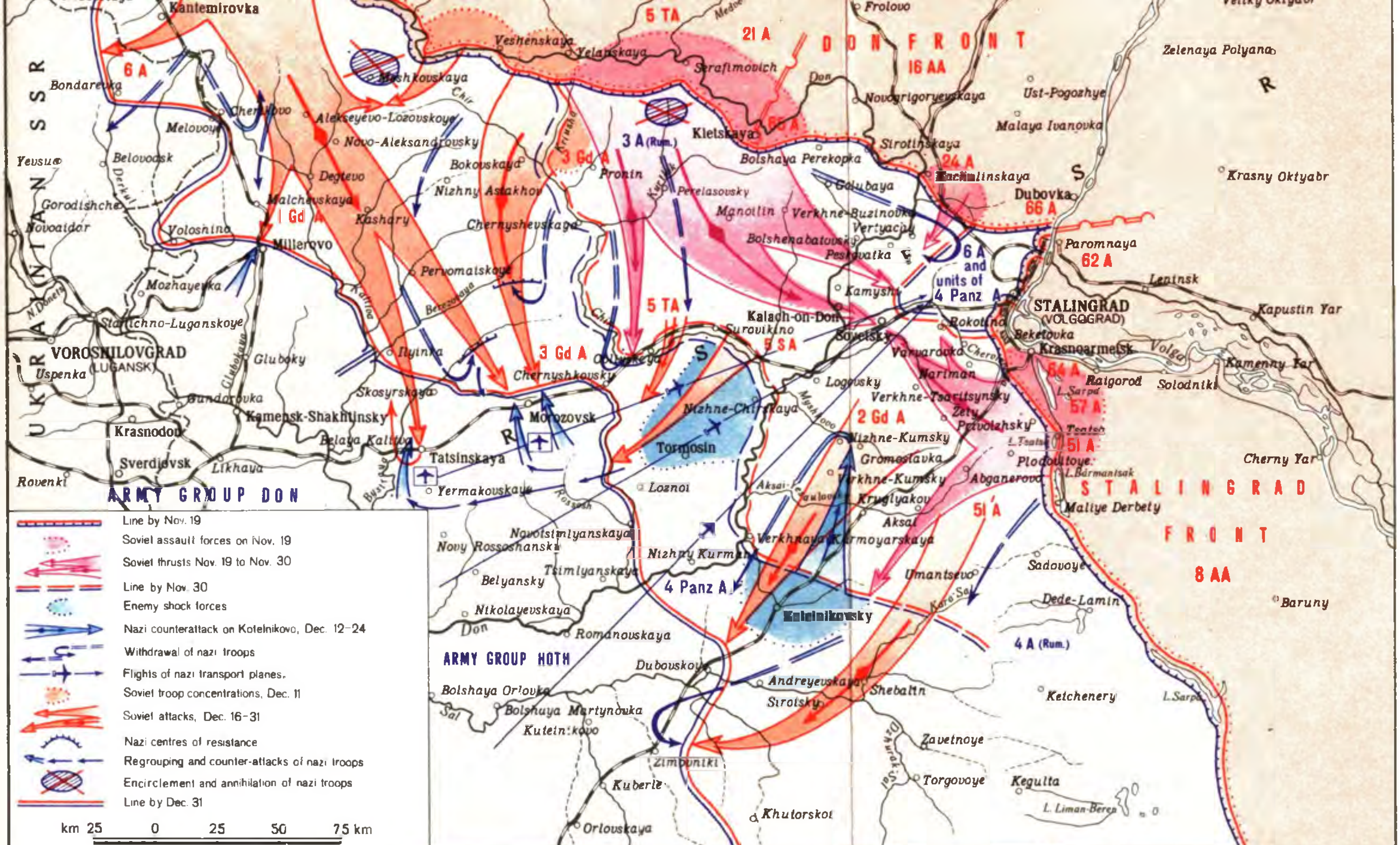
Skilful build-up, distribution and use of strategic and operational reserves proved an important factor. Everybody knows how difficult it had been for the Soviet troops to hold Stalingrad. In the meantime, the Supreme Command built up strength and deployed it to locations of future decisive actions. Although reinforcements were desperately needed in the defensive phase, General Headquarters did not commit them to local engagements. Not until the time for the counter-offensive arrived did the Front receive considerable additional strength. Between November 20 and December 31 alone, the reinforcements out of the Reserve totalled 20 infantry divisions and six tank corps, four motorised corps, seven separate tank brigades, 25 artillery regiments and two air corps. The victory was inconceivable without these reinforcements.

Tanks and motorised corps played the principal part in surrounding the enemy group at Stalingrad. Their experience was subsequently used in many operations in which large enemy groups were encircled.

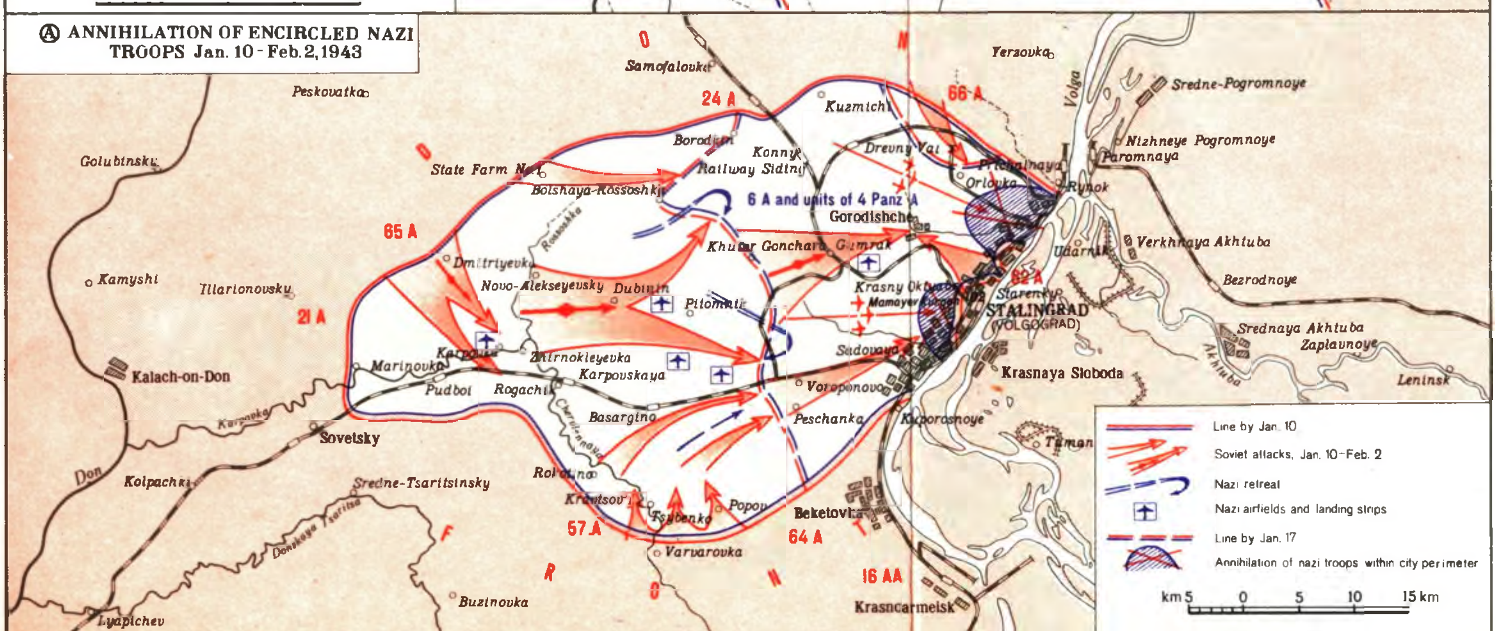
The Stalingrad victory was attained thanks to the superior social and political system of the Soviet Union, the enduring friendship of the peoples of the USSR, the mighty economic war potential of the Red Army, the unexampled tenacity of the Soviet soldier, his prowess and high morale, and the unity of the people with the Communist Party. The Party centred the work of all government, economic, trade union and Komsomol organisations on a single purpose: helping the Red Army in every possible way.

The exploit at Stalingrad was deeply appreciated by the nation. Orders were awarded to 55 formations and units that had distinguished themselves in the battle, and 179 units were decorated with the Guards title. Thousands of officers and men were awarded Government decorations, and nearly 100 were created Heroes of the Soviet Union. Towards the end of 1942 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted the medal "For the Defence of Stalingrad", which was awarded to veterans of the battle—more than 707,000 officers and men. The people revere the memory of Stalingrad's defenders. Recognition of their special services is the memorial on Mamayev Kurgan.

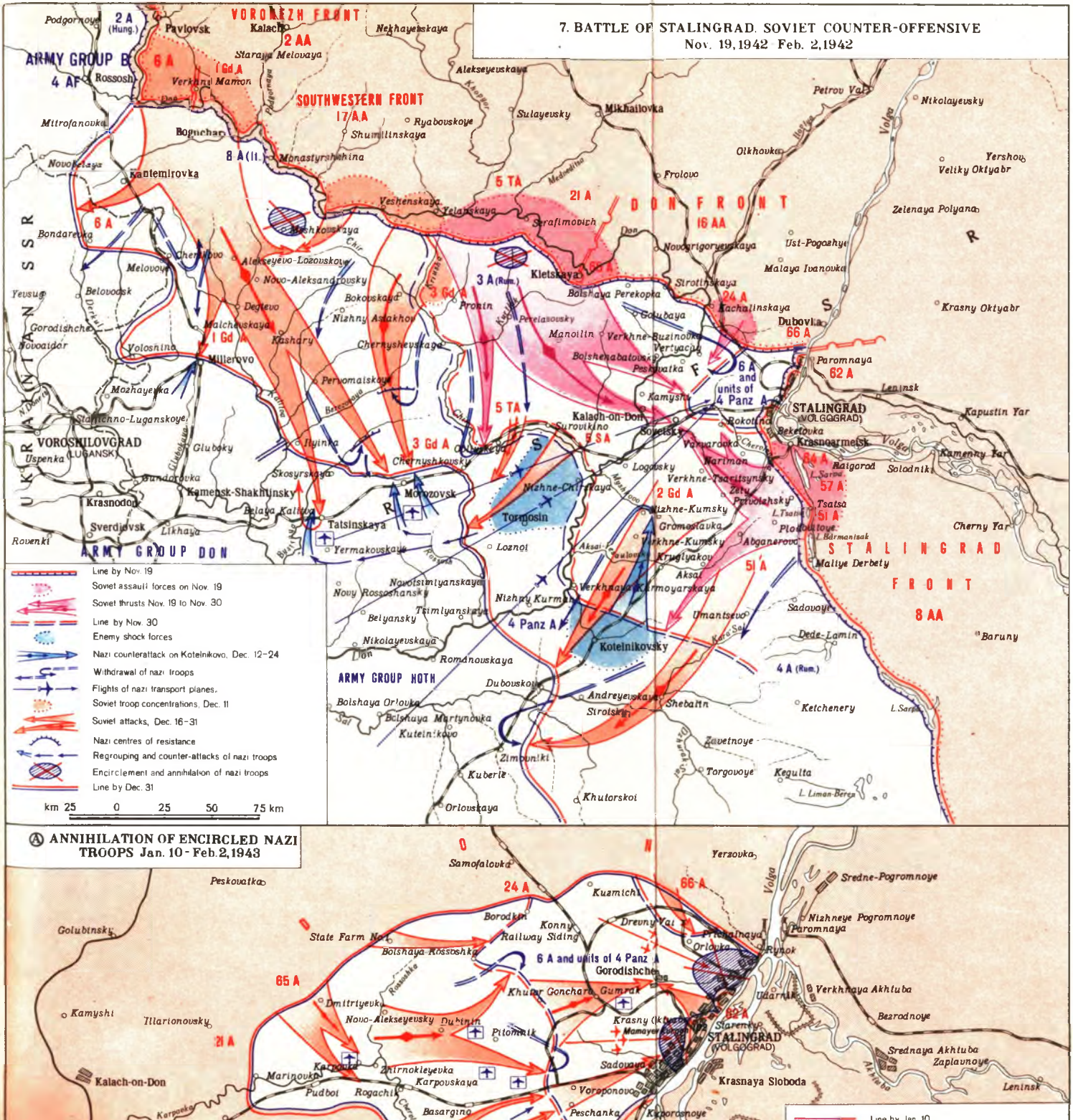
The victory at Stalingrad demonstrated the great military skill of GHQ and the General Staff, the might of Soviet arms and the Red Army's moral superiority over the army of the nazi brigands. At the same time, for Germany the defeat on the Volga was a catastrophe which undermined the morale of the German troops. The faith of the officers and men in the infallibility of their Command was shaken. "The German soldier," writes the West German historian Hicker, "began to fear flank attacks. Hitherto he had known that he could calmly remain in a threatened position, confident that he could leave it opportunely. He now lost that confidence and grew nervous every time the enemy broke through



Kantemirovka
5 TA
21 A
DON FRONT
16 AA
Frolovo
Zelenaya Polyana
Veshenskaya
Yelanskaya
Serafimovich
Meshkovskaya
6 A
Bondarevka
Chir
Novogrigoryevskaya
Ust-Pogozhye
Malaya Ivanovka
Chernyshkovo
Alekseyevo-Lozovskoye
Melovoye
Novo-Aleksandrovsky
3 A (Rum.)
Kletskaya
Sirotinskaya
Yevsug
Belovodsk
Bokovskaya
3 Gd A
Pronin
Bolshaya Perekopka
24 A
Degtevo
Nizhny Astakhov
Perelasovsky
Golubaya
Dubovka
Krasny Oktyabr
Gorodishche
Malchevskaya
Kashary
Chernyshevskaya
Mnogoilin
Verkhne-Buzinovka
66 A
Novoaidar
Voloshino
1 Gd A
Millerovo
Vertyachy
Bolshenabatovsky
Peskovatka
6 A and units of 4 Panz A
Paromnaya
62 A
Pervomaiskoye
Mozhayevka
Kamyshi
Leninsk
5 TA
Kalach-on-Don
STALINGRAD (VOLGOGRAD)
Kapustin Yar
Stanichno-Luganskoye
Surovikino
5 SA
Sovetsky
Rokotino
Beketovka
VOROSHILOVGRAD (LUGANSK)
Uspenka
Glubokoye
Ilyinka
3 Gd A
Oblivskaya
Varvarovka
Krasnoarmeisk
Volga
Kamenny Yar
Chernyshkovsky
Logovsky
Marinovka
64 A
Raigorod
Solodniki
Skosyrskaya
Verkhne-Tsaritsynsky
Gundorovka
Nizhne-Chirskaya
Zety
57 A
Kamensk-Shakhtinsky
Morozovsk
2 Gd A
Privolzhsky
Tsatsa
Krasnodon
Nizhne-Kumsky
51 A
Belaya Kalitva
Tatsinskaya
Tormosin
Gromoslavka
Plodovitoye
Cherny Yar
Sverdlovsk
Likhaya
Verkhne-Kumsky
Abganerovo
Rovenki
Yermakovskaya
Loznoi
Kruglyakov
STALINGRAD FRONT
ARMY GROUP DON
Aksai
51 A
Maliye Derbety
Novotsimlyanskaya
Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya
Novy Rossoshansky
Nizhny Kurmoyarsky
FRONT
Tsimlyanskaya
Umantsevo
Sadovoye
Belyansky
4 Panz A
8 AA
Kotelnikovsky
Dede-Lamin
Baruny
Nikolayevskaya
Romanovskaya
4 A (Rum.)
ARMY GROUP HOTH
Dubovskoye
Andreyevskaya
Bolshaya Orlovka
Sirotsky
Shebalin
Ketchenery
Bolshaya Martynovka
Kuteinikovo
Zavetnoye
Zimovniki
Kuberle
Torgovoye
Kegulta
Khutorskoi
Orlovskaya
Line by Nov. 19
Soviet assault forces on Nov. 19
Soviet thrusts Nov. 19 to Nov. 30
Line by Nov. 30
Enemy shock forces
Nazi counterattack on Kotelnikovo, Dec. 12-24
Withdrawal of nazi troops
Flights of nazi transport planes.
Soviet troop concentrations, Dec. 11
Soviet attacks, Dec. 16-31
Nazi centres of resistance
Regrouping and counter-attacks of nazi troops
Encirclement and annihilation of nazi troops
Line by Dec. 31
km 25 0 25 50 75 km



Ⓐ ANNIHILATION OF ENCIRCLED NAZI TROOPS Jan. 10 - Feb. 2, 1943
DON FRONT
Samofalovka
Yerzovka
Peskovatka
24 A
66 A
Kuzmichi
Sredne-Pogromnoye
Borodkin
Konny Railway Siding
Drevny Val
Golubinsky
State Farm No. 1
Nizhneye Pogromnoye
Paromnaya
Bolshaya-Rossoshka
Orlovka
Rynok
6 A and units of 4 Panz A
Gorodishche
65 A
Khutor Gonchara
Gumrak
Verkhnaya Akhtuba
Dmitriyevka
Bezrodnoye
Kamyshi
Illarionovsky
Novo-Alekseyevsky
Dubinin
Krasny Oktyabr
62 A
Pitomnik
STALINGRAD (VOLGOGRAD)
21 A
Srednaya Akhtuba
Zaplavnoye
Karpovka
Zhirnokleyevka
Sadovaya
Marinovka
Karpovskaya
Krasnaya Sloboda
Kalach-on-Don
Pudboi
Rogachik
Voroponovo
Leninsk
Basargino
Peschanka
Kuporosnoye
Sovetsky
Kolpachki
Sredne-Tsaritsinsky
Rokotino
Krutsov
Tsybenko
Popov
Beketovka
57 A
64 A
Varvarovka
16 AA
Buzinovka
Krasnoarmeisk
Lyapichev
Line by Jan. 10
Soviet attacks, Jan. 10-Feb. 2
Nazi retreat
Nazi airfields and landing strips
Line by Jan. 17
Annihilation of nazi troops within city perimeter
km 5 0 5 10 15 km


7. BATTLE OF STALINGRAD. SOVIET COUNTER-OFFENSIVE
Nov. 19, 1942 - Feb. 2, 1942
VORONEZH FRONT
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT
DON FRONT
STALINGRAD FRONT
ARMY GROUP B
ARMY GROUP DON
ARMY GROUP HOTH
6 A
4 AF
2 A (Hung.)
1 Gd A
2 AA
17 AA
8 A (It.)
5 TA
21 A
16 AA
3 A (Rum.)
3 Gd A
24 A
66 A
6 A and units of 4 Panz A
62 A
64 A
57 A
51 A
2 Gd A
4 Panz A
4 A (Rum.)
8 AA
65 A
Pavlovsk
Kalach
Nekhayevskaya
Podgornoye
Rossosh
Staraya Melovaya
Verkhni Mamon
Alekseyevskaya
Petrov Val
Nikolayevsky
Mitrofanovka
Bogucharl
Ryabovskoye
Shumilinskaya
Sulayevsky
Mikhailovka
Olkhovka
Yershov
Veliky Oktyabr
Novokhopyorsk
Kantemirovka
Monastyrshchina
Frolovo
Veshenskaya
Yelanskaya
Serafimovich
Zelenaya Polyana
Bondarevka
Chertkovo
Alekseyevo-Lozovskoye
Novo-Alekseyevsky
Melovoye
Kletskaya
Novogrigoryevskaya
Ust-Pogozhye
Malaya Ivanovka
Yevsug
Belovodsk
Degtevo
Bokovskaya
Nizhny Astakhov
Strotinskaya
Bolshaya Perekopka
Krasny Oktyabr
Gorodishche
Novoaidar
Malchevskaya
Kashary
Chernyshevskaya
Pronin
Perelazovsky
Manoilin
Verkhne-Buzinovka
Dubovka
Voloshino
Millerovo
Peschanka
Bolshenabatovsky
Peskovatka
Paromnaya
Mozhayevka
Kamyshi
Leninsk
Stanichno-Luganskoye
Surovikino
Rokotino
Kapustin Yar
VOROSHILOVGRAD (LUGANSK)
Uspenka
Gluboky
Ilyinka
Chernushkovsky
Sovietsky
Varvarovka
Beketovka
Krasnoarmeisk
Kamenny Yar
Bundorovka
Skosyrskaya
Logovsky
Nartiman
Raigorod
Soladniki
Krasnodon
Kamensk-Shakhtinsky
Morozovsk
Nizhne-Chirskaya
Verkhne-Tsaritsynsky
Zety
Tsatsa
Sverdlovsk
Likhaya
Tatsinskaya
Tormosin
Nizhne-Kumsky
Privolzhsky
Plodovitoye
Rovenki
Yermakovskaya
Loznoi
Gromoslavka
Verkhne-Kumsky
Aksay-Gulovsky
Kruglyakov
Abganerovo
Cherny Yar
Maliye Derbety
Novotsimlyanskaya
Verkhnaya Kurmoyarskaya
Nizhny Kurmoyar
Tsimlyanskaya
Sadovoye
Umantsevo
Belyansky
Dede-Lamin
Baruny
Nikolayevskaya
Kotelnikovsky
Romanovskaya
Dubovskoye
Andreyevskaya
Shebalin
Ketchenery
Bolshaya Orlovka
Stirolsky
Bolshaya Martynovka
Kutelnikovo
Zavetnoye
Zimovniki
Torgovoye
Kegulta
Kuberle
Khutorskoi
Orlovskaya
Line by Nov. 19
Soviet assault forces on Nov. 19
Soviet thrusts Nov. 19 to Nov. 30
Line by Nov. 30
Enemy shock forces
Nazi counterattack on Kotelnikovo, Dec. 12-24
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Flights of nazi transport planes
Soviet troop concentrations, Dec. 11
Soviet attacks, Dec. 16-31
Nazi centres of resistance
Regrouping and counter-attacks of nazi troops
Encirclement and annihilation of nazi troops
Line by Dec. 31
km 25 0 25 50 75 km
A ANNIHILATION OF ENCIRCLED NAZI TROOPS Jan. 10 - Feb. 2, 1943
Samofalovka
Yerzovka
Peskovatka
Kuzmichi
Sredne-Pogromnoye
Golubinsky
Borodkin
Konny Railway Siding
Drevny Yar
Nizhneye Pogromnoye
State Farm No 1
Bolshaya Rossoshka
Paromnaya
Orlovka
Rynok
6 A and units of 4 Panz A
Gorodishche
Khutor Goncharov
Gumrak
Verkhnaya Akhtuba
Kamyshi
Illarionovsky
Dmitriyevka
Udarnik
Bezrodnoye
Novo-Alekseyevsky
Dubinin
Krasny (kh.)
Mamayev Kurgan
Pitomnik
Starenky
STALINGRAD (VOLGOGRAD)
Srednaya Akhtuba
Zaplavnoye
Kalach-on-Don
Marinovka
Zhirnokleyevka
Karpovka
Sadovaya
Krasnaya Sloboda
Pudbol
Rogachik
Voroponovo
Leninsk
Basargino
Peschanka
Kuporosnoye
Line by Jan. 10

on the flanks, every time there was so much as a remote danger of encirclement."

The Stalingrad victory evoked respect for the Soviet people among millions of working people in the world. They expressed their admiration for the heroic Soviet stand, for the exploits of Soviet men and women in the name of humanity. At the Big Three conference in Teheran, November 1943, the British Prime Minister presented the Soviet delegation with a sword, the gift of King George VI to the people of Stalingrad. In May 1944, the US President sent a message, saying:

"In the name of the people of the United States of America, I present this scroll to the City of Stalingrad to commemorate our admiration for its gallant defenders whose courage, fortitude, and devotion during the siege of September 13, 1942, to January 31, 1943, will inspire forever the hearts of all free people. Their glorious victory stemmed the tide of invasion and marked the turning point in the war of the Allied Nations against the forces of aggression."

Post-war reactionary US and British historians and certain generals endeavoured to belittle the Stalingrad victory and to magnify the importance of the Allied campaign in North Africa, notably the battle at El-Alamein. General George C. Marshall, ex-Chief of Staff of the US Army, wrote in a report to the President that "the crisis of the war broke out at Stalingrad and El-Alamein".

By identifying these two totally unequal battles, he sinned most grievously against the facts of history. After all, whereas more than two-thirds of Hitler's armies operated on the Soviet-German front, there were just four German and eight Italian divisions to be dealt with at El-Alamein.

True, some writers in the capitalist world admit that the turning point in the Second World War came with the Stalingrad victory. But analysing the causes of the nazi defeat, many of them go against the truth. That is done by many of the generals defeated by the Red Army, such as Fieldmarshal Manstein and the generals Tippelskirch, Buttlar, Zeitzler, Mellenthin, Doerr, and others. As they see it, the Stalingrad disaster was due to particular causes: Hitler's ineptitude, the unreliability of the Rumanian, Italian and Hungarian troops, and the mud, snow and cold. They ascribe the defeat to anything but the prowess of the Red Army and the superiority of Soviet military science.

Centuries will go by, but the glory of the defenders of Stalingrad will not fade in the memory of the peoples as a peerless example of courage and fortitude without match in the history of wars.

5. THE BEGINNING OF THE END

After the Stalingrad victory, the Red Army mounted offensives all the way from Leningrad to the Caucasus, with the main effort again on the southern wing.

Under the GHQ plan, after destroying the Kotelnikovsky group, the Southern Front* was to concentrate on a thrust towards Rostov. At the same time, some of its elements were to liberate Tikhoretskaya, thereby cutting off the enemy Caucasian group from Rostov and hitting

* As of December 31, 1942, the Stalingrad Front was converted into the Southern, commanded from February 2, 1943, by General R. Y. Malinovsky.

it from the rear. The Black Sea group of the Transcaucasian Front had the task of striking at Krasnodar and Tikhoretsk and preventing the enemy withdrawing from the Northern Caucasus to the Taman Peninsula. By joint action of the Southern and Transcaucasian fronts the enemy group in the Northern Caucasus was to be isolated and then destroyed.

To evade encirclement the Germans began moving their troops out of the Northern Caucasus—from Mozdok in a northwesterly direction—as of January 1. The Transcaucasian Front set out in pursuit. The retreating enemy abandoned arms, vehicles, loot, even his wounded. Only part of the force headed for Rostov, reaching it by the beginning of February, while the bulk drew back to the Taman Peninsula, joining the German 17th Army to evade a flanking movement by the Southern Front.

Sensing the danger of a Soviet thrust into Taman, the nazis took frantic measures. The very strong fortifications were thrown up in and around Novorossiisk. But despite desperate enemy resistance, the Red Army continued active operations. The troops south of Novorossiisk fought well. A landing force under Major T. L. Kunikov gained a foothold there near the fishing village of Stanichka on February 4, menacing the enemy flank at Novorossiisk and preventing enemy warships from using Tsemess Bay. A series of fierce nazi attacks to destroy the landing force proved futile. Fresh Soviet forces kept arriving and the bridgehead grew. By mid-February it was nearly 30 square kilometres, with the troops securely positioned for the ensuing seven-months' siege.

Some five enemy divisions were massed against the Soviet bridgehead. Fighting continued day and night, on land, sea and in the air. Never were the nazis more determined, sending large infantry, tank and artillery forces into the attack. Luftwaffe planes practically blotted out the sky hour upon hour, bombing the defenders. Hero of the Soviet Union S. A. Borzenko, a veteran of that battle, recalls: "Every inch of ground was hit by either a bomb, a mine or a shell."

Yet the enemy did not achieve his goal.

The stout defence was the result of good political leadership. Rank-and-file Communists and Komsomol members and the political officers of the units inspired the men by their own example. General I. Y. Petrov, commander of the Black Sea Group, Colonel L. I. Brezhnev, Chief of the 18th Army Political Administration, and other high-ranking officers, were often seen among the men.

While the fighting at Novorossiisk was at its height, the Black Sea Group mounted a parallel offensive against the enemy in Krasnodar, liberating the city on February 12.

Soviet offensive operations in the Northern Caucasus continued until mid-February. By then, the Red Army had advanced 160-600 kilometres, clearing much of the Northern Caucasus and Rostov Region and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. That the nazis escaped encirclement was due chiefly to the fact that the Southern and Transcaucasian fronts lacked resources for a swift advance.

The troops defending the Caucasus displayed firm resolve to keep the enemy out. A medal "For the Defence of the Caucasus" was instituted by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and awarded to more than 580,000 officers and men.

Parallel with the fighting in the Northern Caucasus, the Red Army struck in the upper reaches of the Don at Ostrogozhsk, Rossosh and Voronezh.

The Voronezh Front was ordered to destroy the Hungarian 2nd Army and finish off the Italian 8th Army (Italian Alpine and German 24th Army Corps) dug in at Ostrogozhsk and Rossosh. Also, the stretch of the railway between Liski and Kantemirovka was to be cleared of the enemy as a preliminary to a drive towards Kursk and the Donets Basin.

The Ostrogozhsk-Rossosh operation began on January 13. The attackers opposed a superior enemy who had a 1.8:1 edge in men and a 1.5:1 advantage in aircraft. Weakening the passive sectors, the Voronezh Front Command built up a superiority in strength and means on the directions of the main thrust. However, this did not deter the Soviet troops from breaking through and encircling a large nazi force by January 19. The battle lasted six days, with the Germans trying vainly to break out of the pocket. By January 27 fifteen nazi divisions were totally routed, with another six divisions heavily depleted. More than 86,000 men were taken prisoner. As a result, the Soviet units developed the breach in the enemy line to a width of 250 kilometres and advanced as much as 140 kilometres.

The success at Ostrogozhsk and Rossosh opened up favourable opportunities in the Voronezh-Kastornoye area, where the main strength of the German 2nd Army, consisting of 12 divisions, was surrounded by Soviet troops on three sides. Towards the end of January 1943 the Voronezh Front co-operating with the left wing of the Bryansk Front (commander—General M. A. Reiter; member of the Military Council—General I. Z. Susaikov) crashed through the German lines and gathered momentum in an advance on Kursk, while hitting Kastornoye from north and south.

On January 25 General I. D. Chernyakhovsky's 60th Army liberated Voronezh. Despite a blizzard, the Soviet troops developed the offensive swiftly, breaking into Kastornoye, an important railway junction, after a resolute attack on January 28 and clearing it of the enemy totally by the following morning. All avenues of retreat were cut. The ring closed round 10 enemy divisions southeast of the city and all German attempts to save the troops proved futile. Apart from routing a large nazi force, the Soviet troops liberated most of Voronezh and Kursk regions.

The Soviet drive in the Upper Don culminated in a crushing defeat for Army Group B. The breach in the enemy's line, from Livny to Starobelsk, was 400 kilometres wide and the situation propitious for a thrust at Kursk and Kharkov.

Pursuing the nazis westward, the Voronezh Front liberated Kursk, Belgorod and Kharkov, and early in March reached the line Sumy-a point 30 kilometres west of Akhtyrka-Okhocheye, where the offensive halted as it ran into a large German force poised for a counter-attack.

Simultaneous to the offensive of the Voronezh and Bryansk fronts in the Kursk and Kharkov directions, fighting ensued in the Donbas.

On January 29 the Southwestern Front went into action, too. Breaking down enemy resistance, it liberated the northeastern part of the Donets Basin in the early part of February, its mobile units reaching the vicinity of Krasnoarmeiskoye. Combined units on the right wing advanced 130-230 kilometres and liberated hundreds of towns and villages, including Balakleya, Izyum, Lozovaya, Slavyansk and Kramatorsk.

The Southern Front joined in the Donets Basin drive on February 5. By February 17 its divisions had advanced 90-150 kilometres to the Mius River, where the nazis held fast at previously built defences.

Withdrawing troops from the Northern Caucasus and the Northern

Donets to the Donets Basin, the enemy gathered powerful groups for a counter-blow. The Soviet Command, however, held mistakenly that the nazis would retire their main forces to the western bank of the Dnieper. The Southwestern Front was ordered to increase its tempo and prevent the enemy from escaping across the river. By mid-February, the Soviet armies were stretched thin along a 420-kilometre sector, forming a line from south of Krasnograd to Novomoskovsk-south of Pavlograd-Krasnoarmeiskoye-Kramatorsk-Slavyansk-Voroshilovgrad. Advancing swiftly, they left their supply bases far behind (some 300-350 kilometres) and soon experienced acute shortages of ammunition and fuel. The air-strips, too, were now more distant, causing air cover to decrease.

In the meantime, the enemy prepared in all haste for a counter-attack. Two strong panzer groups were formed: one northwest of Krasnograd and another south of Krasnoarmeiskoye. On February 19 these struck convergent blows at the right wing of the Southwestern Front, taking it by surprise. Weakened by the preceding offensive battles, this Front withdrew eastward. By March 1943 the right-wing divisions had rolled back with considerable losses across the Northern Donets. Not until then did they succeed in halting the enemy.

The Germans regrouped, forming a powerful concentration southwest of Kharkov with a 2:1 advantage in men and 3:1 in aircraft. They struck at the left wing of the Voronezh Front on March 4 in an effort to seize Kharkov and Belgorod. For several days and nights the Soviet troops warded off the ferocious onslaught. The Czechoslovak 1st Separate Battalion under Colonel Ludvik Svoboda fought shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet troops, repulsing attacks by superior enemy forces near the village of Sokolovo. The battalion's 1st Company covered itself with glory and its commander, Otakar Jaros, became the first foreigner to be awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The Voronezh Front was embroiled in fierce defensive battles. It was compelled to abandon Kharkov on March 15 and Belgorod three days later. By the end of the month, the Front halted the enemy along the line Krasnopolye, north of Belgorod and along the eastern bank of the Northern Donets. By then the staunch Soviet resistance had worn down enemy strength. The nazi line formed the southern face of the so-called Kursk Salient, destined subsequently to become the scene of a major battle.

The German plan of annihilating the large Soviet group in the Donets Basin, southwest of Kharkov, and then in the Kursk area, was foiled. Sustaining heavy losses, the enemy went over to the defensive.

The Soviet setback in the Donets Basin and at Kharkov was due mainly to the Soviet Command's incorrect assessment of the situation in mid-February.

After the Soviet defeat in the Donets Basin, the enemy aimed to strike at the Voronezh Front. General Headquarters moved a large reserve force to the southern sector, though this weakened the westward offensive in February and March 1943, where the divisions of the Kalinin, Western, Bryansk and Central fronts were committed to crushing Army Group Centre. But the Soviet offensive petered out. Sensing danger, especially to his Orel group, the enemy sent reinforcements, withdrawing troops from the Rzhev-Vyazma bridgehead to south of Orel. As many as 18 divisions, with 12 from Rzhev and Gzhatsk, were transferred in this manoeuvre through February and March 1943.

In the circumstances, GHQ ordered the Kalinin and Western fronts to pursue the enemy in the general direction of Smolensk. After heavy

fighting, they liberated Rzhev on March 3, Gzhatsk three days later, and Vyazma on March 12. By April 1 the advancing Soviet force arrived east of Dukhovshchina and Spas-Demensk, where its drive finally stalled. The situation did not change in that sector until the summer of 1943. During the pursuit, the Kalinin and Western fronts advanced 130-160 kilometres westward, wiped out the strongly-fortified Rzhev-Vyazma bridgehead and reached the distant approaches of Smolensk. At this point the enemy was as far as 270-300 kilometres from Moscow.

During this offensive Soviet troops showed the world further examples of mass heroism. Immortal fame was won by Private Alexander Matrosov.

On February 23, 1943, Red Army Day, Komsomol members of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 91st Infantry Brigade, 6th Infantry Corps, discussed how to capture the village of Chernushki, where the enemy had an important strongpoint. The attack was mounted at dawn, but the troops were stopped by machine-gun fire from an enemy bunker. The whole unit was in mortal danger. Alexander Matrosov rushed to the bunker and covered the firing slit with his body, saving his comrades and ensuring the fulfilment of the combat mission. Guards Private Alexander Matrosov was posthumously decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. His name has been entered in perpetuity in the roster of the 1st Company, 254th Guards Infantry Regiment,* which has been named after him.

The Stalingrad victory created a favourable situation for extending the offensive not only in the southwestern and western directions, but also northwest. Having moved his reserves south, the enemy had become markedly weaker and a good chance existed of breaking the enemy ring round Leningrad. The operation was entrusted to the Leningrad Front (commander—General L. A. Govorov, member of the Military Council—A. A. Zhdanov) and the Volkhov Front (commander—General K. A. Meretskov, member of the Military Council—General L. Z. Mekhlis). Convergent blows at the Schlisselburg-Sinyavino salient were to break the enemy line and restore ground communications with Leningrad. True, considerable difficulties existed: the nazis had their 18th Army in the area, beleaguering the city south and southeast. It consisted of 25 divisions; and the Finnish Army, which held the northern sector of the ring, had another five divisions.

The city of Leningrad had been blockaded for 16 months. The nazi aim was to starve it out. Indeed, thousands of people died each day. But the hunger-stricken, waterless, blacked-out city resisted valorously. Its defenders accepted the ordeal without a murmur. The whole nation helped them to the best of its ability.

On January 12, 1943, after painstaking preparations, General M. P. Dukhanov's 67th Army (Leningrad Front) began a powerful offensive from west to east. General V. Z. Romanovsky's 2nd Strike Army (Volkhov Front), meanwhile, thrust from the other side of the line. Air support was furnished by the 13th and 14th air armies under General S. D. Rybalchenko and General I. P. Zhuravlev respectively. Baltic Fleet marines, artillery and airmen assisted. In seven days of heavy fighting the Soviet forces captured Schlisselburg and a number of other strongpoints. The two fronts met on January 18, ending the Leningrad blockade.

Gaining momentum, the offensive, highlighted by the momentous victory at Leningrad, created a favourable situation for an assault on

* On May 15, 1943, this regiment, of the 56th Guards Infantry Division, was formed on the basis of the 91st Infantry Brigade.

Demyansk. The Northwestern Front attacked on February 15. Dreading defeat, the nazis withdrew east of the Lovat River. The Demyansk bridgehead, which the Germans had held for nearly 18 months, was eliminated.

* * *

On the heels of their debacle at Stalingrad on the Volga, the nazis suffered major defeats in other important sectors. In the period from November 19, 1942, to March 1943 the Germans transferred 33 divisions and three brigades from the West to the Soviet-German front in an attempt to check the Soviet pressure.

In this period the Red Army destroyed more than 100 enemy divisions. According to the German Army General Staff, losses amounted to nearly 1,200,000 officers and men. All in all the fascist bloc lost in the campaign up to 1,700,000 men, 24,000 field guns, over 3,500 tanks and 4,300 aircraft. It was only the absence of a second front in Western Europe that saved the nazi army from a more disastrous reverse.

In the victorious offensive of the winter of 1942-43 the Red Army hurled the enemy back, in some sectors to a distance of 600-700 kilometres, and liberated a territory of 494,000 square kilometres. This made it possible to commission key communication lines linking the central regions of the USSR with the south. Millions of Soviet people were freed from fascist slavery.

The Red Army's victories greatly enhanced the Soviet Union's prestige in the world. They had a powerful impact on the liberation struggle in all countries. Inspired by the heroic struggle of the Soviet people, the peoples of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, France and other countries, led by Communist Parties, intensified their resistance to the German invaders. These countries were swept by a powerful wave of national liberation struggle.

The blows dealt by the Red Army shook the fascist bloc and fanned discord in it. Italy found herself on the brink of military, political and economic collapse. Her weakened position in the Hitler bloc, the crashing reverses suffered by the Italian Army on the Soviet-German front and the people's dissatisfaction with the war greatly aggravated the political crisis in the country. Italy's exit from the war and the downfall of the Rome-Berlin axis were inevitable. The political situation deteriorated in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. The rulers of Finland began to adopt a different line of behaviour. They were now prepared to use any opportunity to extricate themselves from the war. Japan, which had impatiently awaited the fall of the Volga stronghold in order to attack the USSR, was compelled to refrain from open action against the Soviet Union.

The neutral countries likewise changed their attitude. Turkey, for example, had been preparing to enter the war on Germany's side against the USSR, but after the German defeat at Stalingrad she abandoned her intention. The relations between Sweden and Germany cooled.

The crushing defeats and the huge losses sharply worsened Germany's military, political and economic position, confronting her with a crisis of unparalleled proportions. The position of the National-Socialist Party was also shaken. Unmistakable signs of a crisis appeared in the nazi ruling clique. Part of the General Staff and leading industrialists formed an opposition to Hitler. The tolling of funeral bells all over the country on the days of mourning ordered by the nazis for the Paulus army sobered millions of Germans and made them look the truth in the eyes. The formidable spectre of inevitable defeat now loomed large in the minds of people who had been befuddled by Goebbels' propaganda.

Chapter Nine

THE KURSK SALIENT

1. BEFORE THE BATTLE

The heavy fighting of the winter of 1942-43 was followed by a lull. The firing line had been stabilised, and both sides were busy working on plans for future operations. The armies received manpower and materiel replenishments, built up reserves and regrouped their forces.

Heartened by the Red Army's victories and rallied by the Communist Party, Soviet people worked with dedication to hasten the final defeat of the nazi invaders. In 1943 most of the key industries continued to step up the rate of production. The output of armaments mounted steadily. An average of nearly 3,000 aircraft and over 2,000 tanks and self-propelled guns were put out every month, and the number of new types of artillery increased. The Air Force was re-equipped with new models.

In view of the better supply of armaments, the changed conditions of battle and the greater experience of junior and senior officers, the Red Army underwent a further reorganisation. The High Command created a large reserve of artillery divisions and artillery assault corps. New, highly manoeuvrable and heavily armed tank units and armies were formed.

The morale and political awareness of the Soviet troops soared. This was the result of the Party's political work, whose forms and methods were progressively improved. On May 24, 1943, the Party's Central Committee adopted a decision to reorganise the structure of the Party and Komsomol organisations in the Red Army and enhance the role of field, army and divisional newspapers. In line with this decision, primary Party organisations began to be set up not at regiment but at battalion level. The battalion Party Bureau was in a better position to direct the work of the company organisations. The Party organisation secretaries were replaced by company, battalion and regimental Party organisers. Some 20,000 new primary organisations emerged as a result of this reorganisation.

Under the same Central Committee decision, the Main Political Administration instructed the Front, army and divisional newspapers to pay more attention to the political, military and cultural education of the troops. More newspapers were started and the newspaper staffs were enlarged. These newspapers became agitators, propagandists and organisers of the troops. The political work conducted by commanders, political instructors and Party and Komsomol organisations was one of the vital

factors contributing towards the growth of the Soviet Armed Forces' combatworthiness.

The Communist Party took steps to strengthen the Party leadership of the partisan movement. The existing Party organisations were enlarged and new ones created. Large groups of experienced Party workers were sent behind the enemy's firing lines.

The Red Army's victories still further enhanced the Soviet Union's international prestige. Its relations with other countries continued to broaden, and it continued to play the leading and decisive role in the anti-fascist coalition.

Thus, the military and political position of the Soviet Union was still further strengthened by the summer of 1943. Its military might sharply increased. This further changed the balance of strength in favour of the Red Army. The Soviet people were confident of final victory over the enemy and did everything necessary to attain that victory.

The situation in nazi Germany was different. As a result of the defeat sustained in the winter of 1942-43, the German Army on the Soviet-German front lost all the territory it had seized in 1942 and part of the territory it had occupied in 1941. In the period from June 1941 to June 1943, the German Armed Forces lost over 4,126,000 men in killed, missing, wounded and sick. More than a million German as well as Rumanian and Italian officers and men were killed on Soviet territory. The huge manpower and materiel losses undermined the morale of the German Army and people.

The setbacks on the Soviet-German front shook the Axis bloc. The satellite countries seethed with discontent with the war. Germany's prestige sank in the eyes of her allies. Fascist Italy was on the verge of withdrawing from the war.

In spite of indisputable facts, the nazi leadership believed that the war was far from being lost and that the grave situation could be alleviated. The nazi politicians and strategists decided to launch a huge summer offensive on the Soviet-German front, their object being to boost the morale of the army and people, avert the disintegration of the fascist bloc and restore Germany's military and political prestige. They hoped to crush the Red Army's main forces, regain the strategic initiative and secure a change in the course of the war in their favour.

In the spring of 1943 Germany and her satellites began energetic preparations for the offensive. Total mobilisation was proclaimed to replace the manpower losses and restore the numerous divisions that had been smashed. As a result, in 1943 the Wehrmacht received two million men more than in 1942. The nazis used more than two million foreign workers and prisoners of war to relieve the shortage of labour in industry and agriculture. Altogether nearly 6,300,000 prisoners of war and foreign workers were used as labour in Germany in 1943. At the same time, the nazi leadership did its utmost to increase the output of war supplies, replace the material losses and create the necessary reserves. Special attention was devoted to the production of new tanks of the Panther and Tiger types, as well as new assault guns of the Ferdinand type. The aircraft industry began producing better planes. In 1943, as compared with 1942, the output of tanks rose nearly 100 per cent, of aircraft more than 70 per cent, of assault guns about 190 per cent, of artillery over 120 per cent and of mortars 130 per cent.

The German Army was a formidable force in the summer of 1943. It had 10,300,000 effectives, of whom 6,682,000 were combat troops. Of these 4,800,000, or over 71 per cent, were on the Soviet-German front.

THE DEFENCE OF BREST CITADEL

A painting by P. A. Krivonogov

THE IMMORTAL STAND IN SEVASTOPOL

A painting by P. S. Sulimenko

Moreover, the satellite armies on that front had 525,000 effectives. Consequently, on the Soviet-German front the nazi Command had 5,325,000 men. Nevertheless, the balance of strength was tipping against Germany. By July 1943 the Red Army had 6,442,000 officers and men, i.e., a 1.2:1 numerical advantage over the enemy. The superiority in armaments was even more marked: 98,790 field guns and mortars as against the enemy's 54,300, 9,580 tanks and self-propelled guns as against the enemy's 5,850, and 8,290 aircraft as against the enemy's 2,980. However, it must be borne in mind that more than half of the Red Army's artillery consisted of 76-mm guns and 82-mm mortars and nearly one-third of its tanks were of the light type.

At the time the 1943 summer-autumn campaign commenced, the firing line ran from the Barents Sea to Lake Ladoga, and from there farther along the Svir River to Leningrad and thence to the south. At Velikiye Luki it bent to the southeast, and in the vicinity of Kursk formed a huge bulge that went deep into the positions held by the Germans. Farther, from the vicinity of Belgorod the firing line stretched to the east of Kharkov, and then along the Northern Donets and Mius rivers to the eastern shore of the Sea of Azov. In the Taman Peninsula it ran from Temryuk to Novorossiisk (Map 6).

The Karelian Front and the 7th Separate Army were fighting defensive battles in the north, along a line from the Barents Sea to Lake Ladoga. Facing them were the German 20th Army and two operational groups of Finnish troops—Massel and Olonets. Troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov and Northwestern fronts were deployed in the region from Lake Ladoga to Velikiye Luki. They had against them the Karelian Isthmus operational group of Finnish troops and the German Army Group North. The sector from Velikiye Luki to Novosil was held by the Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts, which faced the 3rd Panzer, 4th and 2nd Panzer armies of the German Army Group Centre. From Novosil to Taganrog the defensive line was held by the Central, Voronezh, Southwestern and Southern fronts against the 9th and 2nd armies of Army Group Centre and Army Group South. In the Taman Peninsula the North Caucasian Front operated against the enemy 17th Army and Crimea operational group.

The largest Soviet and German forces were massed in the sector from Novosil to Taganrog, i.e., in the Southwestern direction. In the sea theatres the situation showed hardly any change, although the balance of strength began to tip in favour of the Soviet Navy, chiefly through the numerical and qualitative growth of its air force.

The nazi Command decided that it could most conveniently and with the greatest advantage strike at the Red Army in the bulge near Kursk, which has since become known as the Kursk Salient. In the north Army Group Centre overhung this salient with a powerfully fortified springboard at Orel. In the south the salient was covered by Army Group South. The enemy counted on slicing the salient off at its base and crushing the formations of the Central and Voronezh fronts holding that area. He took into account the fact that for the Red Army the Kursk Salient was of enormous strategic importance. By occupying this salient it could deal powerful blows at the rear and flanks of the enemy's Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov groups.

In the first half of April the nazis completed their plan for an offensive, code-named Operation Citadel. The idea was to strike converging blows at Kursk, one from Orel in a southerly direction and the other from the vicinity of Kharkov in a northerly direction, thus encircling and annihilat-

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ing the Soviet forces in the Kursk Salient. The enemy intended to follow this up by widening the offensive from east of Kursk to the southeast and destroying the Soviet forces in the Donets Basin.

The enemy prepared carefully for this operation. Taking advantage of the absence of a Second Front in Europe, the German Command transferred five infantry divisions from France and Germany to the region south of Orel and north of Kharkov. Special emphasis was laid on the concentration of panzer units. Large numbers of aircraft were brought into the area, among them five air groups from France, Norway and Germany. As a result, the enemy built up powerful assault groups. One of them was deployed south of Orel and consisted of eight infantry, six panzer and one motorised division of the German 9th Army, which was part of Army Group Centre. Another, deployed north of Kharkov, consisted of five infantry, eight panzer and one motorised division, which belonged to the 4th Panzer Army and the Kempf operational group of Army Group South. The 2nd Army of Army Group Centre was deployed along the western edge of the Kursk Salient. Altogether 50 divisions were massed for Operation Citadel. These had nearly 900,000 officers and men, about 10,000 field guns and mortars, some 2,700 tanks and over 2,000 aircraft. General F. Mellenthin, Chief of Staff of the German 48th Panzer Corps, subsequently said that "no other offensive was prepared with such thoroughness".

The Soviet Army likewise prepared for the battle. GHQ drew up a plan of operations, its objectives being to destroy the German Centre and South army groups, liberate the Ukraine up to the Dnieper, as well as the Donets Basin and the eastern regions of Byelorussia, and reach a line running from Smolensk to the Sozh River and the middle and lower reaches of the Dnieper. This offensive was to be launched by the left wing of the Western Front, the Bryansk, Central, Voronezh and Steppe fronts and elements of the Southwestern Front. The main effort would be concentrated in a southwesterly direction, where the largest operations were planned. First and foremost, the plan called for the annihilation of the enemy in the vicinity of Orel and Kharkov, in the Kursk Salient.

The operation in this region was planned with extreme care by GHQ, the General Staff and the military councils and headquarters of the fronts involved. On April 8 G. K. Zhukov, who was in the region of the Kursk Salient on a mission from GHQ, stated his considerations regarding the plan for the coming operation. He wrote to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief: "It would be best if we wore the enemy down at our defences, knocked out his tanks and then, bringing in fresh reserves, launched a general offensive and crushed the enemy's main group." A. M. Vasilevsky shared this point of view. A conference, at which a preliminary decision was adopted on deliberate defensive tactics, was held at GHQ on April 12. The conference came to the conclusion that since the enemy had concentrated large forces north and south of Kursk, an offensive would lead to heavy protracted fighting and much too high a price would have to be paid for victory.

But the question of the tactics to be employed by the Soviet troops in the Kursk Salient was not removed from the agenda. It was discussed repeatedly. G. K. Zhukov, A. M. Vasilevsky, A. I. Antonov and K. K. Rokossovsky spoke in favour of deliberate defensive tactics. N. F. Vatutin, while not rejecting the need for defensive measures, was the only one who suggested striking a forestalling blow at the enemy. In mid-May Stalin finally decided on a deliberate defence.

South of Orel the enemy was to be met by the Central Front, defending the northern and northwestern sector of the Kursk Salient; and the Voronezh Front, defending the southern and southwestern sector, was assigned to meet the enemy advancing from the vicinity of Belgorod. Each of these fronts consisted of five field, one tank, and one air army, and two tank corps. Together they had over 1,337,000 effectives, 19,300 field guns and mortars, more than 3,300 tanks and self-propelled guns and 2,650 aircraft, surpassing the enemy in manpower and equipment.

Behind the Central and Voronezh fronts were troops of the Steppe Front, which was the GHQ Reserve and had the task of halting the enemy, in the event he broke through into the Kursk Salient, and, together with the first two fronts, of crushing the enemy forces in a decisive counter-offensive.

G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevsky were put in charge of co-ordinating the actions of the fronts as GHQ representatives.

After assessing the situation and determining the sector where the enemy was most likely to begin his assault, the Central Front command (commander—General K. K. Rokossovsky; member of the Military Council—General K. F. Telegin) concentrated its main effort in the sector held by the 13th and partly by the 70th army. Also deployed here were the second echelon (2nd Tank Army) and the Front reserve (9th and 19th tank corps). In a 40-kilometre sector (13 per cent of the front's width) where an enemy strike was expected the Front Command massed 34 per cent of its infantry, 46.6 of its field guns and mortars and 70 per cent of its tanks and self-propelled guns. This was a bold and extremely risky deployment. Such a huge concentration of troops and materiel in defence was justified only if there was the fullest certainty that this and no other sector was where the enemy would strike. The necessary confirmation was obtained by intelligence.

The Voronezh Front command (commander—General N. F. Vatutin; member of the Military Council—General N. S. Khrushchev) believed that the main blow of the enemy would in all likelihood be delivered from west of Belgorod towards Oboyan and from Belgorod in the direction of Korocha. The Front's left wing, a sector 114 kilometres long, was held by the 6th and 7th Guards armies, which had seen action at Stalingrad. The right wing, along a 130-kilometre sector, was defended by the 38th and 40th armies. In the second echelon behind the 6th and 7th Guards armies were the 69th and 1st Tank armies, with the 35th Infantry and 2nd and 5th Guards tank corps in reserve. Thus 63 per cent of the infantry divisions, 66.2 per cent of the field guns and mortars and 77 per cent of the tanks and self-propelled guns were concentrated in a 114-kilometre sector (46.7 per cent of the total length of the Front) where the enemy was expected to strike.

Never before, during the two years of the war, had such powerful defence lines been erected. Only on the Central Front there were over 5,000 kilometres of trenches and communication passages.

As a rule, the main line of resistance consisted of two or three positions, each of which had two or three lines of trenches linked up by numerous communication passages. Behind the main zone there was a similarly fortified second and third zone of trenches. Covering these zones were another two and in places three lines of fortifications. The depth of the fortifications reached from 150 to 190 kilometres in the sectors of the Central and Voronezh fronts. Farther, defensive lines were manned by troops of the Steppe Front, and behind them, along the Don, was another line of powerful defence works. Altogether there were eight

lines of resistance linked up by intermediate and switch positions. The depth of the fortifications was from 250 to 300 kilometres.

The concentration of large numbers of troops in strongly fortified positions was accompanied by the build-up of equipment. A total of 141,354 railway carloads of supplies were brought up.

Invaluable assistance in building the defence fortifications was rendered by the population of the liberated front-line districts of Kursk Orel, Voronezh and Kharkov regions. The number of civilians involved in the Kursk Salient alone was 105,000 in April and 300,000 in June.

During the preparations for the defensive battles conditions were created for winning air superiority. The start for this was given in the Kuban area in April 1943. Air battles involving nearly 1,000 aircraft from each side raged there for nearly two months. The enemy lost hundreds of planes and many experienced pilots. In May and June the fighting grew steadily more ferocious. Under instructions from General Headquarters two major air operations were undertaken, the strikes being aimed at enemy airfields in the zones of the Centre and South army groups. In these operations the enemy lost over a thousand aircraft. By the time the Germans started their summer offensive they found themselves short of aircraft.

Soviet troops knew that ahead of them was a colossal battle requiring the mobilisation of all their moral and physical strength. The Army's political organs and Party and Komsomol organisations made sure that every soldier appreciated his responsibility and understood the decisive significance of the pending battles. The number of primary Party and Komsomol organisations in the Voronezh and Central fronts rose by more than 50 per cent. For example, in May there were 2,063 primary Party organisations on the Central Front, and in June the number rose to 3,305, the number of Komsomol organisations increasing from 1,998 to 3,286. Party and Komsomol organisers were elected in the companies and battalions. There was a constant stream of applications for membership from officers and men. In July 1943 the Party organisations of the Voronezh Front admitted 12,378 candidate members, and of the Central Front—14,087 candidate members. The membership of the Komsomol organisations of these fronts rose by more than 26,000 during that month. This was further evidence of the strengthening bond between the Party and the soldier masses.

By the beginning of July the troops were fully prepared to repulse the enemy offensive.

2. THE ENEMY DID NOT PASS

The enemy counted on breaking the fighting spirit of the Soviet troops with a tank avalanche. ". . .In this operation," General Tippelskirch recalls, "Hitler wanted to use a large number of Panther tanks, whose mass production had been started shortly before the battle and on which he pinned particularly high hopes." Indeed, Panther and Tiger tanks and Ferdinand assault guns were arriving in a continuous stream on the Eastern front, in the area of the pending battle.

On July 1 Hitler summoned the top generals in command of the operation and notified them that he had decided it should start on July 5. The nazi Command was particularly anxious that there should be an element of surprise and hoped to achieve this by using large numbers

of new tanks and assault guns. The Soviet Command kept a tireless watch on the enemy. It had long ago become aware of his plan and discovered his new weapons. On July 2 it found out when the enemy would start his offensive. On that day General Headquarters informed the Central and Voronezh Front commands to expect an enemy assault in the Kursk Salient between July 3 and 6. This was confirmed by German prisoners captured in the night of July 4-5. They said the offensive was scheduled to start at 03.00 hours on July 5. On the basis of this information the Central and Voronezh Front commanders ordered, as had been planned earlier, the massive shelling of the areas where the enemy assault forces were massed. It was expected that this sudden pounding would weaken the enemy initial assault and inflict heavy losses on him before he launched his attack.

The Soviet troops knew they were facing a strong and cunning enemy, and they prepared to meet him with all the power of their armaments. The artillerymen took up their battle stations. Infantrymen, engineers, tankmen and pilots were on the alert. Officers, political instructors and the heads of Party and Komsomol organisations inspected the trenches, meticulously checking the preparedness of each and every soldier.

On the eve of the offensive Hitler issued two Orders of the Day: one for officers (dated July 1) and the other to all the troops committed to Operation Citadel (dated July 4). The Order of the Day to the officers stated: "The defeat that Russia will suffer as a result of this offensive must in the immediate future wrest the initiative from the Soviet leadership and may decisively influence developments ... the success of this great battle of 1943 will decide more than any ordinary battle."

But the enemy cruelly miscalculated. At dawn on July 5 the Voronezh and Central fronts heavily shelled the enemy's battle dispositions, artillery, and command and observation posts. One of the greatest battles of the Second World War started. The shelling inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy, particularly on his artillery. This caused confusion and it adversely affected the offensive spirit of the troops. The German Command was compelled to put off the assault for $1^1/_2$-2 hours.

After an artillery barrage the enemy attacked the Central Front at 05.30 hours and the Voronezh Front at 06.00 hours. Under cover of thousands of field guns and mortars and with the support of numerous aircraft enemy tanks and self-propelled guns moved against the forward line of the Soviet fortifications. They were followed by infantry. Savage fighting broke out on land and in the air south of Orel and north of Belgorod.

Three assaults were made on the Central Front in a sector 40 kilometres long. The main assault was launched at Olkhovatka, in the sector held by General N. P. Pukhov's 13th Army. An ancillary blow was struck at Maloarkhangelsk on the 13th Army's right flank, and another at Gnilets on the right flank of General I. V. Galanin's 70th Army.

For his main blow the enemy used nearly 500 tanks, hoping to ram the Soviet defences. The attack was spearheaded by groups of 10-15 heavy Tiger tanks supported by Ferdinand guns. These were followed by groups of 50-100 medium tanks moving at great speed, and by armoured-carrier-borne infantry. The enemy was confident he would quickly drive a steel wedge into the Soviet defences. But he struck his main blow at the most powerfully fortified sector of the Soviet defences, and from the very outset the battle failed to follow the pattern planned by the nazis. The Soviet troops met the enemy with unshakable

staunchness, plastering him with fire and destroying tanks at pointblank range. Engineers moved forward and swiftly set up anti-tank mines, and tank-destroyers used anti-tank guns, grenades and bottles with an incendiary mixture. From the air the enemy was battered by airmen of General S. I. Rudenko's 16th Air Army.

In the course of the day the enemy made four attempts to break through the Soviet defences and was hurled back each time. The number of tanks hit or set on fire grew rapidly, and thousands of German soldiers lost their lives. Soviet troops likewise sustained losses. In the meantime, the momentum of battle steadily increased. The Germans threw new tank and infantry units into the fighting. Against the two Soviet divisions (the 81st and the 15th), manning the defences in the direction of the enemy's main effort, the Germans used four infantry divisions and 250 tanks supported by nearly 100 aircraft. Only the fifth assault mounted towards the end of the day carried the Germans some 6-8 kilometres into the Soviet defences along a very narrow sector, to the second line of fortifications. This was achieved at great cost. The 13th Army's artillery alone took a toll of nearly 15,000 German officers and men and 110 tanks. The enemy failed to make substantial gains against the 8th Infantry Division under Colonel P. M. Gudz and the 148th Infantry Division under General A. A. Mishchenko on the right flank of the 13th Army

During the night the Soviet troops dug in and prepared to meet the next enemy attack. Taking advantage of the respite, the commanders, political instructors and Party and Komsomol organisations summed up the results of the past day, bolstered up the morale of the troops and explained their new tasks to them. Party meetings were held in all the units of the 6th Guards Division, which was ordered to join battle on July 6. At these meetings Communists pledged they would honourably discharge their duty to their country. At the Party meeting in the 8th Company of the 25th Guards Regiment, a resolution was passed in which Communists and candidate members of the Party undertook to set a personal example to the troops. The enemy would not pass where Communists were fighting.

Early in the morning of July 6 troops of the Central Front counter-attacked the main enemy group under air cover. But the Germans drew up fresh panzer and infantry units and threw them into battle. Towards noon the Germans succeeded in advancing slightly. Renewing their offensive they now sought to break through the 13th Army's second line of defences at all costs Despite huge losses, inflicted by Soviet aircraft and anti-aircraft guns, groups of 80-100 German planes ceaselessly bombed Soviet battle dispositions. The Soviet lines, however, did not waver.

Failing to break through to the second line of defences via Olkhovatka, the Germans turned their attention to another sector. At dawn on July 7 a force of 200 tanks and two infantry divisions supported by artillery and aircraft attacked in the direction of Ponyri held by the 307th Division. The Soviet Command urgently transferred large anti-tank artillery and rocket launcher forces to this sector. In the course of the day the Germans attacked fiercely five times without success. The entire field in front of Ponyri was strewn with German corpses and wrecked tanks. Towards nightfall, using fresh forces, the enemy fought his way into the northern part of Ponyri, but was dislodged and hurled back on the next day. Prisoners declared that at Ponyri they had realised how far the German forces were from Kursk.

On July 8 the enemy resumed his assault on Olkhovatka after heavily shelling and bombing the Soviet lines. He committed two more panzer

divisions in a narrow, 10-kilometre sector. Now almost the entire enemy assault group advancing on Kursk from the north was taking part in the battle.

The intensity of the fighting increased hourly. The enemy pressure was particularly fierce at the junction between the 13th and 70th armies. In the course of the day the infantry and artillery units defending this sector fought back as many as 16 attacks. Outstanding courage in these battles was displayed by the men, officers and political instructors of the 3rd Anti-Tank Artillery Brigade. In a dispatch from the field of battle Colonel V. N. Rukosuyev, the brigade commander, wrote: "The enemy has captured Kashara, Kutyrka, Pogoreltsovy and Samodurovka. He is bringing up 200 tanks and motorised infantry in the direction of Tyoploye and preparing for another attack.... The 1st and 7th batteries have fought bravely and died, but they did not retreat an inch. We have destroyed 40 tanks. The 1st Anti-Tank Rifle Battalion has sustained 70 per cent casualties. I have prepared the 2nd and 3rd batteries and the 2nd Anti-Tank Rifle Battalion to repulse the enemy. I have communication with them. We shall fight. We shall hold fast, or die." They held fast. The enemy was unable to pierce the defences. He gained another three or four kilometres at the cost of extremely heavy losses. But that was his last assault.

In the course of four days' bloody fighting the Germans managed to drive a wedge only some 10 kilometres wide and 12 kilometres deep into the Soviet defences in the sector between Ponyri and Olkhovatka. On the fifth day of the battle the enemy could no longer advance.

In heavy defensive fighting Central Front units bled this enemy group and brought its offensive to a halt. After losing 42,000 officers and men and 800 tanks the enemy was forced to dig in.

While the enemy was trying to reach Kursk from the north, another German force pushed from the south, attacking the defensive lines held by the Voronezh Front. This force consisted of the 4th Panzer Army under General Hoth and an operational group under General Kempf. These forces were directed by Fieldmarshal Manstein, commander of Army Group South. All of these three generals had been soundly beaten by the Red Army during the previous winter on the Volga, and now they were eager to wreak vengeance. Fieldmarshal Manstein tried especially hard to restore his tarnished reputation. He had had a setback in his attempt in February-March to encircle Soviet troops in the Donbas and south of Kharkov. He now looked forward to success. "In any case," he admits in his book *Lost Victories*, "the command of Army Group South was certain that though our offensive would encounter difficulties it would be successful."

The enemy directed his main effort in the general direction of Kursk from west of Belgorod. An assault force consisting of two panzer corps advanced in a sector about 30 kilometres wide. Here the enemy concentrated most of his tanks and aircraft, counting on ramming his way through the first and second line of defences held by General I. M. Chistyakov's 6th Guards Army. An ancillary action was undertaken by the 3rd Panzer Corps from the vicinity of Belgorod in the direction of Korocha, which was defended by the 7th Guards Army under General M. S. Shumilov.

On the very first day of the offensive, the morning of July 5, the 52nd and 67th Guards divisions stood up to shelling by thousands of field guns and mortars. Hundreds of planes dive-bombed the dispositions of these divisions, dropping a huge number of bombs and strafing the troops. Covered by artillery and aircraft, German tanks attacked. In groups of 70 to 200 machines with Tigers in the lead they sped towards the forward

line of defences and were followed by infantry. Some 700 tanks were used on the very first day of the battle. The enemy counted on this steel armada having a psychological effect on Soviet troops and crushing their will to resist. But our men did not flinch, putting up a dogged resistance. Along the entire length of the firing lines the enemy was met with hurricane fire from field guns, mortars, rocket launchers and all types of small arms. In the sector of the 67th Guards Division, the 5th Guards Mortar Regiment fired two volleys, which put 11 tanks out of action at once. Artillery salvoes, particularly the volleys fired by rocket launchers, sowed terror among the Germans. Grenadier 1st Class E. Wulf of the German 332nd Infantry Division, who was taken prisoner, said: "I fought in many countries but I never saw anything like the Russian artillery." Soviet aircraft and engineers inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Aircraft bombed enemy battle dispositions, and large numbers of tanks and infantry found destruction in the countless minefields.

Notwithstanding crippling losses, the enemy continued his pressure. There was extremely heavy fighting near the small town of Cherkasskoye. There the 67th Guards Division repulsed several violent attacks by German infantry. In each attack the enemy used 100 or more tanks. By nightfall the enemy managed to breach the division's main line of defences and encircle the 196th Guards Infantry Regiment. But even in encirclement Soviet troops continued to fight selflessly, pinning down considerable enemy forces and thereby slowing down the German advance. In the night of July 5-6 the regiment was ordered to break out of the encirclement and withdraw to a new line. In the most difficult sector its withdrawal was covered by a platoon of submachine-gunners commanded by Junior Lieutenant G. F. Aleko. In the course of several hours 15 daredevil submachine-gunners held up the furiously attacking enemy. Hundreds of shells and mines were fired at them.

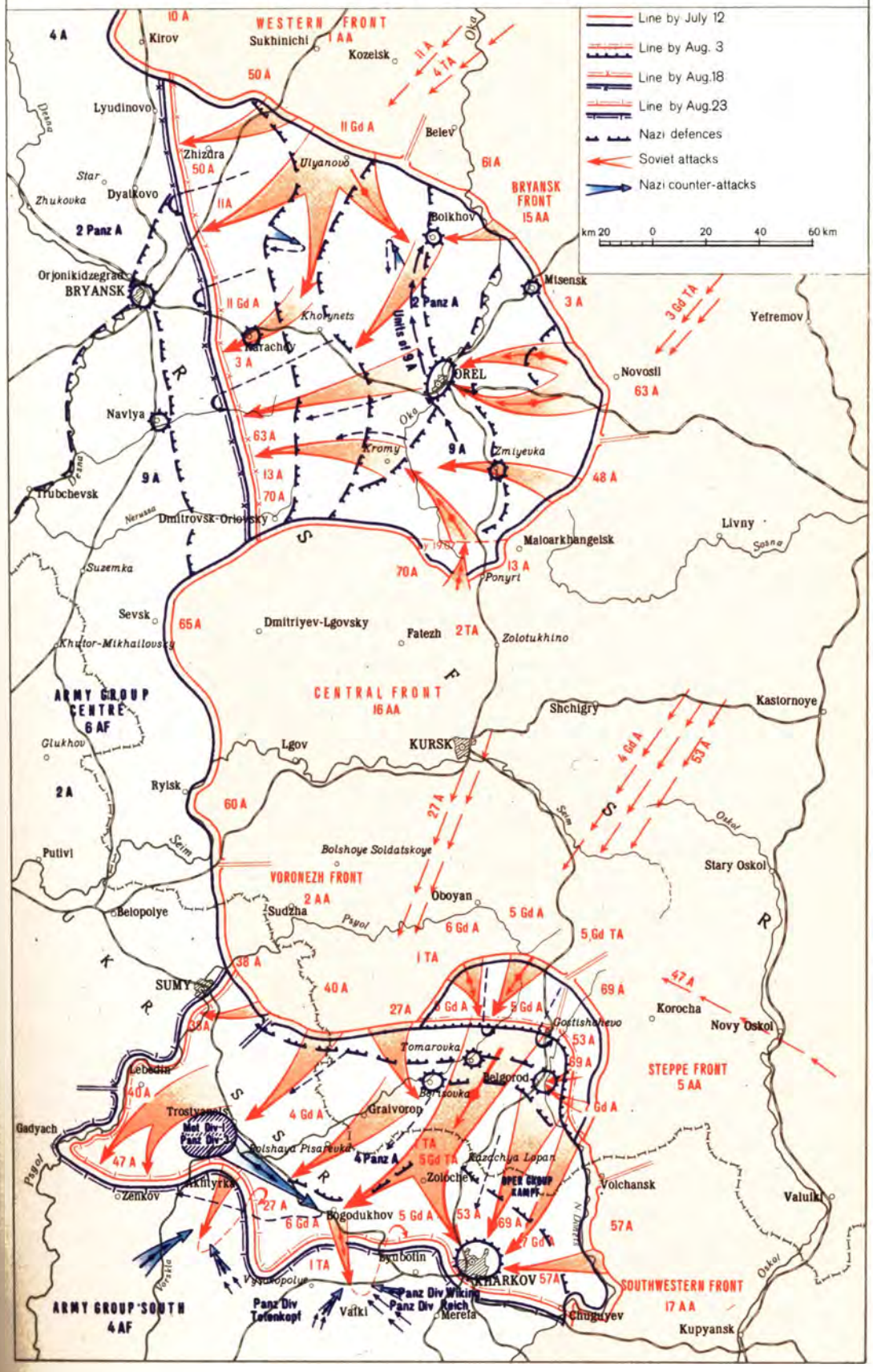
On the very first day of the battle the German 48th Panzer Corps and the 2nd SS Panzer Corps drove a wedge 8-10 kilometres deep in two narrow sectors. In the night of July 5-6, the Voronezh Front commander moved General M. Y. Katukov's 1st Tank Army and the 2nd and 5th Guards tank corps into the 6th Guards Army's second line of defences. These troops were reinforced with fresh anti-tank artillery formations and units. The tankmen were ordered to dig their machines into the ground and shoot down the attacking enemy tanks from these stationary positions.

The tension of battle did not abate on the second day. The enemy threw fresh forces into the fighting, seeking to pierce the defences regardless of losses. Soviet troops fought like lions. Lieutenant G. I. Bessarabov, commander of a tank platoon, distinguished himself in this fighting. During the first day of the battle his T-34 tank destroyed three German Tigers.

In repulsing the German tanks, the land troops received tremendous assistance from Soviet airmen. In this battle assault planes used anti-tank bombs for the first time, and with telling effect. In one of the air battles fighter pilot Senior Lieutenant A. K. Gorovets made history when he shot down nine of a flight of 20 enemy bombers. The pilot died in this battle. He was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union.

At the end of the second day of the offensive, the 2nd SS Panzer Corps, which was operating on the right flank of the assault group, gained some ground on a narrow sector in the second line of the Soviet defences. The German 48th Panzer Corps, which was attacking on its left, was stopped in front of the second line. On July 7 and 8 the Germans made desperate attempts to widen the breach in the direction of the flanks and deepen it towards Prokhorovka.

8. SOVIET COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AT KURSK July 12–Aug. 23, 1943



Similarly desperate fighting flared up in the vicinity of Korocha. Some 300 enemy tanks pressed northeastwards from Belgorod. In the course of four days' fighting the German 3rd Panzer Corps advanced only 8-10 kilometres in a very narrow sector.

On July 9-11 the Germans continued their desperate attacks in an effort to break through to Kursk, which was their main objective. All the six panzer divisions of both corps were committed to battle. Tense fighting went on in the strip between the railway and the motor roads leading from Belgorod to Kursk. Here the enemy again managed to make some headway towards the north. The nazi Command had planned to reach Kursk in two days. But the seventh day was ending, and the German troops had only covered one-third of the distance. They made their largest inroads in the direction of Prokhorovka, gaining 35 kilometres in seven days.

In the direction of Korocha, troops of the 7th Guards Army repulsed as many as 12 attacks in the course of a single day. Like the men of the 6th Guards and 1st Tank armies, they fought for every inch of ground. On July 9, 120 enemy tanks, including 35 Tigers, attacked the positions held by the 214th Regiment, 73rd Guards Division (regimental commander—V. I. Davidenko) near the village of Krutoi Log. The tanks were followed by submachine-gunners. This pitched battle went on for twelve hours. The Guardsmen put 39 enemy tanks out of commission, killing nearly 1,000 Germans. The 3rd and 1st battalions distinguished themselves in this battle, but they suffered heavy casualties. In the 3rd Battalion only 150 of the 450 officers and men remained in the ranks. One of the casualties was Captain Belgin, the battalion commander.

After they had assessed the situation, Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky, representative of GHQ, and the Voronezh Front command decided on a massive counter-attack. For this purpose they used General P. A. Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army and General A. S. Zhadov's 5th Guards Army, which had been placed at the disposal of the Front, as well as the 1st Tank Army, the 6th Guards Army and part of the forces of the 7th Guards, and the 69th armies. This counter-attack was mounted on July 12 and embraced the entire sector of the Front. Both sides used large numbers of tanks. There was particularly heavy fighting around Prokhorovka in the sector of the 5th Guards Army and the 5th Guards Tank Army. These armies encountered exceptionally stiff resistance from units of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps, which ceaselessly counter-attacked. A pitched tank battle raged in this sector, involving more than 1,200 tanks and self-propelled guns. It lasted late into the evening. Many of the tanks were reduced to heaps of scrap. Both sides sustained heavy losses.

The tide of the battle at Kursk turned on July 12. On that day, acting on orders from GHQ, the Bryansk and Western fronts launched an offensive against the enemy Orel group. On the very first day they crushed the defences of the German 2nd Panzer Army in several sectors and developed their offensive in depth. On July 15 they were joined by the Central Front. The Germans were compelled to abandon their plan of surrounding and destroying the Soviet forces in the Kursk Salient and take urgent steps to organise their defences. On July 16 the German Command ordered the withdrawal of its troops from the southern sector of the salient. The Voronezh Front and troops of the Steppe Front, which joined the battle on July 18, went in pursuit of the retreating Germans. Towards the evening of July 23 they almost completely restored the lines that were held by the Soviet forces when the defensive battle started. The third summer offensive of the Germans on the Eastern front thus failed completely, petering out a week after it commenced.

3. A BLOW IN RETALIATION

The opinionated nazi generals believed the Red Army was incapable of launching a large offensive in summer. Founding themselves on a misguided assessment of their experience of past campaigns, they believed that Soviet troops could advance only in "alliance" with bitter frosts. Nazi propaganda persistently created the myth that Soviet strategy was "seasonal". But developments dispersed these notions.

With the strategic initiative firmly in its hands, the Soviet Command dictated its will to the enemy. The defeat of the German armies, that had endeavoured to start an offensive, made it possible to deal the Germans a blow in retaliation. GHQ had for quite some time been preparing a counter-offensive in the vicinity of Kursk. The plan had been drawn up, and approved in May by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Subsequently it was discussed and amended several times at GHQ. This operation was carried out by two groups of fronts. The left wing of the Western Front and the main forces of the Bryansk and Central fronts were assigned to destroy the enemy Orel group, while the Voronezh and Steppe fronts made ready to attack the enemy group in the Belgorod-Kharkov sector. Partisan formations in Orel, Smolensk and Bryansk regions, in Byelorussia and in regions east of the Dnieper were given the task of striking at the railway communications of both German groups, wrecking their supply lines and making it impossible for them to regroup their forces.

Troops of these five Soviet fronts had to operate in face of powerful resistance—the enemy had been entrenched in the Orel and the Belgorod-Kharkov bridgeheads for a long time. The Orel bridgehead had been regarded by the nazis as their starting point for an offensive against Moscow, while the Belgorod-Kharkov bridgehead was, according to them, the gates preventing access to the Ukraine.

Strong groups of German forces opposed the committed fronts. Although the Germans had suffered enormous casualties during their offensive, their armies in this sector had 900,000 effectives at the time the Soviet counter-offensive was launched. The armaments of these forces included nearly 10,000 field guns and mortars, up to 1,800 tanks and assault guns and 2,100 aircraft. This build-up was achieved through the transfer of fresh divisions to this sector and the arrival of replacements.

GHQ massed large forces for the counter-offensive—2,226,500 effectives, over 33,000 field guns and mortars, 4,800 tanks and self-propelled guns and more than 4,300 aircraft. This gave the Soviet forces considerable superiority over the enemy. Nonetheless, to defeat the enemy group, the Soviet troops had to display great combat skill, high morale and supreme physical courage.

It was decided to start the counter-offensive with the destruction of the Orel bridgehead and the annihilation of the German 2nd Panzer and 9th armies holding that bridgehead. The general plan of the Orel campaign, which was given the code name Operation Kutuzov, called for a simultaneous assault on Orel by the three fronts from the north, east and south with the objective of splitting and destroying the enemy group.

The left wing of the Western Front (commander—General V. D. Sokolovsky; member of the Military Council—General N. A. Bulganin) was given the task of advancing from the north, at first jointly with the Bryansk Front, destroying the enemy force around Bolkhov and then, moving towards Khotynets, cutting off the escape route from Orel to the west and, together with the Bryansk and Central fronts, annihilating the German forces. The Front's assault group included General I. K. Bagra-

myan's 11th Guards Army, which was one of the most fully complemented armies in that Front.

The Bryansk Front (commander—General M. M. Popov; member of the Military Council—General L. Z. Mekhlis) prepared for operations southeast of the Western Front. Its task was to breach the enemy defences from the east. The 61st Army under General P. A. Belov, which was to advance on Bolkhov jointly with units of the 11th Guards Army, had to surround and destroy the enemy forces entrenched in that area. Meanwhile, the 3rd Army under General A. V. Gorbatov and the 63rd Army under General V. Y. Kolpakchi were ordered to advance from Novosil towards Orel from the north and south.

The Central Front made preparations to advance in the general direction of Kromy. It had to fight its way to Orel from the south and together with the Bryansk and Western fronts destroy the enemy group in the Orel bridgehead.

In the morning of July 12, the offensive of the Western and Bryansk fronts' assault groups was preceded by artillery and air bombardment. More than 4,000 field guns and mortars opened fire from only the sector of the 3rd and 63rd armies of the Bryansk Front. Fifteen minutes before troops of the Western Front attacked, bombers of General M. M. Gromov's 1st Air Army followed by assault planes pounded the enemy's artillery and strongpoints. In the direction of the Bryansk Front's main effort, enemy positions were attacked by General N. F. Naumenko's 15th Air Army. More than 3,500 high-explosive and fragmentation bombs were dropped on the enemy.

In face of the artillery and air pounding, the Germans could not at once put up serious resistance. In the sector of the 11th Guards Army of the Western Front the Soviet Command employed new tactics—the offensive was mounted not after but during the artillery preparation, when the bombardment was heaviest. Within two days the Soviet troops breached the defences of the 2nd Panzer Army to a depth of up to 25 kilometres (Map 8). In order to strengthen this army the Germans hastily transferred fresh units from other sectors of the Front. Several panzer divisions were taken from the 9th Army. This weakened it and gave the Central Front a favourable opportunity for its planned counter-offensive. It began its assault on the enemy Orel group from the south on July 15. In the course of three days it overcame the enemy's resistance and restored the lines it had held at the start of the defensive battle. By that time the Western Front's 11th Guards Army had advanced nearly 70 kilometres in a southerly direction, its main forces getting to within 15-20 kilometres of Khotynets. To avert the threat to the vital Orel-Bryansk Railway, the Germans hurriedly brought additional forces into the breakthrough sector. This somewhat slowed the Soviet advance. In order to batter down the enemy's growing resistance, the Western Front commander sent into battle the 11th Army, which had been dispatched from the GHQ Reserve, and then the 4th Tank Army. This speeded up the Soviet offensive.

Troops of the Bryansk Front, reinforced by the 3rd Tank Army, made successful headway. Troops of the Central Front, which were advancing towards Kromy, co-operated with them.

Aircraft gave the land forces active assistance. Bombers and attack planes struck at the enemy strongpoints. Fighters were on continuous patrol, hitting out at all enemy planes in the vicinity. One of the fighter pilots in these battles was Senior Lieutenant A. P. Maresyev, who had returned to active duty after having lost both his feet as a result of serious wounds. In dogfights he shot down three enemy aircraft, winning

the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Soviet pilots were aided by the French Normandie Squadron, which had been formed in the USSR by agreement between the Soviet Government and the French National Committee. The squadron originally consisted of 14 French pilots and 58 air mechanics, who fought with supreme courage.

The position of the German troops in the Orel bridgehead grew increasingly critical. The divisions transferred to the bridgehead from other sectors of the Front likewise sustained heavy losses. Their resistance was cracking, and more and more regimental and divisional commanders began to lose control of their troops.

The partisans stepped up their pressure against the enemy in Orel and Bryansk regions, attacking German garrisons and lorry columns, and cutting railways and motor roads. In the night of July 20-21 they blew up more than 6,000 railway tracks behind the firing lines of the enemy Orel group. The fury of the nazis knew no bounds. In retaliation they ruthlessly destroyed entire towns and villages, shot down women, children and old folks, and drove Soviet people to hard labour camps in Germany.

The nazi Command ordered its troops to fight to the last man. Many commanders were relieved of their posts. As was always the case in situations of this kind, Hitler blamed his subordinates for the defeats suffered by the German Army. This time he vented his wrath on General R. Schmidt, relieving him of the command of the 2nd Panzer Army. General Schmidt was replaced by the 9th Army commander General Model, known in the German Army as the "lion of defence". But even the "lion" failed to hold the defences, though his cruelty towards the local population surpassed that of Schmidt. He punished his own troops not so much for abandoning a defensive position in panic as for not burning down villages and shooting the inhabitants. He ordered the destruction of everything that could be destroyed. In Orel Region he was known as the bandit-general.

The German Command failed to stabilise the situation. Its troops retreated, and the initiative remained in the hands of the Soviet Command. The Soviet troops steadily increased the power of their assaults, giving the enemy no respite day and night. On July 29 units of the Bryansk Front's 61st Army jointly with troops of the Western Front liberated the town of Bolkhov. The Germans in Orel now faced the threat of being outflanked from the northwest. At the same time, troops of the Soviet 3rd and 63rd armies approached the town from the northeast and southeast. The semi-circle round the town grew narrower. On the night of August 3-4 bitter street fighting broke out, and at dawn on August 5 the last of the invaders were cleared out of Orel.

The inhabitants jubilantly welcomed their liberators. Old people, women and children, tears of joy running down their cheeks, climbed out of basements and cellars and embraced the troops. They told chilling stories of torture and oppression by the nazis, who were in occupation of Orel for twenty-two months. In that period they barbarously pillaged and destroyed the city. The population diminished by nearly two-thirds. Thousands of Soviet people were tortured to death, shot or sent to Germany as slave labour. The nazi bandits even boasted of their crimes. In reporting the recapture of Orel by Soviet troops, the German news agency wrote: "Soviet troops have occupied an uninhabited town", "The town is completely destroyed", "In Orel the Bolsheviks will not find a single factory. Not a single house is intact".

The Red Army's victories gave the morale of the troops a further boost. The liberation of Orel was followed by the liberation of Kromy, Dmitrovsk-

Orlovsky and Karachev as well as hundreds of villages. The German bridgehead at Orel ceased to exist by August 18. In 37 days the Soviet troops advanced nearly 150 kilometres, smashing 14 enemy divisions.

Troops of the Bryansk and right wing of the Central fronts approached strongly fortified enemy defences east of Bryansk. They temporarily halted their offensive in order to regroup their forces and prepare a further assault. The victory at Orel was the first important result of the Red Army's summer offensive.

While troops of the Central, Bryansk and Western fronts were straightening out the northern fringe of the Kursk Salient, an advance on Belgorod and Kharkov was being prepared on the southern edge of the salient. The Voronezh and Steppe fronts were completing their preparations for a counter-offensive. It was decided to strike the enemy group a deep blow with the adjoining wings of the two fronts from a sector north of Belgorod in the general direction of Bogodukhov-Valki, enveloping Kharkov from the west. The thrust was aimed at the junction between the German 4th Panzer Army and the Kempf operational group so as to split the German forces into two and thereby make it easier to destroy them. The Southwestern Front was to envelop Kharkov from the south.

In this operation, given the code name Rumyantsev, the Soviet Command set the following tasks.

The left wing of the Voronezh Front would strike the main blow with an assault force consisting of the 6th and 5th Guards armies and the 1st and 5th Guards tank armies, break through the enemy's defences and then continue its offensive with mobile units in a southwesterly direction.

The Steppe Front (commander—General I. S. Konev; member of the Military Council—General I. Z. Susaikov), which had since the end of July held the sector running from Gostishchevo to Volchansk, would use its right wing consisting of the 53rd and 69th armies to attack the enemy in the vicinity of Belgorod and then advance on Kharkov from the north. At the same time, the Southwestern Front's 57th Army would accomplish an enveloping movement towards Kharkov from the south.

Before the start of the counter-offensive commanders, political instructors and Party and Komsomol organisations worked day and night preparing the troops for the assault on the enemy's powerful, deeply-echeloned defences. They told the troops of the experience gained in recent fighting, spoke of those who had mastered combat tactics and explained the military and political significance of the Kursk battle. The purpose of this work was to sustain the fighting spirit of the troops. The men were aware that in some sectors the firing lines were almost at the boundaries of the Ukraine. Tortured Ukraine was impatiently awaiting her liberators. At the meetings held in the units before the counter-offensive the officers and men pledged to destroy the nazi invaders and begin the liberation of the long-suffering Ukrainian people.

The artillery bombardment for the attack was started on both fronts early in the morning of August 3. For three hours nearly 6,000 field guns and mortars shelled the enemy's fortifications. The 2nd Air Army commanded by General S. A. Krasovsky and the 5th Air Army commanded by General S. K. Goryunov supported the artillery.

At 08.00 hours the artillery shifted its fire deep into the enemy's battle dispositions, and at the same time tanks and infantry of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts attacked. Destroying the enemy's fire emplacements that had survived the shelling and bombing, they broke into the German trenches and swiftly moved forward.

By noon the Voronezh Front's 5th Guards Army gained nearly four

kilometres. The Front commander sent the 1st and 5th Guards tank armies into battle. Following up the successes of the infantry, these armies completed the breakthrough of the tactical zone and swiftly pressed forward, smashing the enemy's rear echelons and reserves and cutting off the enemy Belgorod group's escape route to the west.

In the meantime, troops of the Steppe Front crushed the enemy's resistance, reached Belgorod and in the morning of August 5 engaged the enemy in the city itself. Units of General V. D. Kryuchenkin's 69th Army advanced from the north, and units of the 7th Guards Army approached the town from the south. The 1st Motorised Corps enveloped Belgorod from the west. Though they were threatened by encirclement the Germans attempted to hold their ground. The street fighting ended only by nightfall. The enemy hastily withdrew to the west, leaving behind more than 3,000 dead.

Two ancient Russian cities, Orel and Belgorod, were liberated on one and the same day, August 5. To mark this victory a salute of twelve salvoes from 120 guns was fired in Moscow in honour of the gallant troops of the Western, Bryansk, Central, Voronezh and Steppe fronts. This was the first victory salute of the Great Patriotic War.

The Soviet offensive steadily gathered momentum. The tank armies were particularly successful, cracking enemy resistance and moving rapidly southwards. On August 7 and 8, after reaching the expanses of the Ukrainian steppes, the 1st and 5th Guards tank armies of the Voronezh Front captured the towns of Bogodukhov and Zolochev and the settlement of Kazachya Lopan. On the right flank of the 1st Tank Army, General S. G. Trofimenko's 27th Army advanced in a southwesterly direction along the Vorskla River.

When the Soviet tank units gained the vicinity of Bogodukhov the enemy's defences crumbled along their entire operational depth. The German Belgorod-Kharkov force was split into two groups: one retreated to the southwest, and the other to the south, with Soviet troops in pursuit. By August 8 the gap between the two groups reached 55 kilometres. The threat of annihilation now hung over not only the enemy's Kharkov group but also his forces in the Donets Basin. Hitler's Headquarters was gripped by alarm. Before the nazis could recover from the blow dealt them at Orel, they were hit at Belgorod and Kharkov. They had to take emergency measures to close the breach. Divisions from other sectors of the front were hurriedly transferred to the area, but this operation was hindered by Soviet partisans who attacked the enemy's communication lines. There was nothing the nazis could do.

In particular, Fieldmarshal Manstein, commander of Army Group South, fumed with helpless fury. On July 13 he had boastfully told Hitler that he had crushed the Soviet forces covering Kursk in the south, that they were no longer able to advance or even go over to the defensive. Now he called for help. General Zeitzler, Chief of the Army General Staff and the architect of Operation Citadel, was rushed to his rescue. At a conference on August 8 Manstein asked for 20 divisions to be sent to the sector of the 4th Panzer Army and the Dnieper. But where were the nazis to get so many divisions? After internal regrouping the German Command managed to concentrate four infantry and seven panzer and motorised divisions with 600 tanks west of Akhtyrka and south of Bogodukhov and launch a counter-attack.

Bitter fighting took place in this area between August 11 and 17. The Soviet 1st Tank and 5th and 6th Guards armies heroically repulsed the German assault. By August 20 the enemy group was bled white.

While troops of the Voronezh Front were repulsing the furious attacks of the enemy south of Bogodukhov and west of Akhtyrka, troops of the Steppe Front successfully advanced in the direction of Kharkov. The German Command made frantic efforts to hold on to that area, bringing in fresh divisions from its reserve. The Steppe Front had to engage in heavy fighting on August 18-22. The storming of Kharkov was started in the night of August 22-23, and in the morning, after savage fighting, this major economic, political and cultural centre was liberated.

In their counter-offensive the Voronezh and Steppe fronts inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and hurled him 140 kilometres westward, clearing the way for the liberation of Ukrainian territory on the eastern bank of the Dnieper and the Donets Basin. The Soviet counter-offensive ended with the liberation of Kharkov.

The Battle of the Kursk Salient, one of the greatest operations of the Second World War, lasted for fifty days. Like the battles at Moscow and Stalingrad, it falls into two phases. The first was the defensive action in the southern and northern legs of the Kursk Salient and it was started on July 5. Compared with the preceding battles it did not last long. The second phase was the counter-offensive, in which five fronts took part: the Western, Bryansk, Central, Voronezh and Steppe. It was mounted on July 12 in the direction of Orel and on August 3 in the direction of Belgorod and Kharkov. The Battle of Kursk ended on August 23. The counter-offensive developed into a colossal strategic offensive in an area stretching from Velikiye Luki to the Black Sea. Its victorious outcome showed that GHQ had been right in deliberately deciding on defence.

The German Army suffered a defeat from which it never recovered. Soviet forces smashed almost 30 enemy divisions, including seven panzer divisions, and destroyed over 3,500 aircraft. Soviet pilots won air supremacy and held it firmly till the end of the war. After Kursk the nazi Command was compelled to abandon its offensive strategy and go over to the defensive along the entire Soviet-German front. This meant that the backbone of the German Army had been broken. The strategic initiative was now unequivocally in the hands of the Soviet Armed Forces. This finally turned the tide of the war.

The results of the Kursk Battle convincingly showed that the plan of the nazi Command for the summer of 1943 was basically defective. It overrated the offensive potential of the German Army and underestimated the might of the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces.

The nazi defeat at Kursk still further exacerbated the contradictions within the fascist bloc and sharply aggravated the political situation in the satellite countries. In Italy the Resistance movement, coupled with the defeats sustained by the Italo-German forces and the collapse of the German offensive at Kursk, gave rise to a political crisis. On July 25 Benito Mussolini, ringleader of the Italian fascists, was removed from the premiership and arrested. This came as a shock to Hitler. On the next day, July 26, he summoned Fieldmarshal von Kluge, commander of Army Group Centre, and demanded that he transfer several divisions to Italy. "We are faced with a desperate situation," Hitler said. "This is a very hard decision to make, but we have come to a crisis point." Despite Hitler's categorical demand, Kluge argued that in the Orel bridgehead his divisions had been smashed, new defensive lines had not been prepared and he therefore could not spare any troops. "I draw your attention," said Kluge, "to the fact that at the moment I am in no position to spare a single formation. This is quite out of the question at present." Soon, with the Red Army striking ever harder, Hitler realised that there could be no question of transferring any

troops from the Soviet-German front. This created increasingly favourable conditions for the Anglo-US landings that had started in the Mediterranean.

After the war many bourgeois historians sought to belittle the significance of the Red Army victory in the summer of 1943. Some of them regard the battle in the Kursk Salient as an ordinary, commonplace episode of the Second World War. Others either completely ignore it or speak of it vaguely. However, the significance of this massive battle cannot be obscured, much as it is impossible to conceal the adventurist nature of the German third summer offensive, and the thrashing received by the nazi generals.

This is appreciated by some bourgeois historians as well. One of them, the West German historian Görlitz writes: "Between July 10 and 15 Field-marshal Manstein and his advancing units reached the watershed between the Donets, Psyol, Seim and Vorskla, following which they found themselves exhausted. The offensive came to a standstill on the heights at Shebekino and near the forest at Gonki on the Belgorod-Oboyan motor road. General Konev later spoke of the swan song of the German armoured forces. The last units capable of offensive operations burned down to a cinder. The backbone of the German armoured forces was broken."

In the Battle of the Kursk Salient Soviet troops fought heroically, giving blow for blow. More than 100,000 soldiers were decorated with Orders and medals, and 180 of them were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

As everywhere else, during the fighting in the Kursk Salient Communists and Komsomol members were in the front ranks. The Party organisations of the Central Front's 13th Army alone lost 3,717 Communists in killed and wounded. In the 4th Airborne Division 334 Communists or 30 per cent of the Party organisation, fell in battle. By setting an example of courage, Communists enhanced the prestige of the Communist Party; the flow of applications for Party membership steadily increased. During the fighting in the Kursk Salient nearly 90,000 officers and men of the Voronezh, Steppe and Central fronts joined the Party—72,535 as members and 24,273 as candidate members. In the 13th Army alone the number of new members in that period totalled 1,223.

The Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov operations were closely intertwined with the Soviet offensive on other sectors of the Soviet-German front. Troops of the Southwestern and Southern fronts made a large contribution towards the defeat of the German forces in the Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov bridgeheads. By their offensive in July they pinned down the enemy in the Donets Basin and compelled the nazi Command to transfer five panzer divisions from Belgorod to the Donets Basin. Another contributing factor was the offensive of the Western and Kalinin fronts in the direction of Smolensk.

The operations of Soviet partisans were another major factor facilitating the Kursk victory. Behind the lines of Army Group Centre, the Byelorussian partisans pinned down more than 80,000 German troops; they held immobile another 60,000 enemy troops in Smolensk Region and more than 50,000 troops in Bryansk Region. In July they conducted 1,460 raids on railways, damaging and putting out of commission more than a thousand locomotives. That same month they derailed 761 enemy trains in Byelorussia, 349 trains in the Ukraine and 102 trains in Smolensk Region. The enemy had to use large forces to guard his communications. An entire division guarded the Bryansk-Roslavl railway.

The historic victory at Kursk demonstrated the increased might of the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces, a might built up by the Soviet people led by the great Party of Lenin.

Soviet artillery in position to shell the enemy, July 1943

An attack by troops of the Steppe Front, August 1943

Troops of the 5th Guards Tank Corps, Voronezh Front, attack an enemy position, August 1943

Orel is liberated, August 5, 1943

People of Orel welcome their liberators

Moscow fires its first artillery salute of the war, the occasion being the liberation of Orel and Belgorod, August 5, 1943

Assault by troops of the Voronezh Front, September 1943

The Red Army enters a village in Kharkov Region, the Ukraine, 1943

In the liberated village of Kuski, Sumy Region, September 1943

Military Council of Southwestern Front (left to right): Major-General V. M. Layok, member of the Military Council; Lieutenant-General M. M. Popov, Deputy Commander; General of the Army N. F. Vatutin, Front Commander; Major-General M. V. Rudakov, Chief of Front Political Administration; Lieutenant-General A. S. Zheltov, member of the Military Council, hear situation report by Lieutenant-General S. P. Ivanov, Chief of Staff, 1943

Forward, to Kiev

Colonel-General L. A. Govorov, Commander, Leningrad Front, and member of the Military Council Lieutenant-General A. A. Zhdanov

Volkhov Front, January 1943

Left to right: Commander of the Southwestern Front General of the Army R. Y. Malinovsky, member of the Military Council of the Southwestern Front Lieutenant-General A. S. Zheltov, and member of the Military Council of the Southern Front Lieutenant-General K. A. Gurov, summer 1943

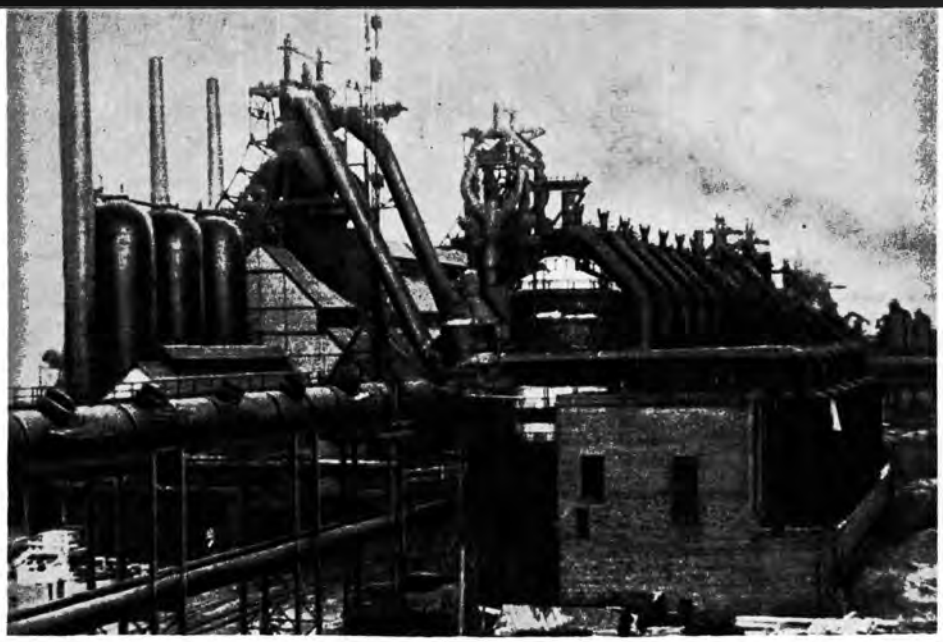
People of Bryansk welcome the Red Army, September 17, 1943

Liberated from nazi slavery

Partisans of the 2nd Kletnya Brigade on their way to a combat assignment, Orel Region, 1943

Partisans lay a mine on a railway, Byelorussia, 1943

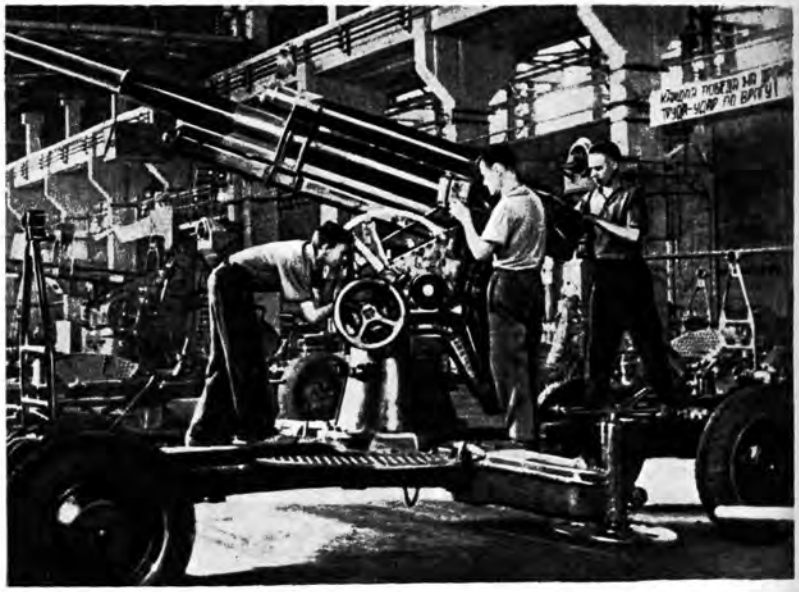
Partisans returning from a combat mission, Pinsk Region, 1943



The country fought and built up its war economy. Blast furnace built in record time at the Magnitogorsk Iron-and-Steel Plant, 1943

War plant

Arms designer V. A. Degtyaryov inspects anti-tank guns on production line, 1943



Assembly of anti-aircraft guns, 1943

Girls assemble shells, 1943

A delegation from the Mongolian People's Republic under Marshal Choibalsan brings gifts to tankists at the front lines

Chapter Ten

BATTLE FOR THE DNIEPER

1. THE ENEMY IS DRIVEN OUT OF THE REGION EAST OF THE DNIEPER. LIBERATION OF THE DONETS BASIN

The consequences of the Stalingrad and Kursk battles were catastrophic for the nazis, while for the Red Army they opened the door to final victory. By developing their offensive and giving the enemy no respite the Soviet troops could now drive him westwards.

In the course of the fighting at Kursk GHQ issued directives ordering an offensive along the entire line from Velikiye Luki to the Sea of Azov. The Red Army continued to concentrate its effort in the Southwestern direction. The Central, Voronezh, Steppe, Southwestern and Southern fronts were given the task of crushing the enemy's main forces on the southern wing, liberating the Ukraine up to the Dnieper, clearing the enemy out of the Donets Basin and seizing bridgeheads on the western bank of the Dnieper. The Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts started preparations for an offensive with the aim of destroying Army Group Centre. The North Caucasian Front jointly with the Black Sea Fleet had the task of driving the enemy from the Taman Peninsula and seizing beachheads on the Kerch Peninsula. The partisans were assigned a large role in these operations. They had to destroy enemy troops, make every effort to prevent the enemy from bringing up troops and materiel, and help the Red Army to cross rivers, particularly the Dnieper.

Having decided to dig in along the entire Eastern front the German Command ordered its troops to cling to their positions. It took steps to build numerous fortifications in depth, using chiefly large rivers. Orders for the immediate building of the so-called Eastern Wall were issued as early as August 11. This strategic defensive line was to run along the Narva River, through Pskov, Vitebsk and Orsha and along the Sozh River, the Middle Dnieper and the Molochnaya River. The greatest importance was attached to the Dnieper, a wide and deep river with a high western bank, which was a formidable obstacle for advancing troops. The Germans believed it would be an insuperable barrier to the Red Army.

In the Southwestern direction the Soviet forces were faced by a powerful enemy group consisting of the 2nd Army of Army Group Centre, the 4th Panzer, 8th, 1st Panzer and 6th* armies of Army Group South. It had 1,240,000 effectives, 12,600 field guns and mortars, about 2,100 tanks and assault guns and nearly 2,000 aircraft. The Soviet forces in this area consisted of 2,633,000 effectives and their armaments included more than

* This army was newly formed to replace the 6th Army which had been encircled and annihilated in the Battle of Stalingrad.

51.200 field guns and mortars, over 2,400 tanks and self-propelled guns and 2,850 aircraft. Though this gave them general superiority over the enemy it was not as great as the former nazi generals claim. The superiority of the Red Army in this area was 2.1:1 in men, 1.1:1 in tanks, 1.4:1 in aircraft, and 4:1 in guns and mortars.

The six weeks of uninterrupted fighting at Kursk had spent the troops and it was not easy to prepare for the new offensive. However, difficulties did not daunt them. They were eager to come to grips with the enemy and drive him out of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The Soviet Command rapidly regrouped its forces, brought up its rear echelons and replenished the supplies of ammunition.

On August 9, 1943, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of People's Commissars of the republic called upon the Ukrainian people to step up the struggle against the ruthless enemy. "People of the Ukraine," the message said, "come out for the decisive battle. We are not alone. Shoulder to shoulder with us there are Russians, Byelorussians, Georgians, Armenians—sons of all the peoples of the Soviet Union.... Forward, against the enemy!"

In the morning of August 26, after powerful artillery and air bombardment, troops of the Central Front started their offensive, attacking in the direction of Sevsk and Novgorod-Seversky (Map 9). The enemy reconnaissance had discovered the preparations for the offensive with the result that large forces were concentrated around Sevsk. In the course of four days of heavy fighting Soviet troops gained only 20-25 kilometres. South of Sevsk the rate of advance was faster. There the 60th Army under General I. D. Chernyakhovsky and the 9th Tank Corps under General G. S. Rudchenko advanced 60 kilometres in a southwesterly direction and entered the northern regions of the Ukraine by the end of August. Taking advantage of this rapid leap, the Front commander transferred considerable forces from his right wing to the sector of the 60th Army, and the troops pressed towards Nezhin.

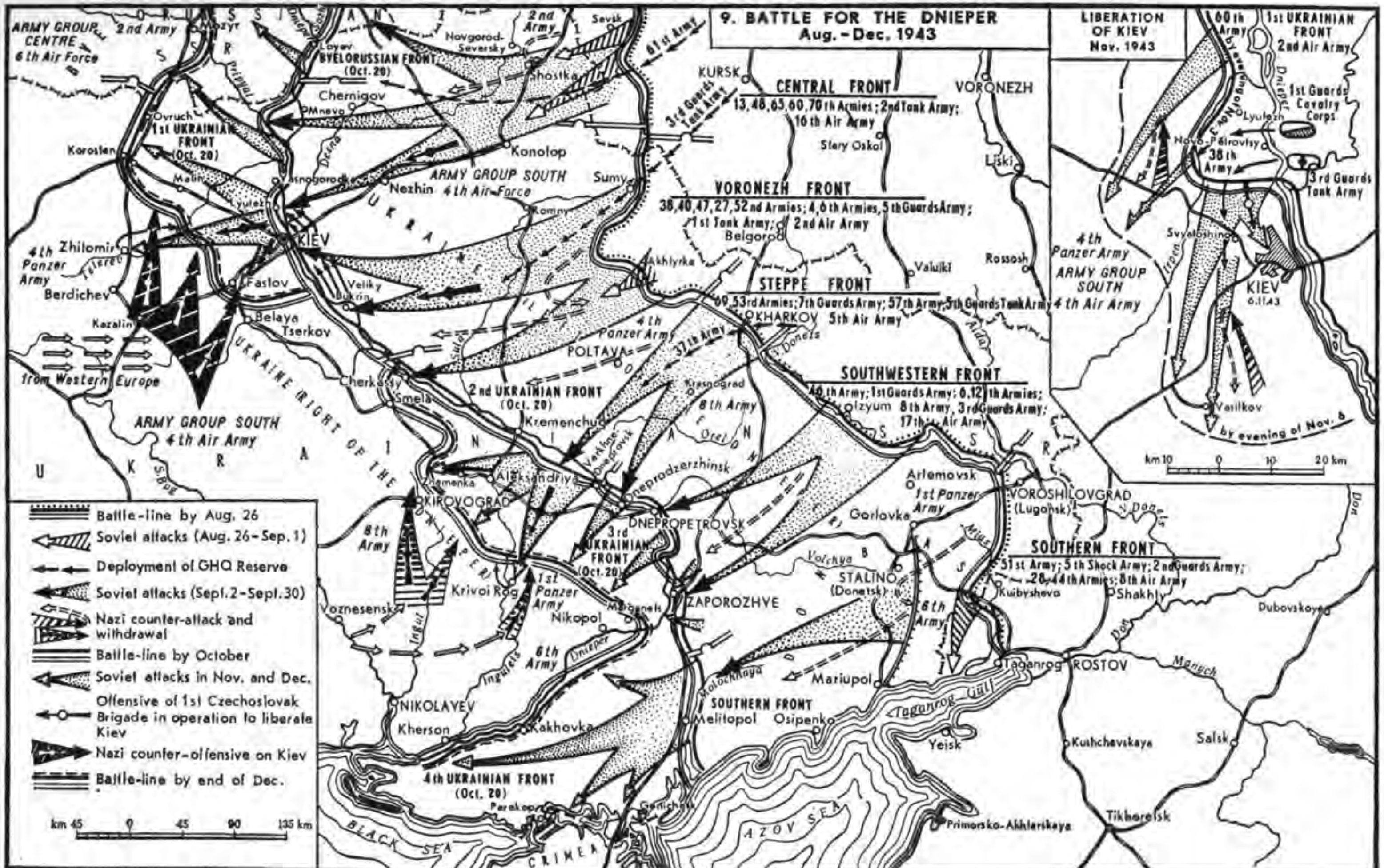
The main forces of the Voronezh Front moved towards Poltava and Kremenchug, and the Steppe Front towards Krasnograd and Verkhne-Dneprovsk. However, their progress was slow; the enemy fought doggedly in an effort to prevent a flank attack on his troops in the Donets Basin. By the close of August the left wing of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts had advanced only 30 kilometres. The Voronezh Front's right wing pursued the enemy with air support and on September 2 liberated Sumy and advanced successfully towards Romny.

The Southwestern and Southern fronts began operations aimed at liberating the Donets Basin while the fighting at Kursk was still raging. The right wing of the Southwestern Front (commander—General R. Y. Malinovsky; member of the Military Council—General A. S. Zheltov) attacked first, on August 13. It forced the Northern Donets and moving along its western bank helped the Steppe Front to liberate Kharkov. The offensive started in the centre of the Front on August 16 bogged down, but it held major enemy forces and thereby facilitated the breaching of the German defences along the Mius River.

The Mius Front, as the nazis called their positions on that river, was a powerfully fortified line. The German 6th Army was ordered to hold it at all costs, for it was considered that that was where the destiny of the Donets Basin would be decided.

The Germans were not mistaken. The Southern Front (commander—

 General F. I. Tolbukhin; member of the Military Council—General


9. BATTLE FOR THE DNIEPER
Aug. - Dec. 1943
LIBERATION OF KIEV Nov. 1943
Battle-line by Aug. 26
Soviet attacks (Aug. 26 - Sep. 1)
Deployment of GHQ Reserve
Soviet attacks (Sept. 2 - Sept. 30)
Nazi counter-attack and withdrawal
Battle-line by October
Soviet attacks in Nov. and Dec.
Offensive of 1st Czechoslovak Brigade in operation to liberate Kiev
Nazi counter-offensive on Kiev
Battle-line by end of Dec.
km 45 0 45 90 135 km
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
6th Air Force
2nd Army
BYELORUSSIAN FRONT (Oct. 20)
1st UKRAINIAN FRONT (Oct. 20)
ARMY GROUP SOUTH
4th Air Force
CENTRAL FRONT
13,48,65,60,70th Armies; 2nd Tank Army;
16th Air Army
VORONEZH FRONT
38,40,47,27,52nd Armies; 4,6th Armies, 5th Guards Army;
1st Tank Army; 2nd Air Army
STEPPE FRONT
69,53rd Armies; 7th Guards Army; 57th Army; 5th Guards Tank Army
5th Air Army
SOUTHWESTERN FRONT
46th Army; 1st Guards Army; 6,12th Armies;
8th Army, 3rd Guards Army;
17th Air Army
SOUTHERN FRONT
51st Army; 5th Shock Army; 2nd Guards Army;
28,44th Armies; 8th Air Army
2nd UKRAINIAN FRONT (Oct. 20)
3rd UKRAINIAN FRONT (Oct. 20)
4th UKRAINIAN FRONT (Oct. 20)
SOUTHERN FRONT
4th Panzer Army
1st Panzer Army
6th Army
8th Army
ARMY GROUP SOUTH
4th Air Army
from Western Europe
UKRAINE RIGHT OF THE DNIEPER
KIEV
KURSK
VORONEZH
KHARKOV
POLTAVA
DNEPROPETROVSK
ZAPOROZHYE
STALINO (Donetsk)
VOROSHILOVGRAD (Lugansk)
ROSTOV
KIROVOGRAD
NIKOLAYEV
Kherson
Melitopol
Mariupol
Taganrog
Zhitomir
Berdichev
Korosten
Chernigov
Konotop
Nezhin
Sumy
Belgorod
Cherkassy
Kremenchug
Krivoi Rog
Nikopol
Voznesensk
BLACK SEA
AZOV SEA
CRIMEA
Taganrog Gulf
60th Army
1st UKRAINIAN FRONT 2nd Air Army
1st Guards Cavalry Corps
38th Army
3rd Guards Tank Army
Lyutezh
Novo-Petrovtsy
Svyatoshino
Vasilkov
KIEV 6.11.43
by evening of Nov. 6
km 10 0 10 20 km

K. A. Gurov) launched a fierce offensive on August 18, crushing the enemy defences with hurricane fire from 5,000 field guns and mortars, powerful air strikes and swift infantry and tank attacks. A motorised and a cavalry corps were committed to exploit the success. Bypassing enemy strongpoints they pressed southwards, towards the Sea of Azov. On August 30 Soviet troops overwhelmed the enemy group near Taganrog and liberated the town. The attempts of the enemy to evacuate his troops from Taganrog by sea were foiled by the 8th Air Army and the Azov Naval Flotilla under Admiral S. G. Gorshkov. The breakthrough on the Mius made the enemy's position in the Donets Basin untenable, and on September 1 he was forced to begin the withdrawal of his troops to the west. Soviet troops occupied one town after another, and on September 8 liberated Stalino (Donetsk), chief town of the Donets Basin.

Troops of the Central Front moved rapidly in the direction of Nezhin, and the Voronezh Front made good headway in the direction of Romny. In the light of these successes GHQ essentially amended the plan of further operations. The main effort of the Central and Voronezh fronts was now concentrated in the direction of Kiev, while that of the Steppe Front in the direction of Kremenchug. General Headquarters began a rapid build-up of reserves in these areas, and the speed of the offensive steadily mounted.

In mid-September, being unable to hold up the Red Army's onslaught, the enemy forces began withdrawing from Ukrainian territory east of the Dnieper and from the Donets Basin. Acting in accordance with a prearranged plan, they barbarously demolished towns and villages, destroyed factories, railway stations, bridges and motor roads, set fire to crops, confiscated livestock, and took Soviet people to slavery in Germany. In *Lost Victories*, Manstein, commander of Army Group South, cynically admits he ordered the destruction of all militarily important objectives in the Donets Basin, in other words, he ordered his troops to leave scorched earth behind them.

Forcing the Desna in the sector of its offensive, the Central Front reached the Dnieper at the mouth of the Pripyat on September 21-22, and by the end of the month reached the Sozh and Dnieper rivers along the line running from Gomel to Yasnogorodka. Troops of the Voronezh Front likewise made swift progress in the direction of the Dnieper River. The 3rd Guards Tank Army under General P. S. Rybalko and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps under General V. K. Baranov, which had been committed to battle from the GHQ Reserve, reached the Dnieper in the vicinity of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky by nightfall of September 21. The Steppe Front battered down the enemy's resistance and on September 23 liberated Poltava. On the same day, units of its left wing gained the Dnieper southeast of Kremenchug. The eastern bank of the Dnieper along the entire sector of the Front was cleared of the invaders by the end of the month. The offensive in the Donets Basin likewise progressed successfully. On September 22 troops of the Southwestern Front pushed the enemy beyond the Dnieper in the sector between Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye. Troops of the Southern Front completed the liberation of the Donets Basin on their sector and reached the Molochnaya River.

Thus, in the battle for the Dnieper the Red Army scored decisive successes by the end of September. The Central, Voronezh, Steppe and Southwestern fronts gained the Dnieper along a 700-kilometre sector stretching from Loyev to Zaporozhye, and force crossed the river at several points, while the Southern Front occupied the line running along the Molochnaya River. Almost all Ukrainian territory east of the Dnieper and the Donets Basin was recovered. This was a fresh major Soviet victory.

Hurled beyond the Dnieper, the enemy attempted to stop the further advance of the Red Army. The Germans believed that after such a long offensive the Red Army would not have the strength to force the river. But they miscalculated again.

Aware of the hopes the enemy was pinning on the Dnieper defences, GHQ issued a directive, as early as the beginning of September, stating that it was necessary to force the river as soon as it was reached by Soviet troops and establish a bridgehead on its western bank.

To force the Dnieper Soviet troops had to mobilise all their moral and physical strength. Advance units began crossing the river the moment they gained the eastern bank, displaying mass heroism and resourcefulness. They did not wait for the arrival of special means, but crossed the river on rafts made of logs and boards, ferries made of empty petrol drums, and rain-capes filled with straw. Partisans made many fishing boats available to the troops. Bridges were built as soon as pontoons and other river-crossing means were brought to the scene.

The river was forced at many points all the way from Loyev to Zaporozhye. The entire population of the newly-liberated areas turned out to help the troops. They repaired roads and bridges and assembled and built boats. Fishermen showed the most convenient places for crossing the river and acted as guides.

North of Kiev, in the vicinity of Mnevo, troops of the Central Front's 13th Army, commanded by General N. P. Pukhov, were the first to cross the Dnieper. Advanced units gained the western bank as early as September 21, using a crossing captured by the partisans. The end of the month saw troops of the Central Front in possession of a 90-kilometre-long bridgehead on the western bank.

The river was successfully crossed by troops of the Voronezh Front as well. In the night of September 21-22, advanced units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army forced the river southeast of Kiev, in the vicinity of Veliky Bukrin. Led by Lieutenant N. I. Sinashkin, a company of submachine-gunners of the 51st Guards Tank Brigade was the first to reach the far bank at the village of Grigorovki. Four men, V. N. Ivanov, N. Y. Petukhov, I. D. Semyonov and V. A. Sysolyatin, all members of the Komsomol, and a partisan who acted as their guide, were the first to reach the right bank, where they quickly dug in and engaged a forward unit of the enemy. In the meantime the company, reinforced with 120 partisans, forded the Dnieper without losses and knocked the enemy out of the village of Grigorovki. This laid the beginning for the important Bukrin bridgehead. Ivanov, Petukhov, Semyonov and Sysolyatin were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Simultaneously with the 3rd Guards Tank Army the Dnieper was forced near the Bukrin bend and to the right of it by the 40th Army, and to the left by the 47th Army. The troops were heavily shelled by enemy artillery and attacked by groups of 40-50 aircraft. The hardest job fell to the engineers, who transported troops and weapons without letup. Sergeant A. G. Chernomorets, of the 30th Division, was in action for 20 hours without rest, transporting troops, ammunition and weapons to the far bank and bringing back wounded. He was decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

As soon as they crossed to the western bank of the Dnieper the troops had to engage in bitter fighting. The Germans brought up large reinforcements and counter-attacked continuously. But the Soviet troops stood firm against this furious pressure. Peerless courage was displayed by Captain V. S. Petrov, a Communist and the deputy commander of the

1850th Tank Destroyer Regiment, 40th Army. His regiment was one of the first to cross the Dnieper. In the night of September 22-23, in face of enemy fire, Captain Petrov organised the transportation of men, weapons and shells on crude rafts. Bitter fighting flared up in the morning. The Germans made an all-out effort to hurl the landing party back into the river. But the men fought like lions. Their numbers steadily dwindled, and soon only one or two men were left in the crews. Petrov directed the battle, firing one of the guns. He was wounded in both hands but did not leave the battlefield. In hospital both his hands were amputated, but he managed to obtain permission to rejoin his regiment, with which he later fought all the way to the Oder. For indomitable courage and self-sacrifice he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union twice. Repulsing these attacks troops of the Voronezh Front enlarged the Bukrin bridgehead to a length of 11 kilometres and a depth of 6 kilometres. The main forces of the 27th and 40th armies as well as motorised infantry units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army were massed in this bridgehead.

At the close of September the 38th Army under General N. Y. Chibisov forced the Dnieper near Lutezh north of Kiev. In this sector one of the first units to cross the river was a group of 25 men commanded by Communist Senior Sergeant P. P. Nefyodov of the 842nd Infantry Regiment, 240th Division. For twenty long hours this small group fought a numerically superior enemy and eventually gained a firm foothold. Nefyodov was created a Hero of the Soviet Union and the other men were decorated with battle Orders. The 7th Guards Army was the first of the Steppe Front to force the Dnieper, effecting the crossing northwest of Verkhne-Dneprovsk. The other armies of this Front crossed the river by September 30.

The Southwestern Front began forcing the Dnieper on September 26, its spearhead consisting of General I. T. Shlemin's 6th Army. This army established a bridgehead south of Dnepropetrovsk, and began operations to widen it.

Thus, at the close of September the four fronts committed in this offensive established 23 bridgeheads on the western bank of the Dnieper.

The factors that made it possible to effect a head-on crossing along such a wide front of a broad river like the Dnieper and to seize bridgeheads on its right bank were the high morale of the Soviet troops, their utter devotion to their socialist country, mass heroism and consummate skill in combat.

For the forcing of the Dnieper 2,438 officers and men of all ranks and of all arms of the service were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

2. LIBERATION OF KIEV. BATTLES TO ENLARGE BRIDGEHEADS ON THE DNIEPER

After they had forced the Dnieper the Soviet troops in this area set their sights on the liberation of Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, enlarging their bridgeheads on the Dnieper and driving the enemy out of the whole of the Ukraine. At the same time, they had to destroy the enemy bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Dnieper near Zaporozhye, smash the enemy forces along the Molochnaya River and advance towards the lower reaches of the Dnieper.

The Germans were still hoping that by a powerful counter-attack they would restore their defences along the western bank of the Dnieper and hold their positions along the Molochnaya River. Their principal concern, however, was to prevent any further Soviet advance in the Ukraine in the vicinity of Kiev, for the capture of the Ukrainian capital would enable the Red Army to move on to Poland, to the Carpathians. That was why the Germans concentrated a strong group on the Kiev direction.

For the liberation of Kiev the 1st Ukrainian Front* commander planned a two-pronged assault, one from the Bukrin bridgehead, 80 kilometres south of Kiev, and the other, an ancillary operation, from bridgeheads north of Kiev. In October, the assault group massed in the Bukrin bridgehead launched two attacks. But the enemy defences held firm. The rugged relief obstructed offensive action, particularly for the 3rd Guards Tank Army. In the meantime, the troops striking the ancillary blow enlarged their bridgehead north of Kiev in the vicinity of Lutezh. It was decided to transfer the main effort from the Bukrin to the Lutezh bridgehead and strike in a southerly direction. Receiving the appropriate instructions from GHQ, the Front command conformably regrouped its forces. The regrouping was accomplished secretly, mainly under cover of darkness or morning and evening mists, and the Germans therefore were unable opportunely to detect troop concentrations in the new sector.

At the beginning of November, the 1st Ukrainian Front had roughly 7,000 field guns and mortars, 675 tanks and self-propelled guns and 700 aircraft. This gave it a slight superiority over the enemy: 1.1:1 in artillery and 1.6:1 in tanks. The air strength was almost even. To cover the offensive the Front command concentrated more than 2,000 field guns and mortars (76-mm and larger calibre) and 500 rocket launchers in a narrow sector (6 kilometres wide). This created a high artillery density—over 300 field guns and mortars per kilometre. The land forces were supported by large numbers of planes from the 2nd Air Army.

The military councils of the Front and the armies, the political bodies and the Party and Komsomol organisations mobilised the entire personnel of all the committed units for the fulfilment of the battle assignments.

The political and Party work in preparation for this offensive was conducted under the slogan "Liberate Kiev by the 26th anniversary of the Great October Revolution". The fighting spirit of the troops was greatly bolstered by the appeals of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) to the people and Armed Forces on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the Revolution. "Valiant troops of the Red Army," the appeals said, "you are awaited as liberators by millions of Soviet people languishing under nazi oppression. Hit the enemy harder, annihilate the German invaders. Forward, for the liberation of Soviet territory." The preparations for the offensive coincided with another memorable date, the 25th anniversary of the Lenin Komsomol. At their meetings and rallies members of the Komsomol swore to mark that date with the liberation of Kiev.

In the morning of November 3, after the enemy had been heavily shelled, the troops and tanks of General I. D. Chernyakhovsky's 60th Army and General K. S. Moskalenko's 38th Army launched their offensive, enveloping Kiev from the west. Fierce fighting raged, with the enemy repeatedly counter-attacking. Groups of 40 German planes bombed the advancing troops, who pressed forward with unprecedented determination crushing the nazi defences. General S. A. Krasovsky's 2nd Air Army

* On October 20, 1943, the Voronezh, Steppe, Southwestern and Southern fronts were renamed the 1st, 2nd 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts respectively.

attacked the enemy on the ground and in the air. On the first day of the offensive there were 36 air battles in which 31 German aircraft were shot down. Heavy fighting took place in the Bukrin bridgehead as well, where the 40th Army under General F. F. Zhmachenko and the 27th Army under General S. G. Trofimenko attacked two days earlier in order to divert large enemy forces.

The weather deteriorated on November 4. It became harder to advance in the drizzle, but in spite of that the armies involved kept increasing their pressure on the enemy, committing their second echelons and reserves, including the Czechoslovak 1st Separate Brigade under Colonel L. Svoboda. Towards nightfall the battle was joined by the 3rd Guards Tank Army.

The fighting continued all day long. The Soviet tanks maintained their pressure at night as well, attacking with headlights switched on, sirens wailing and cannon and machine-guns firing as fast as they could be loaded. The enemy was unable to withstand this overwhelming blow, and in the morning of November 5 units of the Soviet tank army reached the vicinity of Svyatoshino and cut the Kiev-Zhitomir motor road. Towards the evening of the same day, troops of the 38th Army entered the outskirts of Kiev and engaged the enemy in street fighting.

Enemy resistance in Kiev was completely broken by 04.00 hours on November 6. An artillery salute in Moscow informed the world that the capital of the Soviet Ukraine had been liberated. A total of 17,500 officers and men were decorated with Orders and medals in only the period from October 12 to November 7, 1943, and 65 formations and units of the Ukrainian Front were decorated with the title Kiev. The Czechoslovak 1st Brigade was awarded the Order of Suvorov, 2nd Class, and its commander and 139 soldiers were decorated with Soviet Orders and medals.

In the period of over two years in which they had been in occupation of Kiev, the nazi invaders inflicted untold suffering on the population. They tortured to death, shot or gassed more than 195,000 people, and barbarously destroyed and pillaged the Ukrainian capital. Led and organised by local Party and Government bodies and aided by the Army, the people of Kiev enthusiastically got down to the restoration of their beloved city.

After liberating Kiev, the 1st Ukrainian Front followed up its offensive, advancing 150 kilometres in a westerly direction in the course of ten days and liberating many towns and villages, including the towns of Fastov and Zhitomir. A strategic bridgehead with a front exceeding 500 kilometres took shape on the right bank of the Dnieper. It cut vital communication lines between the German army groups Centre and South.

In an effort to remedy the situation, the Germans massed large tank and infantry forces south of Zhitomir and Fastov, and east of Kazatin.

On November 13, an enemy group of eight panzer and motorised and seven infantry divisions launched a counter-offensive. There was sanguinary fighting throughout the second half of November. On some days the enemy used from 300 to 400 tanks. At the cost of enormous losses he managed to recapture Zhitomir on November 20 and advance some 40 kilometres by November 25. That was as far as he was able to go.

In the meantime, the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front continued its offensive. On November 17, the 60th Army liberated Korosten, and on the next day units of the 13th Army co-operating with a partisan formation under General A. N. Saburov threw the nazis out of Ovruch. In the fighting for this town the troops were assisted by a Czechoslovak partisan detachment commanded by Captain Jan Nalepka. The captain was wounded at the approaches to the railway station but went on fighting. He was killed

in an assault on an enemy strongpoint. For valour and exemplary service in helping to promote the partisan movement in the Ukraine Captain Jan Nalepka was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union. A monument to him was unveiled in Ovruch.

In December the enemy made two attempts to break through to Kiev from the northwest through Malin. Meanwhile the 1st Ukrainian Front was again reinforced from the GHQ Reserve. On December 24 this Front resumed its offensive and in eight days recovered all the territory which the enemy had captured during his counter-offensive. The firing line now ran 125 kilometres west and 50 kilometres south of Kiev. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR returned to Kiev in early January 1944.

Heavy fighting continued also in the south of the Ukraine. After the Southwestern Front reached the Dnieper, GHQ set it the task of destroying the enemy bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Dnieper near Zaporozhye. This bridgehead commanded the roads to the economically important districts of Krivoi Rog and Nikopol and enabled the enemy to hold a defensive line along the Molochnaya River. The German High Command, therefore, ordered Army Group South to hold that bridgehead at all costs. It was strongly fortified and manned by five infantry and one panzer division and several separate units.

After minute preparations, Soviet troops attacked the bridgehead on October 10. In the course of three days' fierce fighting they breached the enemy's defences and reached the inner defensive ring and the outskirts of Zaporozhye. To prevent the Germans from strengthening their positions along this ring it was decided to attack them at night. The assault was started at 22.00 hours on October 13 and caught the enemy unawares. Soviet troops broke into the town and liberated it on October 14. This action destroyed the enemy bridgehead.

Major successes were also scored by the 2nd Ukrainian Front. In the morning of October 15 its assault group, concentrated southeast of Kremenchug, began an offensive. In the second half of the day the battle was joined by units of the 5th Guards Tank Army. The land troops were supported by the 5th Air Army. Crushing the enemy's resistance, tho tanks entered Krivoi Rog and drove a wedge nearly 125 kilometres deep into the enemy's dispositions.

This rapid advance created favourable conditions for an offensive by the 3rd Ukrainian Front from bridgeheads west and south of Dnepropetrovsk. The offensive was launched on October 23, and in two days the troops liberated Dnepropetrovsk and Dneprodzerzhinsk, and by the end of the month hurled the enemy 70 kilometres to the west of the Dnieper.

In an effort to retain the Krivoi Rog basin in its hands, the German Command transferred to that region four panzer and motorised and two infantry divisions from Western Europe, and also a number of divisions from the adjoining sectors of the Front. It planned to use these forces for a series of counter-attacks and then start a counter-offensive, which it was hoped would drive the Soviet troops back beyond the Dnieper. Savage fighting broke out on October 24. Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front repulsed all the assaults of the enemy panzer divisions. However, they had been exhausted by previous battles and in the end were forced to withdraw to the Ingulets River. But that was as far as the enemy succeeded in pressing them. Suffering huge losses, the Germans went over to the defensive.

The 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts continued operations in the direction of Kirovograd and Krivoi Rog throughout November and December.

Advancing southwest of Kremenchug, troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front liberated several towns and villages. General A. S. Zhadov's 5th Guards Army was particularly successful. It smashed the enemy's resistance and liberated the towns of Alexandria and Znamenka. In the vicinity of Cherkassy, the 52nd Army commanded by General K. A. Koroteyev forced the Dnieper and on December 14 recaptured that town. Troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front attacked the enemy west of Zaporozhye, forced the Dnieper south of that town and drove the Germans to a line north of the town of Marganets.

Thus, in the course of three months' fighting, despite the heavy terrain caused by autumn rains, the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts established on the western bank of the Dnieper a huge bridgehead nearly 450 kilometres long and up to 100 kilometres deep. All the attempts of the enemy to destroy this bridgehead were frustrated.

The 4th Ukrainian Front was likewise successful. On September 26 it started an offensive with the objective of breaching the powerful enemy defences along the Molochnaya River, liberating Northern Tavria and gaining the lower reaches of the Dnieper. The main thrust was made by the 5th Strike Army under General V. D. Tsvetayev, the 44th Army under General V. A. Khomenko and the 2nd Guards Army under General G. F. Zakharov. A supporting action south of Melitopol was carried out by General V. F. Gerasimenko's 28th Army.

The fighting became heavy at the very outset of the offensive. The enemy sought to hold his defensive positions on the Molochnaya River at all costs, for this was the last advantageous line covering the approaches to the Crimea. In spite of savage resistance, Soviet troops smashed the enemy's defences and liberated Melitopol on October 23. Following up this success, they fought their way to the lower reaches of the Dnieper and the Perekop Isthmus by November 5. This action cut the enemy group in the Crimea off from the rest of the German Army. The Germans were cleared out of the eastern bank in the lower reaches of the Dnieper too. They only managed to retain a small bridgehead near Nikopol.

The Soviet offensive in the Ukraine prepared the conditions for the liberation of the Taman Peninsula. This task was carried out by the North Caucasian Front (commander—General I. Y. Petrov; member of the Military Council—General A. Y. Fominykh) in co-operation with the Black Sea Fleet commanded by Admiral L. A. Vladimirsky and the Azov Naval Flotilla. The main blow was struck in the vicinity of Novorossiisk by the 18th Army under General K. N. Leselidze and a task force landed by the Black Sea Fleet. Fierce resistance was put up by the German 17th Army on the so-called Blue Line, a network of powerful fortifications. But this resistance was overwhelmed by swift assaults, and Novorossiisk was liberated on September 16. Suffering heavy casualties, the enemy began a withdrawal towards the Kerch Straits and then started to evacuate to the Crimea. Pursuing him, Soviet troops liberated the whole of the Taman Peninsula in early October, giving the Black Sea Fleet much better bases.

A task force from the 56th Army crossed the straits in the night of November 2-3. Preliminary artillery bombardment in the landing area disorganised the enemy's fire system, enabling the task force to capture a small beachhead on the very first day with light casualties. Hurling back the enemy counter-attacks, they enlarged the beachhead and on November 11 reached the northeastern outskirts of Kerch. Here they encountered dogged resistance and were compelled to dig in. Hard as the enemy tried, he was unable to throw them into the sea. In the spring of 1944 this beachhead was used by the Red Army for the liberation of the Crimea.

3. CENTRAL SECTOR OF THE FRONT

In August, while the battle at Kursk was still at its height, the left wing of the Kalinin Front and the main forces of the Western Front started an offensive in the direction of Smolensk to smash Army Group Centre, which was opposing them, reach the line running through Dukhovshchina-Smolensk-Roslavl, and prevent the enemy from transferring forces from this sector to the south, where the Red Army was making its main assault (Map 6).

The German Command attached immense importance to the "Smolensk Gates", a sector between the Dnieper and the Western Dvina. From here it was relatively near to Moscow. From airfields in this sector enemy aircraft could raid the Soviet capital. The loss of these "Gates" would deprive the enemy of this possibility and, moreover, clear the road for Soviet troops to Byelorussia and from there to East Prussia and Poland. Hence, despite the difficult situation near Kursk, the enemy maintained a large force in the Smolensk sector.

In early August the Kalinin and Western fronts were confronted by the German 3rd Panzer and 4th armies and units of the 2nd Panzer Army.* These forces were supported by large numbers of aircraft of the 6th Air Fleet. The enemy group consisted of nearly 850,000 officers and men, 8,800 field guns and mortars, 500 tanks and assault guns and 700 aircraft. They occupied a strongly fortified line consisting of five or six excellently equipped defence zones running to a depth of some 130 kilometres.

Together the Kalinin and Western fronts had 1,253,000 effectives, over 20,600 field guns and mortars, more than 1,400 tanks and self-propelled guns and over 900 aircraft.

The Western Front's assault group, consisting of the 5th, 10th Guards, 33rd and 68th armies, mounted an offensive from southeast of Spas-Demensk in the morning of August 7. The enemy, who had spotted the preparations for the offensive, had strengthened his defences, transferring two infantry and a panzer division from the vicinity of Orel. From the outset it was obvious that there would be protracted fighting. The enemy fought desperately, but despite his counter-attacks, Soviet troops slowly made headway. Towards the evening of August 20 they liberated more than 500 towns and villages, including the town and railway station of Spas-Demensk.

On August 13 the offensive was joined by the 43rd and 39th armies of the Kalinin Front (commander—General A. I. Yeremenko; member of the Military Council—General D. S. Leonov), which attacked in the direction of Dukhovshchina from positions northwest and east of the town. They encountered stiff resistance and in the course of five or six days were able to drive a wedge only 3-5 kilometres deep into the enemy's defences. In order to halt the Soviet advance westward, the German Command was, in the period from August 1 to 18, compelled to transfer 13 divisions, mostly from around Orel and Bryansk, and throw them against the Western and Kalinin fronts.

In the morning of August 28, after some regrouping, troops of the Western Front resumed their offensive and in two days breached the enemy's defences to a depth of nearly 15 kilometres. On August 30, the 10th Guards Army under General K. P. Trubnikov, units of the 21st Army under General N. I. Krylov and the 2nd Guards Tank Corps under Gen-

* In mid-August the 2nd Panzer Army was disbanded, its units being transferred to the 9th and 2nd armies.

eral A. S. Burdeiny crushed the enemy's resistance and entered the town of Yelna. But the farther they pressed westward, the stiffer the resistance of the enemy became. The forests and swamps made the going extremely heavy for the artillery, infantry and tanks. In the course of nine days the Soviet troops advanced nearly 40 kilometres, after which they encountered organised resistance from troops manning fortifications prepared in advance, and had to stop. The Kalinin Front likewise ceased active operations.

At this time the Bryansk Front conducted successful operations. Its task was to liberate Bryansk and continue its advance towards Gomel. The main blow was to be struck in a southwesterly direction from the vicinity of Kirov. The Front commander transferred General I. V. Boldin's 50th Army to the sector in question, and on September 7, after a short but powerful artillery barrage and with air support this army attacked the flank of the enemy Bryansk group. The suddenness of the attack decided the outcome of the battle. General V. V. Kryukov's 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps followed the 50th Army into the breach made in the enemy's defences, reached the Desna and established a bridgehead on the river's western bank northwest of Bryansk. South of Bryansk the Desna was forced by General I. K. Bagramyan's 11th Guards Army and at the town itself by the 11th Army under General I. I. Fedyuninsky. Effective support was received from partisans operating around Bryansk. Bryansk and Bezhitsa were liberated on September 17.

On September 14, after a seven-day lull, the Kalinin Front resumed its offensive, and was followed on the next day by the Western Front. In the direction of the main thrusts the nazi defences were torn to pieces on the very first day; troops of the Kalinin Front captured the town of Dukhovshchina, an important enemy strongpoint on the road to Smolensk, while troops of the Western Front liberated the town of Yartsevo. In close co-operation with them, troops of the Bryansk Front pressed forward, and the offensive developed along a vast sector. On September 25, units of three armies of the Western Front's right wing (the 31st under General V. A. Gluzdovsky, the 5th under General V. S. Polenov and the 68th under General Y. P. Zhuravlev) liberated the ancient Russian town of Smolensk. On the same day General V. S. Popov's 10th Army drove the nazis out of Roslavl. On the next day units of the Bryansk Front crossed into Byelorussia and occupied Khotimsk, a district centre in Mogilev Region. On September 30, acting in concert with the Western Front's left-flank armies they captured the town of Krichev. Early in October, units of all three fronts reached a line running south of Usvyati, Rudnya and Lenino and farther along the rivers Pronya and Sozh to Gomel. There they encountered organised resistance from the enemy.

These operations were supported by three air armies: the 3rd under General N. F. Papivin, the 1st under General M. M. Gromov and the 15th under General N. F. Naumenko. Extensive assistance was rendered by partisan formations in Kalinin, Smolensk and Bryansk regions and in Byelorussia.

As a result of the two months' offensive the Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts dealt the main forces of Army Group Centre crippling blows. They smashed the enemy's defences in a sector 350-400 kilometres long, advanced 250 kilometres to the west, gained the upper reaches of the Dnieper, liberated part of Kalinin, Smolensk and Bryansk regions and entered Eastern Byelorussia. Up to 55 German divisions were pinned down in the central sector of the Soviet-German front. This facilitated the main task, that of crushing the German troops in the southwest.

The Red Army's entry into Byelorussia was a major military and political event in the life of the Byelorussia people. For more than two years they had courageously fought behind the enemy's lines. Hundreds of thousands of Byelorussians were serving in the Red Army. Now many of them, together with soldiers of all the other peoples of the Soviet Union, were poised for the liberation of their republic.

Heavy fighting broke out on October 6 in a sector more than 550 kilometres long running from Nevel to the mouth of the Pripyat. Along with the Baltic Front,* the Kalinin Front struck in the direction of Vitebsk in order to envelop the enemy group in Byelorussia from the north. The Western Front pushed from the east towards Orsha and Mogilev, and the Central Front attacked from the south in the direction of Gomel and Bobruisk.

The enemy made frantic attempts to stop this advance. Taking into account the fact that the loss of occupied Byelorussia would have catastrophic consequences, the German Command continued to maintain large forces in this area and to do its utmost to strengthen the fortifications. In early October Army Group Centre had up to 70 divisions, and around Nevel there were another five divisions from the 16th Army of Army Group North.

On October 7, overcoming enemy resistance, troops of the Kalinin Front liberated Nevel and in four days advanced 25-30 kilometres through a forest-swamp. In order to halt the Soviet advance the enemy transferred to this area another five infantry and one panzer division from the vicinity of Gomel and two infantry divisions from around Leningrad. Until the end of the month the Germans counter-attacked continuously but failed to restore their lines.

In November and December the 2nd, 1st Baltic** and Western fronts continued their offensive in the direction of Vitebsk. Advancing 50-90 kilometres they enveloped Vitebsk from the northwest and approached the town from the east.

One of the units which took part in the fighting near Lenino (a town 75 kilometres northeast of Mogilev) was the Polish Tadeusz Kosciuszko 1st Infantry Division commanded by Colonel Z. Berling. This division, which operated as a component of the 33rd Army, was formed in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1943 on the initiative of the Union of Polish Patriots, an anti-fascist patriotic organisation of Polish émigrés in the USSR. It consisted of volunteers from among Polish citizens residing in the USSR. The Soviet Union supplied it with instructors and armaments. On October 12, units of this division together with other formations of the 33rd Army mounted an offensive and fought sanguinary battles in the course of two days. The officers and men displayed indomitable courage, many of them laying down their lives for victory over the common enemy. The Soviet Government highly appreciated the valour of the Polish soldiers, decorating 243 of them with Orders and medals. Two of them—Anel Kzivon and Wladyslaw Wisocki—were created Heroes of the Soviet Union. The anniversary of the action near Lenino is marked in People's Poland as Army Day.

On November 10, units on the left wing of the Byelorussian Front started

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* In early October GHQ disbanded the Bryansk Front. Three of its armies and a cavalry corps were transferred to the Central Front, and the rest of its forces and administration were transferred to the north to activate the Baltic Front.

** On October 20 the Baltic Front was renamed the 2nd Baltic Front, the Kalinin Front—the 1st Baltic Front, and the Central Front—the Byelorussian Front.

an offensive from a bridgehead south of Loyev on the western bank of the Dnieper and advanced in a northwesterly direction. On November 25 they forced the Berezina River and established a bridgehead south of Zhlobin. Meanwhile, the Front's right wing reached the Dnieper near Novy Bykhov in a deep enveloping movement round Gomel from the north. This made the Germans withdraw from the Sozh River to the west. On the next day, striking from the north in co-operation with units of General P. L. Romanenko's 48th Army, which was advancing from the south, the 11th Army threw the enemy out of Gomel. The first regional centre in Byelorussia was thus liberated.

In spite of the heavy terrain and bad weather, units of the 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts and of the Western and Byelorussian fronts liberated a number of eastern districts in Byelorussia in October-November 1943. The offensive was supported by partisans. These people's avengers continuously attacked the enemy's railway communications, destroyed entire garrisons and helped Soviet troops to force rivers. Soviet troops surmounted powerful nazi defences along the rivers Pronya and Sozh, thus clearing the way for the liberation of the whole of Byelorussia. Army Group Centre suffered heavy casualties. A vital sector of the "Eastern Wall" was demolished.

During the summer-autumn campaign the Red Army smashed the enemy at Kursk, liberated the Donets Basin and the whole of Ukrainian territory east of the Dnieper, established large bridgeheads on its western bank, drove the invaders out of the Taman Peninsula and began the liberation of Byelorussia. In these battles the Red Army routed 118 enemy divisions. In the period from July to December 1943 the German land force alone lost 1,413,000 officers and men.

4. UNSUBDUED SOVIET TERRITORY

As we have already pointed out partisans operating behind the enemy's lines made a large contribution to victory. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union republics and territorial and regional Party committees moved to step up partisan activity behind the enemy's lines, strengthen the underground Party and Komsomol organisations and broaden political work among the population in occupied territory. The headquarters of the partisan movement, set up as early as June 1942, provided the struggle behind the enemy's lines with centralised leadership. They established contact with most of the partisan formations and kept them supplied with weapons, ammunition and explosives.

By mid-1943 in occupied territory in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Lithuania and Latvia as well as in Leningrad, Kalinin, Smolensk, Orel and Kursk regions there were 24 underground regional and 222 district, area, town and town district Party committees. More than 800 primary Party organisations functioned in only the Ukraine and Byelorussia. They directed Komsomol organisations, which united many thousands of young people. Operating in the Ukraine were 12 regional, 265 town and town district Komsomol committees and 670 Komsomol organisations.

The Party and Komsomol organisations grew in strength and number and this allowed them to enlarge the scale of political work among the partisans and population of the occupied regions. Employing various forms of work—individual talks, meetings and rallies—the Party and Komsomol organisations sought to influence all sections of the population

and bring every person the truth about the war. Agitators—partisans and underground workers—operated in all towns and villages, acquainting the people with the major decisions of the Party and the Government and telling them of the magnificent victories of the Red Army and about the feats of the people on the labour front.

A very important role in agitation and propaganda was accorded to the press. *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and other newspapers were sent to occupied territories. Moreover, the republican and regional organisations published their own newspapers. By the beginning of 1943 almost all the Party committees were putting out their own newspapers or leaflets. Through messengers and agitators all this literature was passed on to millions of readers.

The Red Army's victories at the close of 1942 and beginning of 1943, as well as the large-scale political work, gave rise to an upsurge of activity by the people. An unprecedented influx of volunteers was observed in partisan detachments in all occupied territories. In January-April 1943 the number of partisans operating in the Ukraine increased 2.5-fold, and in Byelorussia their numbers more than doubled in the period from January to November 1943. The same picture was to be seen in other territories. For instance, in Lithuania the number of partisans increased 2.5-fold, in Latvia 4-fold and in Estonia 9-fold. Towards the close of 1943 there were nearly 250,000 armed partisans in territory occupied by the enemy.

Their direct mainstay consisted of self-defence, guard and other detachments which had hundreds of thousands of men.

The growth of the numerical strength and combatworthiness of the partisan detachments and formations coupled with the improvement of armaments supplies to them made it possible to increase the scale of their struggle and use them more purposefully. From the spring of 1943 onwards most of the partisan operations were co-ordinated with those of the Red Army. In planning operations General Headquarters and the military councils of the various fronts took the strength of the partisans and underground workers into account and charted their tasks in advance.

Surmounting incredible difficulties, the partisans destroyed enemy communications and crippled railways. In the winter of 1942-43, when the Red Army was crushing the nazis on the Volga, in the Caucasus and on the Middle and Upper Don, the people's avengers attacked the railways which the enemy was using to transfer reserves to the firing lines. In February 1943 on the Bryansk-Karachev and Bryansk-Gomel railways, the partisans blew up several bridges, including a bridge across the Desna. From 25 to 40 trains carrying troops to the firing lines and transporting decimated units and materiel as well as loot deep into the rear had passed over that bridge every day. In Byelorussia partisans blew up 65 railway bridges in only the period from November 1, 1942, to April 1, 1943. In the Ukraine partisans destroyed a bridge across the Teterev in the Kiev-Korosten sector and a number of bridges in other regions. Large railway junctions like Smolensk, Orsha, Bryansk, Gomel, Sarny, Kovel and Shepetovka were constantly attacked by partisans. In the period from November 1942 to April 1943, while the Battle of Stalingrad was being fought and the Red Army launched a general offensive, the partisans derailed nearly 1,500 enemy trains.

Partisans harassed enemy communications during the Red Army's summer-autumn campaign. They made it difficult for the enemy to regroup his forces and bring up reserves and materiel, thereby rendering the Red Army tremendous assistance. A partisan operation carried out in August and the first half of September 1943, which has become known

as the Rail War, involved huge numbers of avengers and yielded momentous results. It was planned by Central Headquarters of the partisan movement and was thoroughly prepared. Its main objective was to paralyse the railways by simultaneous massive attacks. Partisans in Leningrad, Kalinin, Smolensk and Orel regions as well as in Byelorussia and, partially, in the Ukraine were drawn into this operation. It was started in the night of August 2-3, 1943. During that very first night the partisans blew up more than 42,000 railway tracks. The attacks were sustained throughout the whole of August and the first fortnight of September. By the end of August the partisans put out of commission more than 170,000 railway tracks, or the equivalent of 1,000 kilometres of a single-track railway. By mid-September the number of rails blown up reached nearly 215,000. "In the course of a single month the number of attacks increased 30-fold," stated a dispatch of August 31 from the command of the security corps of Army Group Centre.

On September 19 the partisans launched a new operation directed against enemy railway communications. Its code name was Operation Concert. This time the struggle embraced new regions as well—Karelia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Crimea. Telling blows were inflicted on the enemy. During its first stage Operation Rail War involved 170 partisan brigades, detachments and groups totalling nearly 96,000 men, and in its second stage it was carried out by 193 brigades and detachments with a total of over 120,000 men.

The attacks on the railways were combined with raids on enemy groups and lorries transporting troops and weapons on motor and country roads, as well as with assaults on enemy river communications.

In addition to inflicting huge material losses on the nazis and disorganising and paralysing their railways, they demoralised the occupation forces. The enemy was helpless in face of the mass offensive of Soviet patriots behind his lines. "The natural consequence of our helplessness, which is becoming more and more obvious with each passing day," declares the above-mentioned dispatch from the enemy security command, "is the unreliability of the local formations, the law-keeping services, the volunteers and the administration officials."

In 1943 the partisans derailed nearly 11,000 enemy trains, damaged 6,000 locomotives and close to 40,000 railway cars and platforms, destroyed over 22,000 lorries, and blew up or burnt down some 5,500 bridges on motor and country roads and more than 900 railway bridges.

Furthermore, partisans and underground workers helped the Red Army by seizing river crossings, and liberating villages and railway junctions and holding them until the arrival of advance Red Army units. In the Ukraine, for example, during the Soviet offensive towards the Dnieper, partisans captured and held three crossings on the Desna, 10 crossings on the Pripyat and 12 crossings on the Dnieper.

A major role in promoting an upsurge of the patriotic struggle and intensifying the disorganisation of the enemy rear was played by raids deep behind the German firing lines by large partisan formations such as those commanded by S. V. Grishin, S. A. Kovpak, Y. I. Melnik, M. I. Naumov, V. Y. Samutin and F. F. Taranenko. In 1943 these formations covered hundreds and in some cases more than a thousand kilometres behind the enemy's lines. They destroyed troop garrisons and police stations and blew up munition dumps and other military objectives. Wherever they went they were warmly received by the local population who gave them every assistance and provided them with reinforcements. Soviet people regarded the partisans both as a military and political force. In the eyes of the people

the partisans embodied Soviet power in opposition to the cruelty and vandalism of the enemy. That was why wherever the partisans appeared the struggle of the local population against the invaders was invariably intensified.

1943 witnessed the activation of underground workers as well. Soviet people will always cherish the memory of the heroes of Krasnodon, Kiev, Lvov, Odessa, Nikolayev, Rovno, Pavlograd, Simferopol, Vitebsk, Minsk, Mogilev, Kaunas, Riga, Pskov and many, many other towns. Employing various forms of struggle and scorning death which lay in wait everywhere, these valiant fighters courageously discharged their duty. It was only utter devotion to the motherland that could have induced Professor P. M. Buiko of the Kiev Medical Institute to place his home at the disposal of wounded partisans or travel many kilometres regardless of weather to render medical aid. He knew what this risk entailed, but he took it and died as a hero.

Legendary feats were accomplished by N. I. Kuznetsov, an underground worker, who shot Funck, the chief nazi judge in the Ukraine, took part in the kidnapping of the German General Ilgen from Rovno and killed two deputies of Erich Koch, Reichskommissar and hangman of the Ukrainian people.

In Minsk underground workers intrepidly carried on their activities in spite of the reign of terror instituted by the nazis. In one of their operations they raided the house of W. Kube, the nazi governor of Byelorussia. One of their number, a girl named Y. G. Mazanik, smuggled a time-bomb into this heavily guarded house and put it under the hangman's bed. It exploded exactly at midnight, killing Kube. The other underground workers participating in this operation were N. P. Drozd, M. B. Osipova and N. V. Troyan.

The partisans and underground workers, personifying the finest features and fighting spirit of Soviet people, made a considerable contribution towards the defeat of the nazi invaders. Their struggle forms one of the unfading pages of the history of the Great Patriotic War.

Chapter Eleven

FURTHER LEAP IN PRODUCTION. THE SOVIET UNION'S INTERNATIONAL SITUATION IMPROVES

1. THE NATION PUTS ITS SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL

The Red Army offensives consumed increasing numbers of aircraft, tanks, guns and ammunition. The war economy, which began to function smoothly in the latter half of 1942, provided the Armed Forces with all essential supplies, but there was not enough fuel and electric power for its further growth.

The Party Central Committee and the State Defence Committee took steps to eliminate these bottlenecks.

Capital construction proceeded on a large scale. Despite the colossal cost of the war, 1943 investments in the iron-and-steel, power and coal industries doubled over 1942.

Much effort went into improving the operating factories and mines, principally the Karaganda and Kuznetsk coal basins, which were supplied with considerable quantities of new equipment. The State Defence Committee assigned to them a large number of workers, technicians and engineers. Supplies of food and consumer commodities for miners increased. Most of the Party members among the workers (e.g., 70 per cent in Karaganda) chose to work below the surface. They displayed models of devotion and discipline and initiated many drives for greater output. This yielded good results. In 1942 the Karaganda Basin produced 7,100,000 tons of coal, while the figure for 1943 was 9,700,000 tons. In 1943 the Kuznetsk Basin produced nearly 26 million tons of coal or 4 million tons more than the year before. Coking coal output increased 23 per cent.

Coal production in the Urals grew, amounting to 5 million tons more than in 1942 and running second only to that of the Kuznetsk Basin.

The Donets Basin and the Moscow coal mines gradually recovered after the expulsion of the nazis. New mines and restored old mines in the two basins built up a capacity for more than 15 million tons in 1943, with production in the Moscow mines surpassing pre-war by nearly 50 per cent. That the miners worked wonders in the fight for fuel is evidenced by the fact that in 1943 alone output increased by 17,600,000 tons over 1942, totalling 93,100,000 tons of coal. This met the vital needs of the war industry.

In the oil industry the situation was nearly as gloomy as before. The oil yield in 1943 was 4 million tons below the preceding year, because the North Caucasian oilfields were badly damaged and extraction in the Baku area dropped considerably for many of the wells were temporarily sealed.

Development in the east of the country, primarily the "Second Baku" (the Ural-Volga oilfields), Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, held top priority.

The oil-refining industry produced the maximum possible quantity of aviation, automobile and other gasolene, kerosene and lubricants. Workers and engineers devised new oil-refining techniques, achieving a 10 per cent increase over 1942 in gasolene, a 130 per cent increase in diesel oil and a 70 per cent increase in motor oil. On the face of it, the situation was paradoxical: while oil extraction dropped, aircraft, tanks and other vehicles were supplied fuel in abundance.

A large amount of local fuel was obtained, such as peat and firewood. Production of peat, for example, increased 44 per cent over 1942, totalling 21,300,000 tons.

The changes in coal and oil extraction and the production of peat and firewood raised the fuel supply by as much as 16,800,000 tons (in terms of conventional fuel) over 1942. No longer did the fuel industry trail behind, with the corresponding benefits accruing therefrom for the economy as a whole.

The supply of electric power increased as well. Existing power stations were expanded and new ones were built. In 12 months the power output rose 11 per cent from 29,000 million kwh to 32,300 million.

The rapidly growing war industries demanded more iron and steel. Tanks and aircraft needed armour, and steel was needed for guns, mortars, shells and mines. A programme was drawn up early in 1943 to build new iron-and-steel plants, furnaces and rolling mills, with the accent on high-grade steel.

The nation was fighting and building. In 1943 alone, three open-hearth and 20 blast furnaces, 23 electric furnaces, eight rolling mills and three coking complexes were built in the rear areas. Academician I. P. Bardin, an eminent authority in metallurgy, who headed the Government commission inspecting the newly-built No. 6 open-hearth furnace in Magnitogorsk, wrote: "This is the first time on record that an open-hearth furnace was built in such short time.... Quality of building—and this refers to the entire furnace—is first-class." By the close of 1943 in areas cleared of the enemy, two open-hearth furnaces, nine rolling mills and 27 blast furnaces with a total capacity of 1,050,000 tons were restored or built anew. The 1943 production of iron totalled 5,600,000 tons, steel 8,500,000 tons and rolled stock 5,700,000 tons.

The giants of metallurgy, the Kuznetsk and Magnitogorsk combines, acquitted themselves splendidly. Production of grade steel rose rapidly. Deputy People's Commissar for Iron and Steel, Hero of Socialist Labour P. I. Korobov, wrote: "It was anything but a mechanical process. The important war-industrial problem was resolved by means of numerous investigations, by working out and introducing new techniques, by persevering efforts to produce the kind of steel that withstood enemy shells and steel for shells that pierced the armour of the nazi tanks."

The Germans did not produce such high-grade steel at any time during the war. General Guderian of the German armoured troops admitted this. "Our alloy steel," he wrote in his memoirs, "was inferior to that of the Russians, and, moreover, quality kept dropping because of shortages in essential raw materials."

In 1943 high-alloy steel comprised 85 per cent of the total Magnitogorsk steel output.

Output of non-ferrous metals expanded steadily. Newly-developed deposits in the Urals, Siberia, Kirghizia and Kazakhstan coped with the demand for nickel, tungsten, magnesium and other metals essential in grade-steel production and in the manufacture of arms and ammunition.

This titanic effort increased the capacity of the coal, iron-and-steel and power industries.

The expansion of heavy industry paved the way for greater production of arms and ammunition. The war industries, like all the others, witnessed a technological advance. Techniques improved, as did the organisation of production at factory level. Mass-production methods proved highly effective, lesser outlays of labour and resources yielding a considerably bigger output with the same equipment. Suffice it to say, that mass-production methods in the aviation industry, coupled with rationalisation of the work process, pushed down labour outlays per La-5 fighter by as much as 60 per cent and per Il-2 attack plane by 80 per cent. Production costs decreased. In 1943 the drop in costs covered the expense of producing an additional 8,790 planes (La-5s) or almost a quarter of the total for the year.

In the meantime, designing of improved weapons proceeded rapidly. In 1943 the gifted designers Heroes of Socialist Labour A. D. Shvetsov, V. Y. Klimov, A. A. Mikulin and their associates modernised most of the plane engines in use. Compared to pre-war, the rated average capacity of an air engine increased 50 per cent. Hero of Socialist Labour S. A. Lavochkin collaborated with Plant No. 21 to improve his La-5 fighter. As a result, the new plane, La-5FN, surpassed German fighters in speed and manoeuvrability. The designing team under Hero of Socialist Labour A. S. Yakovlev developed the splendid Yak-9 fighter equipped with a 37-mm gun in place of the usual 20-mm one. German efforts to do the same failed. The tactical and technical qualities of Soviet attack planes and bombers were also improved.

In 1943 the aviation industry produced almost 35,000 planes or 37.4 per cent more than in 1942, surpassing Germany by 9,700 planes. Building up capacity, the aviation industry gradually provided the material and technical resources for the Air Force to win command of the air.

Tank-builders likewise made striking headway, enthusiastically responding to the State Defence Committee's call for more tanks. In this decision of January 1943 the State Defence Committee obligated regional and city Party Committee secretaries "to exercise personal supervision over the fulfilment of orders for tank plants" and help the directors of these plants in every possible way. The regional and district Party organisations led the drive to enlarge the tank industry and this helped it to increase output. Tank production was concentrated chiefly in the Urals. In 1943 the three Urals giants—Urals Engineering Works, the Kirov Works and Works No. 183 (managing directors—B. G. Muzrukov, I. M. Zaltsman and Y. Y. Maksarev) accounted for two-thirds of the output of the factories run by the People's Commissariat for the Tank Industry. A large share of this output was produced by the Krasnoye Sormovo Works in Gorky (managing director—Y. E. Rubinchik). All factories were put on a mass-production basis. At the Kirov Plant in Chelyabinsk 70 per cent of all equipment making T-34 tanks was on mass production. Not only did the mass-production method speed up manufacture; it facilitated intra-mural movement of parts and materials, reduced the number of ancillary workers and shortened many of the operations.

Soviet tank-builders developed and applied the highly efficient method of casting large steel parts in metal instead of sand moulds. This reduced by half the outlay of labour. Stamping of parts, replacing casting and forging, greatly speeded production. Tank turrets, for example, were stamped, something never done at home or abroad before the war.

High-frequency electrical heat treatment of metal offered tremendous

advantages. Technical progress in the tank industry increased the average annual performance per worker in 1943 by 75.7 per cent over pre-war.

The fire power, armour, manoeuvrability and speed of the Soviet tanks were superior to those of the German panzers, which troubled the nazis considerably. Guderian wrote, for one thing, about the "growing alarm over the decreasing power of German armour as contrasted by the constantly increasing power of Soviet armour, particularly of the superior mass-produced Russian T-34 tank".

A new heavy tank, the IS, developed by a team of designers under Hero of Socialist Labour Z. Y. Kotin, was first put to field in September 1943. Its armour was considerably superior to that of the heavy German Tiger and twice as dependable as that of the Panther. The vehicle was also more powerfully armed. The Hitler Command learned of the IS tank with ill-concealed dread, instructing the German panzers to avoid encounters with it and recommending engagements only from ambushes and the safety of pillboxes. New self-propelled guns, the SU-152 and ISU-122, also made their appearance.

All in all, 24,000 tanks and self-propelled guns were produced in the Soviet Union in 1943. This was a decisive setback for Germany, which produced considerably fewer vehicles, and most of them were inferior to the Soviet.

Output of improved arms—field guns, mortars, machine-guns and sub-machine-guns—increased as well. The new regimental 76-mm gun, the 152-mm corps howitzer, the 57-mm anti-tank gun and other arms of superior firing power were welcome acquisitions. The enemy suffered the greatest casualties from the rocket launchers and the world-renowned *Katyushas,* of which 3.4 times more were produced in 1943 as compared with 1941.

Industry manufactured 130,000 guns of all types. "This expansion," wrote People's Commissar for Armaments, Hero of Socialist Labour D. F. Ustinov, "enabled us to supply the Red Army with a surfeit of artillery."

The supply of ammunition swelled too. Output was almost three times that of 1941, and quality improved greatly. Consumption in the Soviet offensives was matched, even outmatched, by the supply.

That the war industries coped with the demand is distinct evidence of the superiority of socialist over capitalist economy. Nazi Germany, for example, had far greater material resources, for in 1943 her supplies surpassed the Soviet Union's more than threefold in coal, 2.4-fold in steel and 2.3-fold in electric power. Yet her manufacturing industries produced far less.

The German economy proved to be unable to compensate for the losses on the battlefield. Even German bourgeois historians admit that these losses "reduced the available armaments in proportions that exceeded the production capacity of industry".

The achievements of the Soviet war industries rested on the creative thought of the Soviet scientists, the dedicated labour of workers, technicians and engineers and the amazing fortitude of the whole nation. Red Army successes doubled, even tripled, the energy of the Soviet people. The workers particularly performed wonders. Almost all of them took part in the socialist emulation movement. When the tide turned and the enemy was being gradually pushed out of the Soviet Union, the personnel of Artillery Plant No. 172 called on the workers to redouble their efforts in the socialist emulation movement in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Red Army. It pledged to supply enough arms in excess of the plan

to equip an additional 10 artillery regiments. The workers responded with enthusiasm.

Labour productivity in the tank, aircraft and arms industries increased considerably in 1943 over the preceding year.

Among the forms of emulation the shock workers' movement gained the greatest popularity, embracing all the key industries, notably iron-and-steel and coal. The shock workers filled every minute of their work time and devised the best ways of using the machinery. Such men as N. Bazetov and M. Zinurov, both of the Urals, reduced smelting time by as much as two to three hours, and coal-miner A. Ibateyev and some of his mates did five to seven daily assignments in a shift.

Women and the youth made a significant contribution. They were building workers and miners, worked at open-hearth furnaces and in timber camps, coping bravely with the hardships and shortages of war-time. Millions of women learned trades for centuries performed only by men. In 1943 some 40 per cent of the steelworkers, for example, were women. Academician Y. O. Paton, who worked in the Urals during the war, wrote: "I shall never forget the women of those days. They came to the factories by the hundreds, often with their growing sons, performed the hardest jobs, jobs usually done by men, then stood for hours in queues for food and looked after their children, for whom they were mother and father at once, and did not break down when the death notices arrived bearing the name of their husbands, sons or brothers. They were really heroic, and to be heartily admired."

The war's hardships steeled the young people. Working at a factory, mine, power station or railway became a vital need. The Komsomol-youth team of the 1st Ball-Bearing Plant initiated a movement to produce more with fewer workers. The four members of the team did the work of six, had no rejects, and nearly quadrupled the daily assignment. Other teams followed suit, released tens of thousands of hands for other work while keeping output at the previous level.

By the end of the year more than 45,000 Komsomol-youth teams were formed in industry, their hard work bringing victory closer.

Transport, especially the railways, improved visibly. In the early period of the war it did not cope with the flow of raw materials and fuel to the Urals, Siberia and the Central regions, slowing down industrial growth. "Unless radical measures are taken immediately," wrote People's Commissar for Iron-and-Steel Industry I. F. Tevosyan to the Party Central Committee in November 1942, "a breakdown is inevitable, meaning that the war industries will not be supplied the necessary metal."

The Central Committee and the Government took drastic action. Experienced executives were assigned to run the railways. Manpower, too, was supplied in required numbers. Passenger traffic was temporarily reduced, while freight traffic increased. Special State Defence Committee instructions were issued to speed up handling and ensure a continuous flow of empty cars to the Kuznetsk Basin, where tens of thousands of tons of metal were awaiting shipment. The capacity of the railways was enlarged. A. A. Andreyev, a Central Committee Secretary, was sent to the Urals and Siberia to help establish order. A large sum, 1,500 million rubles, was allocated for construction. Additional tracks were laid to supplement the existing Sverdlovsk, Perm and Southern Urals lines, new railways were started and junctions expanded. By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of April 15, 1943, a state of military emergency was proclaimed as of May 9 for railways, river shipping and the merchant marine, stiffening discipline.

The set of measures yielded good results. By February the Southern Urals Railway, the country's most important line at that time, was handling 2,217 freight cars daily, raising the number to 3,242 by June. Traffic on the Perm, Kuibyshev and other lines became greater. Coal carriage increased in 12 months by 15.6 per cent, iron and steel by 2.9 per cent and crude oil and oil products by 21.9 per cent.

The railways also transported freight directly to the front-lines, though the retreating enemy destroyed the facilities and the Luftwaffe raided communications ceaselessly near the front, flying an average of 20 sorties each day to bomb trains and tracks.

The nazis thought transport was the most vulnerable sector of the Soviet economy. Some Western economists, too, held that nazi efforts to destroy the railways would ultimately cripple the Red Army. Charles Whitworth, a British expert, wrote in 1943: "The real Russian problem will be when a rapid advance begins and large areas of territory are recovered.... The advances of August and September 1943 may provide an even greater test and strain for the Russian railways than the retreats of 1941 and 1942."

But the Soviet railways coped with requirements despite these prophecies. In 1943, 45,500 railway cars were handled daily; this was 30 per cent more than in 1942. During the Stalingrad Battle, the enemy dropped more than 90,000 bombs on the Ryazan-Urals and the Southeastern railways that were supplying the Southwestern, Don and Stalingrad fronts. But traffic continued without interruption.

The war-damaged lines had to be repaired: in 12 months tracks put back into operation added up to 18,800 kilometres, or 4.5 times as much as in 1942.

The year 1943 was marked by good work in river shipping and the merchant marine, the rivermen increasing freightage by three per cent and overfulfilling the troop shipments target by 12 per cent.

Farming, however, was still in difficulties. Millions of men, including many operators of farm machinery, had been conscripted. Vehicles, tractors, even horses had been requisitioned for the fighting forces. Fuel and mineral fertilisers ran extremely short. Female labour was predominant. There were almost three times as many women driving tractors and more than three times as many women operating combines as the year before. Women assumed administrative posts in many of the collective farms, let alone in the teams and in animal husbandry.

Yet the 1943 spring sowing had to be top-grade despite the incredible hardships. Too much depended on it in Siberia, the Urals, the Volga area, Kazakhstan, the Central regions of the Russian Federation and in areas liberated from the invader.

The 1943 agricultural development plan laid the accent on using every hectare of arable land in the most sensible way, boosting yields and increasing production. Preparations were in full swing. Wherever seed was short the collective farmers contributed out of their own stock; frequently, one farm would lend seed to another. Due to the lack of tractors and horses, cows were put before the ploughs. Wherever spare parts were lacking for machinery old parts were repaired. Many women and juveniles were trained to drive tractors.

Despite these severe conditions, the cultivated area was increased over the preceding year by 6,400,000 hectares. More than 94,100,000 hectares were sown. The increase was traceable to the liberation of considerable territory, and to the spring sowing in most regions being fulfilled according to plan.

The farmers displayed models of dedication. Women tractor-drivers acquitted themselves splendidly. More than 150,000 of them participated in socialist emulation. Large tracts of land were sown to seed over the planned quota on the initiative of the Gorshikha Collective Farm, Yaroslavl Region, with the harvest going to the defence and liberated areas rehabilitation funds. Twenty-six thousand Komsomol-youth teams joined in the battle for a bumper crop.

The difficulties of harvesting were of similar dimensions. True, industry was doing well enough to allow some factories to manufacture farm machinery and spare parts in March 1943. But this did not alter the situation to any notable extent, because the machines did not begin coming off the production line until the latter half of 1943. Again, everything depended on the enthusiasm and dedication of the farmers. Old and young worked in the fields. A. I. Maximenko, a member of the Andreyev Collective Farm, Stavropol Territory, declared, for example: "I have four sons in the Red Army and I want to help them as much as I can." He mowed 0.7 hectares daily by hand instead of the stipulated 0.5. P. Y. Moreva, an elderly woman-member of the Road to Communism Collective Farm, Yaroslavl Region, who had 10 sons and 14 grandsons in the Army, put in 300 work-days in the field. Fervent Soviet patriotism sparked thousands upon thousands of similar labour exploits.

Factory and office workers, students and schoolchildren came from the towns to help the farmers gather the harvest. The potato crop was 50 per cent and the sunflower crop 180 per cent bigger than in 1942. But in aggregate, the output of farm products was nearly as low as that of 1942. Less than one-third of the pre-war harvest of grain was gathered, totalling 29,400,000 tons. This was due largely to the drought in the Volga area, the early frost in Siberia and the long spell of rain in the Central regions of the Russian Federation. The other reasons were weaknesses in management by local Party and government bodies.

Liberated areas in the Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus contributed considerably to the food supply. They yielded more than a quarter of the aggregate grain harvest and considerable amounts of other produce. That they were able to do so was due to the concern shown by the Party and the Government, which took steps to speed up the rehabilitation of machine-and-tractor stations and collective farms in liberated areas as early as January 1943.

It required an enormous effort to develop livestock-breeding, which was the hardest hit branch of agriculture. A great deal was accomplished in this branch in many republics and regions.

By the end of 1943, the cattle population in the country increased by 5,500,000 head, and that of sheep and goats by 1,500,000 head.

The Party Central Committee and the Soviet Government noted in a survey for 1943 that agriculture had ensured "supplies for the Red Army and the population of food and industrial crops without serious interruptions".

On January 22, 1943, the Party Central Committee issued a decision improving aid to servicemen's families. It said that constant concern for the needs of servicemen's families was politically and militarily important and amounted to half the concern for the Red Army. The Republican Councils of People's Commissars formed administrations, and the Councils of People's Commissars of Autonomous Republics and local executive committees formed departments for supplying and accommodating servicemen's families and war invalids. The entire nation showed its willingness to help. Volunteer teams were formed at factories and farms. Collective farms

allocated food to special aid funds and at many factories women worked afterhours, making shoes and clothes for soldiers' children from material they had saved during working hours. The public volunteered help in renovating servicemen's homes and working their garden plots.

The people's affection, their moral and material support, their daily concern, shown in big and little things, raised Army morale. Fund-raising campaigns were begun in autumn 1942 throughout the country. Collective farmer F. P. Golovaty, of Saratov Region, contributed 100,000 rubles out of his savings for a warplane. Hundreds of farmers followed suit. By the end of 1943 funds collected for the Army approached the 13,000-million-ruble mark. In addition, people contributed valuables, food and warm clothing. Thousands of tanks, aircraft and guns paid for out of the people's savings added strength to the troops.

The Government announcement of a state loan on June 5, 1943, was received with enthusiasm. In a matter of days the population undersigned 20,300 million rubles, exceeding the envisaged sum by 8,000 million rubles.

Volunteer units were formed: the Urals Tank Corps, the Special Siberian Infantry Corps and the Volunteer Cossack Formation. The men admitted to them were hand-picked, and the arms and other equipment paid for out of citizens' contributions.

The people dedicated themselves entirely to the war effort. The battle front and the rear were fused. This helped close the technical gap in 1943, the Soviet economy coming out on top in the contest against nazi Germany's capitalist economy.

The resurgence in industry and transport. that began in 1942 and was consolidated in 1943, and the surmounting of the difficulties in agriculture made it possible to organise an uninterrupted and increasing flow of weapons, ammunition and food for the armies in the field.

2. ANTI-FASCIST COALITION SOLIDIFIES

Soviet foreign policy was oriented throughout 1943 as before on strengthening the anti-fascist coalition and hastening the end of the Second World War. The second front in Europe was the paramount question, for which the politico-military situation was entirely favourable: for one, the Red Army offensives had compelled Hitler to transfer many of his divisions from Western Europe to the Soviet-German front and, for another, the United States and Britain had splendidly equipped armies.

By the summer of 1943 the US Army was almost 7,000,000 and the British 2,600,000 strong. In just 12 months (July 1942 to July 1943) the US Armed Forces received 54,000 aircraft and 33,500 tanks, and the British Army, too, had arms in abundance.

A landing in France was practicable. US, British and German statesmen admitted it. US Vice-President Henry Wallace declared in February 1943 that if the United States and Britain exerted a joint effort matching that of the Russians, Germany could be beaten before the end of 1943. The nazi chiefs flinched at the thought of a second front. "One dreads to think what would happen if the English and the Americans were suddenly to attempt a landing," wrote Goebbels in his diary in March 1943. Field-marshal von Rundstedt revealed later that the landing was expected that year because in its effort to stabilise the Eastern front the German Command had denuded the West, its troops spread thin along a vast front.

However, the Western Allies procrastinated. In January 1943 at Casa-

blanca the heads of the US and British governments agreed on operations in the Mediterranean. To use Churchill's phrase, a landing in Western Europe was not envisaged until German resistance was "weakened to the required extent". Official communications indicated that France would be invaded "as soon as practicable". On receipt of this vague promise, the Soviet Government requested the Allies to specify the date when operations in Western Europe would begin.

Britain's Prime Minister replied in February that the probable time would be August or September 1943. However, in May Churchill journeyed to Washington and reached an understanding with Roosevelt that Allied operations would be confined to the Mediterranean theatre until mid-1944. The Soviet Union was informed that no second front could be opened in 1943, ostensibly because of numerous difficulties, meaning that the war would last longer. The Soviet reply stressed that the reasons for the delay indicated by the Allies were groundless, and noted: "It should be remembered that millions of lives in the occupied parts of Western Europe and Russia, and a reduction in the colossal casualties of the Soviet armies, compared to which Anglo-American casualties are very small, depend on this decision."

From spring to November 1943, shortly before the Battle of the Kursk Salient, the ruling circles in the United States and Britain also withheld shipments of material and arms to the Soviet Union by the northern route.

This policy went against the interests of the American and British peoples, who opposed articulately the behaviour of their governments. The protests were sparked by workers. Factory meetings in Britain demanded a second front. On the walls and pavements in workers' districts inscriptions appeared: "Stop sabotaging the second front!", "Don't let the Russians down!", "Strike in the West!"

The US Amalgamated Automobile Workers issued a resolution on behalf of its 800,000 members, saying:

"Now that Hitler is reeling under the blows of our Soviet allies an invasion of Europe is insistently necessary to make the Axis countries surrender unconditionally. Defeat the Axis in 1943—that is the battle-cry of the American and all the United Nations."

Nearly ten million Americans contributed their savings to funds in aid of the Red Army and the Soviet people. Some 500 fund-raising committees were formed, spending the money collected on medical supplies, food and clothing.

Understandably, supplies of certain arms, industrial equipment and food from the United States and Britain were of some help and were appreciated by the people of the Soviet Union. But as before, the Soviet Union was sacrificing the greatest number of lives for the common victory. Nothing could be compared to that human sacrifice. Edward R. Stettinius Jr., head of the lend-lease administration, declared that for all Allied aid "the Russians have already made a return far beyond any measurement in dollars and tons".

The second front had to be opened in Western Europe, for it would have drawn off part of German strength, helping the USSR effectively. That was why Soviet foreign policy was centred on that issue. An acute controversy erupted at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow on October 19-30, 1943. The Soviet delegation, headed by Vyacheslav Molotov (the US by Cordell Hull and the British by Anthony Eden), proposed to examine "measures to be taken to shorten the war against Germany and her satellites in Europe", implying, in effect, a discussion of the second front in Europe.

The American and British spokesmen, however, were reluctant to accept any specific commitments. They declared that Western Europe could not be invaded before the spring of 1944, and that provided the weather in the British Channel was favourable, the Luftwaffe did not have too many planes in Western Europe and the German reserves in France did not exceed 12 divisions, with the German Command unable to move in more than 15 additional divisions from other fronts. That, as we see, was another very vague commitment. For all this, the joint communique stressed that the governments considered "hastening the end of the war" their prime aim.

The conference discussed the post-war arrangement, above all in Germany. The American and British delegations favoured partitioning that country. The Soviet delegation argued for the principle of wiping out nazism and establishing control in Germany, thereby securing a lasting peace in Europe; it opposed the partitioning plan.

The conference also discussed Italy's complex political situation. Following the Anglo-American landing in the south and the crushing defeat of her armies on the Soviet-German front, fascist Italy had surrendered.* The US and British authorities were backing reaction there and suppressing the democratic forces. The people of Italy had to be aided. The Soviet delegation expressed strong views concerning the separate activities of the United States and Britain. A declaration was adopted, noting that the Allied policy in Italy should be built on the main objective: complete elimination of fascism and the opportunity for the Italian people to create democratically their own Government and other institutions. A Consultative Council was formed to co-ordinate Allied policy, inspiring Italian patriotic forces to fight reaction and fascism, for the liberation of the country.

The conference also adopted a declaration on Austria, proclaiming null and void Austria's annexation by Germany and expressing the desire of the three governments "to see re-established a free and independent Austria", adding, however, that Austria had "a responsibility which she cannot evade for participation in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany".

The British and US delegations showed a keen interest in Poland. Their efforts were aimed at installing there their own protégés hostile to the Soviet Union, to which, understandably, the Soviet Government would not consent, advocating an independent, democratic and strong Polish state headed by a Government friendly to the USSR.

Among the other important decisions passed by the conference was the setting up of the European Advisory Commission including representatives of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain** to co-ordinate the post-war arrangement in the world and, primarily, the surrender terms for Germany and her allies. A declaration on responsibility for war crimes sounded as a serious warning to the nazi butchers. Lastly, the conference examined the ways for ensuring universal post-war security and adopted a special declaration on this score, pointing to the need for an international body and defining its key principles.

The Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference strengthened the anti-fascist coalition. Also, it brought a step nearer the preparations for the Big Three summit meeting in Teheran.

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* See "Other Theatres of War in 1943", p. 226.

** A representative of France was invited to join the Commission somewhat later on Soviet insistence.

The Teheran Conference, November 28-December 1, 1943, holds a prominent place in the history of the Second World War, being the first at which the heads of the three great anti-fascist powers met: Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Devoted chiefly to military issues, it occupied itself quite extensively with the plans of a second front in Western Europe. The first to speak, US President Roosevelt declared that an Anglo-American landing in France could take place in May or June 1944. True to form, the British Prime Minister evaded a clear answer. Asked about the date, he launched into a discourse on the desirability of "Mediterranean strategy", though admitting that operations in the Eastern Mediterranean would probably delay the landing across the Channel. It was clear that the British Government was determined to sidestep specific commitments, preferring to confine Anglo-American operations to the Mediterranean where, among other things, it envisaged a landing in the Balkans. This implied the concentration of effort on secondary objectives with the consequent dragging out of the war, and showed Churchill's intention of establishing control over the Balkans and the whole of Southern Europe. These were precisely the areas embraced by a large partisan movement which had set itself not only national liberation but also class objectives.

Wishing to shorten the war, the Soviet Government insisted on an Allied landing in Western Europe in the first place. It suggested May 1944, this being the most favourable time for the operation. The Mediterranean operations, the head of the Soviet delegation pointed out, should be viewed as no more than diverting actions. The discussion of this issue was sharply political. The firm and consistent attitude adopted by the Soviet delegation, which apart from Stalin included V. M. Molotov and K. Y. Voroshilov, compelled the British and United States delegations to yield to the Soviet proposals. D-Day was fixed for May 1944, the landing in Northern France (Operation Overlord) to be supported by actions in Southern France. The Soviet Government, too, undertook "to organise by May a large offensive against the Germans at several points in order to pin down German divisions on the Eastern front and deny them the opportunity for creating any complications for Overlord".

All this was recorded in the secret military decisions of the Teheran Conference. The parties also reached an understanding concerning contacts between the General Staffs of the three powers, laying the groundwork for a co-ordinated military strategy.

The American and British delegations devoted considerable attention to the German problem, just as they had done at the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference. The US President suggested that Germany should be partitioned into five states. Furthermore, he suggested putting the zones at Kiel and Hamburg under United Nations or four-power control and the Saar and Ruhr under either United Nations or all-European control. Churchill had his own partitioning plan: to isolate Prussia from the rest of Germany and to separate the southern provinces—Bavaria, Baden, etc.—from the Saar to Saxony inclusive. He suggested incorporating these provinces into a Danube Federation.

The Soviet delegation denied its support to either plan and the question of Germany's post-war arrangement was submitted for closer study to the European Advisory Commission.

The American and British representatives again called on the Soviet Union to restore relations with the Polish émigré government. But the USSR refused, because the émigré government in London continued to

conduct a policy hostile to the USSR and followed a reactionary line in relation to the Polish democratic movement.

The conference dealt with other important issues. For one thing, it endorsed the Three-Power declaration on Iran, assuring her independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Three-Power declaration on the joint war effort against nazi Germany and on post-war co-operation had a strong political impact, emphasising that the powers had agreed on the scale and terms of large offensive operations "planned from east, west and south", and that nothing could stop them.

The Soviet Government consented in principle to enter the war against Japan some time after Germany's surrender. In doing so, it acted on the security interests of the country, its duty as an Ally and its desire to help the Asian peoples shake off the Japanese militarists.

The Teheran decisions were of great military and political significance, and the most important among them was that on the second front in Europe, which was to be opened in May 1944. The powers set forth their ideas on the post-war arrangement of the world, bearing out the possibility of fruitful co-operation between the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain, that is, between states with different social systems. Thus, the efforts of German and Japanese diplomats to split the anti-fascist coalition foundered, for the Teheran Conference was a tangible step towards strengthening all forces in the struggle against the common enemy.

The Soviet Union also worked for closer relations with other members of the anti-fascist coalition, extending them every assistance in their fight to regain independence.

Recognition of the French National Liberation Committee and conclusion of a treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and post-war co-operation with Czechoslovakia were other important acts in 1943. The Soviet Government gave Czechoslovak and Polish patriots an opportunity to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army against the nazi invaders. The Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division of Polish volunteers and the Czechoslovak 1st Separate Brigade were formed, seeing action for the first time at Lenino and Sokolovo. Blood shed jointly by Soviet, Polish and Czechoslovak soldiers welded the fraternal friendship of the three peoples, presaging an unbreakable alliance.

Thanks to Soviet efforts, the anti-fascist coalition became more solid and more firmly convinced of early victory.

In the meantime, the situation in the fascist camp was gloomy. Spurred by the aggressive ambitions of its members, the piratic alliance looked strong until the first setbacks. The crushing Red Army offensives in 1943 sharpened the antagonisms between Germany and her partners and there set in the process of disintegration. The Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis collapsed after Italy's surrender. The nazis lost all hope of Japan ever acting against the Soviet Union. The situation in Hungary, Rumania and Finland caused them mounting anxiety. The ruling classes in those countries had begun to realise the inevitable consequences of continued co-operation with Germany and tried to withdraw from the war. Their representatives in Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal and Turkey made surreptitious contacts with US and British diplomats, seeking a separate peace. Germany's international position deteriorated. Before her attack on the Soviet Union she was at war with 15 states; towards the end of 1943 their number had increased to 36.

Her isolation increased while the Soviet Union was winning new friends, the favourable international situation helping greatly the fight against nazism.

3. UPSURGE OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The national liberation movement of the European peoples entered a new phase in 1943. Under the impact of Red Army victories, the anti-fascist struggle spread to all the occupied countries. The Resistance movement grew broader, stronger and deeper, like a mountain stream in spring. National fronts appeared in all countries. The central and local organs of the Resistance movement expanded. The armed struggle grew. And the fight for liberation against the invader merged increasingly with the people's struggle against the exploiting classes.

New democratic organs of power emerged on the people's initiative in Yugoslavia, Greece, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Albania, their fight against the bourgeois-landlord order being the opening phase in the revolutionary reconstruction of the state.

In Southeastern Europe the national liberation movement was the greatest in scale and scope.

The Yugoslavs fought heroically. Dismayed, the Germans launched three successive offensives to destroy the People's Liberation Army. Battles on a large scale were fought in Western and Central Bosnia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Macedonia and Serbia. Despite their extraordinary heroism, the Yugoslav troops were gradually pushed out of some of the earlier liberated areas by superior enemy forces.

However, nothing could dishearten the People's Liberation Army, which was supported by the whole country. Recouping the heavy losses, it tripled its original strength in 1943, its 300,000 men controlling considerable territories administered by people's liberation committees. The Soviet Union helped the Yugoslav Resistance fighters. Soviet aircraft delivered arms, ammunition and medical supplies, while initially Britain assisted only Mihailovic's chetniks who frequently collaborated with the occupation authorities. Not until January 1944, under pressure of the events, did Churchill's Government cut off this aid.

While still fighting the invader, the Yugoslav people began building a new democratic state. On November 29, 1943, the second session of the Anti-Fascist People's Liberation Assembly* proclaimed itself the supreme legislative and executive organ, forming a provisional Government, the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia. In the name of the people, the Assembly disavowed the émigré government. The new Yugoslav state was constituted as a federation of equal peoples. November 29, 1943, became a national day.

The Resistance movement in Greece gained momentum. It was headed by the Communist Party and other democratic organisations that merged in the National Liberation Front. Greek workers retaliated with strikes, acts of sabotage and demonstrations against the reign of terror of the occupation authorities. The beginning of the year was marked by mass actions protesting against the German-inspired compulsory labour law. More than 250,000 people went into the Athens streets on March 5, driving off the police, gaining control of the Labour Ministry building and destroying the lists of people proscribed for shipment to Germany. Demonstrations took place throughout the country. The mass protests compelled the Germans to repeal the law. Powerful armed resistance was offered.

* The Anti-Fascist People's Liberation Assembly was formed at the end of November 1942 by representatives of all the peoples and all anti-fascist political groups in the country.

In 1941, German newspapers reported that "Greece refuses to work". In 1943 they could have reported with equal cause that Greece was fighting. The People's Liberation Army (ELAS), 70,000 strong in the summer of 1943, gained control over nearly two-thirds of the country, authority in the liberated areas passing into the hands of the people.

The success of the Greek Resistance was so spectacular that the governments of Britain and the United States were compelled to recognise it. The Anglo-American Command in the Middle East sent the ELAS a telegram expressing gratitude. However, the British Government feared the liberation struggle. It stopped shipments of arms to ELAS in October 1943, while stepping up aid to the monarchist groups, preparing the ground for an armed intervention against a democratic victory.

The Albanians, too, intensified their resistance to Italy. In the first three months of 1943 Albanian partisans drove the occupation forces out of the districts of Conispoli, Zagorye, Mesaplicu, Malacastri, Pogon and Lunjeri. The fascist Command was spurred to action: bitter fighting broke out in the southern part of the country in June and July. Aircraft, artillery and a large force of infantry were sent against the partisans. But though the latter were compelled to retreat, the fascists fell short of their objectives. Resistance increased after the partisan detachments were fused into a National Liberation Army. Then Italy surrendered and resistance continued against the nazi forces thrusting into Albania. In autumn, the National Liberation Army of 20,000 liberated Berat, Delvina, Gjiorocastro, Peshkopia, Tepelena, Saranda and other towns and districts. Its operations diverted a nazi force of some 40,000.

Fighting also raged in nazi-ravaged Poland. The moving spirit of the Resistance was the Polish Workers' Party: since its founding in January 1942 it had worked hard to unite the country's democratic forces and organise nation-wide resistance. A partisan army, Gwardija Ludowa, was formed, launching an armed struggle.

In 1943 Gwardija Ludowa was active nearly in all parts of Poland. Its units raided police stations and gendarmeries, set fire to arms and munition dumps, flung grenades into German cinemas and clubs, and blew up railways. Battles were fought in Lublin, Kelecz and Lodz districts. There was an uprising in the Warsaw ghetto where tormented, hunger-weakened, poorly-armed men entered into unequal combat with the enemy. "These days," complained Hans Frank, Hitler's governor in Poland, "the soldier at the battle-lines is in less danger than an official in the governorship."

Polish Resistance fighters sowed terror among the nazis. Yet they could have acted more successfully if the émigré government had not restricted the Armija Krajowa* in conducting armed operations and not repulsed all proposals of the Polish Workers' Party to join forces. However, the intrigues of the reactionaries did not dampen the people's aspirations for an independent, democratic Poland.

Red Army victories made a strong impression on the anti-fascist movement in Czechoslovakia. Sabotage and strikes harassed the nazis. Workers damaged machines or put out virtually useless products. But in 1943 the accent was laid by the Communist Party on extending the armed struggle. New partisan detachments were formed in Olomouc, Ostrava, Tabor and in Moravia, under Communist leadership, the partisan movement in Slovakia grew rapidly, and underground national committees began

* Armija Krajowa—underground armed forces aligned with the London-based émigré government.

playing a leading role, gaining the support of the country's patriotic forces.

The year 1943 was marked by successes for the Resistance movement in Western and Northern Europe.

Resistance increased in France where it was led by the Communists. The Communist Party's efforts to unite all patriotic forces and make the armed struggle country-wide won it many new followers, because its policy accorded with the vital interests of the nation. The leaders of bourgeois organisations were compelled to come to terms with the Communist Party. At the end of 1942 the Communist Party and the French National Liberation Committee concluded an agreement on joint action. But the Right wing of the Resistance movement persisted in its wait-and-see attitude, linking liberation with an Allied landing, and was wholeheartedly supported in this by the British Government. In a memorandum sent to de Gaulle from London in the spring of 1943 it was bluntly stated that all steps had to be taken to "prevent the spread of the present wave of resistance".

Nothing could stop the liberation movement. The Communist Party prepared the ground for a national uprising. General directives on this score were drawn up in April 1943. A National Resistance Council was established in May, on which eight organisations were represented, supporting the Communist proposal to organise a rising.

Poles, Czechoslovaks, Italians, Spaniards and Soviet people participated in the French Resistance. Detachments were formed of Red Army officers and men who had escaped from nazi POW camps. Towards the end of 1943 the guerrilla forces totalled 200,000 men. The movement was based in the departments of Savoy, Correze, Dordogne, Henne and others. Groups of the "Secret Army"* co-operated with the guerrillas although their command endeavoured to evade direct engagements.

The strike movement, too, involved many tens of thousands of people. Opposition to the transportation of workers to Germany was very strong. Half a million Frenchmen were saved from forced labour in the Reich. The people's growing restlessness and activity, and the encouraging growth of the armed struggle indicated that it was high time to unite the fighting forces in an army under a single command. Formation of the French Home Army began at the end of the year.

In Norway, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands the people defied the nazi occupation authorities. Sabotage and strikes were the most widespread forms. Hardly a day passed but that explosions resounded on motor roads and railways, in the ports, at sluices, factories or offices. German servicemen were attacked. Fires broke out in the shipyards and warehouses. Freight cars carrying plunder to Germany were set aflame.

Transmission lines were cut and power stations put out of operation. Industrial plants stopped work. The best-known of the numerous operations by the Norwegian Resistance fighters was the destruction in Vehrmark of a factory making heavy water for atomic reactors. In Denmark 350 acts of sabotage were perpetrated in six months, or three times as many as in all 1942. In February alone, workers staged 74 strikes. In the spring of 1943 there were also mass strikes in Belgium—in the city of Liége, Charleroi, La Louviere and Mons. A wave of strikes swept Holland in April and May.

Armed action grew in scale. New partisan detachments and fighting groups came into being. Defying the wait-and-see policy of the Right-

* "Secret Army"—an armed organisation connected with de Gaulle.

wing Resistance groups pursued on recommendations from London, the Belgian, Danish and Norwegian freedom fighters took up arms more resolutely. Soon the partisans controlled large territories, as, say, in the Ardennes at the end of 1943, where they were complete masters, save of the bigger cities. The nazis described the situation in Belgium as "hell let loose" and could, for that matter, say the same thing about all the other countries. Their power was on the brink of collapse everywhere.

Not only in the occupied countries did the Red Army victories of 1943 spur the national liberation struggle. They had a strong impact on the anti-fascist movement in Germany and the countries allied with her. The fight of the German patriots against nazism and war, for a peaceful, democratic Germany was headed by the Communist Party. The Communists worked perseveringly to unite all anti-nazi forces in incredibly difficult circumstances. The underground groups were most active in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Karlsruhe, Hamburg, Munich and in Thüringia, Saxony and the Ruhr. The founding of the Free German National Committee gave the struggle strong impetus. Formed in the summer of 1943 at a conference in Krasnogorsk, near Moscow, it was attended by representatives of the German Communist Party, German trade unions and public organisations, and by German prisoners of war. Its programme called for a peaceful, democratic German state.

In Italy, too, resistance grew. Her alliance with nazi Germany had brought Italy to the brink of disaster. Immense losses in battle, hunger, a shaky economy and the fantastic state debt of 1,000,000 million liras—those were some of the results of Mussolini's reign. Strikes broke out, and a revolutionary situation quickly took shape. The Resistance movement reached its peak after Italy withdrew from the war and the northern part of the country was occupied by German troops.*

The anti-fascist movement in Bulgaria, Hungary and Rumania also increased. It was sinking in gradually among the people that a break with nazi Germany was their only hope to avert swiftly approaching disaster. Anti-war acts grew in number. There were more and more acts of sabotage. An anti-Hitler patriotic front was formed in Rumania on Communist initiative in 1943. It embraced the democratic parties and groups. In August 1943 a National Fatherland Front Committee became active in Bulgaria, and by the end of the year it headed more than 200 local committees. These were new, revolutionary organs of power, which guided the anti-fascist struggle. The Bulgarian Resistance fighters carried out more than 1,500 armed operations, and the rapid growth of the partisan detachments was soon crowned by the formation of a People's Liberation Army. The Bulgarian Workers' Party was preparing the ground for a nation-wide armed rising. In Hungary the democratic forces were also gradually coming to terms with each other.

To sum up, the anti-fascist struggle in all countries in Europe grew under the impact of the Soviet victories. Growing legitimately out of the internal contradictions in each country, it undermined the foundations of fascist domination and helped to bring nearer final victory.

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* See next section, "Other Theatres of War in 1943".

While the Soviet Armed Forces turned the tide in the Great Patriotic War, important politico-military developments also occurred elsewhere.

Red Army resistance in the summer and autumn of 1942 denied the nazis any opportunity to conduct active operations on other fronts. This benefited the Allies. In the summer of 1942 the Anglo-American Command tried to seize North Africa, planning in autumn an offensive by the British 8th Army from El-Alamein westward and a large Anglo-American landing in Morocco and Algeria. Thrusts from west and east were expected to wipe out Rommel's troops and establish control over the region.

The 8th Army, commanded by General Bernard Law Montgomery, was reinforced. By the end of October it consisted of 11 divisions (including three armoured) and four separate brigades. The divisions also included one French and one Greek division. This army's strength in Egypt was 165,000 men, with 600 tanks, 2,275 field guns and something like 1,200 aircraft. In the meantime, neither Germany nor Italy could provide replacements for Rommel's army in Africa, because all reserves were being sent to the Soviet-German front. The Italo-German panzer army, *Afrika*, consisted of the German *Afrika Korps* (two panzer and two light infantry divisions and one paratroop brigade) and three Italian corps (two tank, two motorised, five infantry and one paratroop division). This constituted a force of some 93,000 men, 470 tanks and 1,450 field guns. The Italo-German Air Force in Africa had 689 planes, of which only slightly more than half were airworthy.

On October 23, 1942, the British 8th Army began the offensive. On November 3 it completed a breakthrough in depth. To avoid total defeat, Rommel retired from Egypt, drawing back to Libya. Mussolini appealed in vain to Hitler for military aid. The Germans had their hands full elsewhere, for the Red Army had mounted its counter-offensive at Stalingrad. Suffering heavy losses, the Italo-German troops failed to stem the enemy in Libya and, rolling back, withdrew to Tunisia in February 1943, where they assumed defence positions.

On November 8-12, 1942, the Allied Command effected landings in Morocco and Algeria, then controlled by the Vichy Government. Covering 900 kilometres, the Anglo-American forces entered Tunisia towards the end of November. By that time the enemy had been reinforced with one German panzer division from France and one infantry division and a few other units from Italy. The nazi troops dug in east of the Algerian-Tunisian border with orders to hold the strategic Tunisian theatre at any price, preventing a landing in Europe.

The heads of the US and British governments tried to pass off the operations in North Africa as a second front or something very close to it. On August 14, 1942, Churchill wrote Stalin: "The best second front in 1942, and the only large-scale operation possible from the Atlantic, is Torch."* While on the eve of the Allied landing in North Africa Roosevelt described it as a help to America's heroic Allies in Russia equivalent to a second front. Certainly, this was at variance with the facts. A second front would have diverted large forces from the Soviet-German front. Actually, the Germans did not transfer a single division from the Eastern front. The Anglo-US forces were, as before, opposed by inconsiderable forces. The nazi leadership confined itself to transferring to North Africa several divisions and separate units from Italy and France.

The invasion of the French colonial possessions by the Allies was not prompted by any desire to shorten the war. The United States and Britain each pursued its own particular aims. British efforts were centred on consolidating and enlarging British possessions in North Africa and the Middle East. And the Americans were eager to elbow out their British partners wherever possible. In February 1943 the Western Allies had more than 200,000 men and 540 tanks in Northern Tunisia, while the opposing Italo-German force had over 50,000 men and 150 tanks.

In the south of Tunisia, the British 8th Army had 187,000 men and 480 tanks, while the adversary had about 100,000 men and 200 tanks. Though its superiority was overwhelming, the Anglo-US Command repeatedly postponed the deadline for completing the Tunisian operation, and conditioned the landing in Western Europe on the completion of the African campaign. Churchill wrote on July 18, 1942: "We must first beat Rommel." And on February 22, 1943, Roosevelt repeated this: "The American war effort will be projected on to the European continent ... subsequent to success in North Africa."

At last, on March 20, Montgomery ordered his 8th Army into action. A flanking manoeuvre compelled the Italo-German panzer army *Afrika* to draw back further. Yet at the beginning of April it was still in control of a large part of Tunisia with a 200-km front 140 kilometres deep. It was not until May 6 that the Anglo-Americans mounted a fresh offensive. Pounded by Allied aircraft, the enemy withdrew hastily to Bon Peninsula, hoping to evacuate to Sicily. However, on discovering that ships and boats were lacking, the Italo-German Command surrendered on May 13.

Further Allied action developed in keeping with the Casablanca Conference decisions, envisaging a strong effort against Sicily after the African operation. The increasingly tense situation in Italy due to the defeat in Africa and the setbacks on the Soviet-German front compelled the Anglo-American Command posthaste to endorse, in May 1943, an Allied landing in that country. The US and British governments were aware that the people of Italy wanted peace, rebelling against the official policy that had brought on the war. They could not help seeing that discontent was rife in the Italian Army. This process was gathering momentum, particularly after the return to Italy of the remnants of the Italian 8th Army smashed in the Don area in December 1942. Popular hatred spread also against the nazis, who behaved in Italy as though she were a conquered land. These factors brought home to the Anglo-Americans that they must not delay.

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* Torch—code name for the Anglo-American operation in North Africa.

The Allied Command assigned for the landing in Sicily the 15th Army Group, consisting of the US 7th and British 8th armies (13 divisions and 600 tanks), supported by 4,000 combat and 900 transport aircraft and more than 3,000 vessels of different types. The island defences were manned by the Italian 6th Army of 11 divisions (nine Italian and two German), 150 tanks and 240 aircraft.

The landing began at dawn on July 10. The Italo-German troops offered no serious resistance. Most of the Italian divisions surrendered without a shot in the first few days. The German divisions withdrew to the Messina Straits and were shipped across to the southern shore of the Apennine Peninsula on August 17.

Important political developments unfolded in Italy. Industrial and financial circles, eager to retain their grip on the country, entered into a compact with the monarchy to get rid of Mussolini, the head of the fascist government, by means of a "palace coup". Mussolini was arrested on July 25 and replaced by Marshal Badoglio, a monarchist choice backed by the big bourgeoisie. On the following day, Badoglio telegraphed Berlin that the war would continue. He was eager to preserve a fascist regime and prevent popular action.

But his efforts were in vain. The Communist Party of Italy, the only party that had fought fascism from the outset, foiled his plan. By the autumn of 1942 underground Communist cells existed nearly in all the main industrial enterprises. In February 1943 the newspaper *l'Unita*, the central organ of the Communist Party, urged all people to join the armed struggle for peace and freedom. A National Action Front was set up in March, in which the Italian Communists played a vanguard role. Anti-fascist and anti-war demonstrations and meetings swept the country in March and April 1943. Strikes were staged in Milan and Turin, which rank among the biggest industrial centres in the north of Italy. Most of the bourgeois anti-fascist groups dreaded revolution and appealed to the population to wait for liberation by the Anglo-Americans. The Communist Party, on the other hand, launched preparations for a country-wide uprising. The day after Mussolini's arrest, on the initiative of the Communist Party an extra issue of *l'Unita* published an appeal by all anti-fascist parties calling for the complete uprooting of fascism, the revival of all democratic freedoms and a stop forthwith to all military action. Strikes and demonstrations under these slogans took place in Northern and Central Italy.

The Anglo-US success in North Africa, and especially in Sicily, the increasing resistance of the Italians to fascism and the Battle of the Kursk Salient, disastrous for the nazis, compelled the Badoglio Government to conclude an armistice with the Allied Command on September 3. On the same day the British 8th Army landed in the south of Italy and, meeting little or no resistance, advanced northward.

In a counter-move, the German High Command reinforced its troops in Italy, occupying a larger part of the country and disarming the Italian Armed Forces almost everywhere. The Germans formed a fascist government in the occupied areas and put Mussolini, whom they had rescued from gaol, at its head again. At the beginning of September, the German forces in Italy consisted of as many as 18 divisions, formed into two army groups, South and B.*

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* At the beginning of November 1943, Army Group South was renamed Army Group C, consisting of the 10th and 14th armies, while Army Group B was disbanded.

The US 5th Army landed unobstructed at Salerno on September 9. On September 23 it began pressing the enemy northward slowly. Before November the Germans withdrew to previously prepared lines north of Naples. On November 5 the British 8th and US 5th armies moved forward to contact the enemy. In November and December the Allied forces made several attempts to breach the German defences and advance to Rome. However, despite superior strength, they failed and assumed the defensive towards the end of December. The Anglo-US offensive of 1943 ended.

In the autumn the Communist Party of Italy began to translate into practice the plan of an armed rising. On its initiative a National Liberation Committee was formed on September 9 to lead Italy's anti-fascist forces. Local committees appeared throughout the country. The Communist Party played a leading role in launching the armed struggle against the nazi occupation forces. Many Soviet people who had escaped from nazi POW camps fought shoulder to shoulder with the Italian freedom fighters. More than 100 Red Army officers and men joined the Garibaldi Brigade, whose banner now reposes in a Soviet museum. Luigi Longo and P. Seccia, members of the Italian Communist Party Central Committee, stood at the head of the first Garibaldi guerrilla units. The partisan movement became nation-wide.

To sum up, in 1943 the Allies gained complete control over North Africa and occupied the southern part of Italy. Italy withdrew from the war and her Army ceased to exist. The situation could not have been more favourable for a decisive Anglo-American offensive. But, as before, the Western Allies were not inclined to open a second front.

Hitler's Far Eastern partner, imperialist Japan, which had achieved her strategic aims in the Pacific in 1942, continued to consolidate her political control over the occupied East and Southeast Asian countries. To be sure, Japan's successes were insecure. By and large, the politico-military situation in the Pacific had swung against the Japanese aggressors. Tokyo had underestimated the military and economic potential of the United States and Britain. At a rapid rate, the USA built up tremendous strength in the Pacific theatre. Towards the end of 1942, together with its British ally, the United States gained superiority in strength. In November, President Roosevelt was able to report: "We are in the Southwestern Pacific with very heavy forces by air, land and sea."

The situation in the Japanese-occupied East and Southeast Asian countries, too, boded ill for Tokyo. Its colonialist policy was bitterly resisted. The national liberation struggle grew for domestic reasons and, in large measure, under the impact of the Red Army victories. In China, Korea, Vietnam, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines the peoples fought for freedom. And it was the Communist Parties there that stood in the van, inspiring and organising resistance. They organised the guerrilla forces into united national fronts. For the Japanese, the resumption of active operations by the people's revolutionary armies of China (the 8th and 4th New armies) was particularly alarming. Together with the partisan groups, these two armies liberated areas populated by 80 million in 1943 and compelled the Japanese Command to keep 26 divisions and 11 separate brigades in China.

In 1943 the politico-military situation in the Pacific began to improve for the United States and Britain. The Allied Command was now able to launch offensive operations with far-reaching objectives. At the beginning of 1943 Roosevelt and Churchill informed the Soviet Government that "in the Pacific it is our intention to eject the Japanese from

Rabaul within the next few months and thereafter to exploit the success in the general direction of Japan". But that did not take place. Actually, in 1943 the Anglo-US Command confined itself to capturing the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, from where it began an advance in the South-western Pacific.

The advance "in the general direction of Japan" was thus planned from points several thousand kilometres away, with the main objectives of but little strategic importance. In 1943 the Americans captured the Solomon Islands, the southeastern part of New Guinea, the western part of New Britain and the Gilbert Islands, which, of course, was not enough to weaken Japan to any significant extent. All the same, for the first time since the beginning of the war she was faced with the stark prospect of losing all she had so spectacularly won in the Pacific theatre.

THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE WAR

A BRIEF SUMMARY

The second period of the Great Patriotic War which began in November 1942 ended on a note of triumph in December 1943. Despite the absence of a second front in Western Europe, the tide in the war had turned. The turn began with the Soviet counter-offensive at Stalingrad and culminated in the victories of the summer-autumn campaign. Delivering its blow at Stalingrad in the winter of 1942-43, the Red Army regained the strategic initiative (which it had first won at Moscow) and strengthened its grip in the Battle of the Kursk Salient.

In contrast to the first period, when the Red Army was compelled mostly to retreat and fight defensive actions, it was now solidly on the offensive. As for the defence at the Kursk Salient, that had been deliberate, and the counter-offensive that followed ended in a brilliant victory for the Red Army. For their part, the nazis had no choice but to assume strategic defence, hoping to stabilise the front and maintain their hold on the Ukraine east of the Dnieper. However, the Soviet armies foiled their plan and pushed on westward.

Between November 1942 and December 1943 the Red Army advanced 500 to 1,300 kilometres in the south, liberating 46.2 per cent of Soviet territory occupied by the enemy in 1941 and 1942 with a pre-war population of more than 41 million. In the course of two years (from December 1941 to December 1943) the Red Army liberated 53 per cent of the territory seized by the enemy with a population of nearly 46 million.

In the second period, the Soviet Army defeated 218 divisions, of which 56 were totally wiped out, captured or dissolved, and 162 were badly mauled, with many reduced to a condition where they had to be withdrawn and reactivated. The most experienced officers of the Wehrmacht were killed. In this period the enemy lost nearly 7,000 tanks (excluding assault guns), 14,300 aircraft and almost 50,000 field guns. To replace the losses, some 75 German divisions were transferred to the Soviet-German front from the West.

The Soviet Navy was considerably more active in 1943, covering the Army's flanks against attack from the sea, landing troops on enemy-held shores, guarding external and internal communications and attacking nazi shipping. As a result, nazi Germany lost 296 ships of various classes. In bitter fighting with the enemy Soviet sailors discharged their duty to their country.

The Soviet Air Force played a distinguished part and in 1943 won control of the air.

The partisan movement went from strength to strength. The partisans were twice as many as the year before and their detachments had power

enough for devastating blows. What distinguished the partisan movement in 1943 was its numerical strength, efficient organisation, sense of purpose and greater tactical skill. This enabled GHQ to assign to the partisans in the strategic offensives increasingly larger and more important tasks.

The underground fought valiantly in the occupied western and north-western parts of the Russian Federation, in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic area and Moldavia. It foiled the measures planned by the occupation authorities and harassed the rear of the nazi armies. The Communists stood at the head of the underground, inspiring the people behind the enemy lines to resist.

As in the first period, the Soviet-German front was the main and decisive theatre of the Second World War. The nazi Command massed its main forces there, and the withdrawal of a large number of German divisions from the West to the East made the task of the Allies in Italy much easier.

The nazi defeats weakened Germany. There was a shortage of manpower. Industry worked under tremendous strain. The anti-fascist forces in the country gained heart. The feeling that victory could not be won spread far and wide. A section of the ruling element arrived at the conclusion that a separate peace with the United States and Britain was vital.

Towards the end of the second period the crisis in the nazi bloc, which had begun after the Stalingrad defeat, grew still more acute. Italy surrendered. The situation in Rumania, Hungary and Finland became more precarious: their peoples demanded an end to the war that had brought them nothing but hunger, destruction and death. Their rulers were obviously inclined to capitulate. The neutral countries, too, modified their attitude. Sweden and Turkey reduced their economic co-operation with the nazi bloc. In France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece and other European countries the national liberation movement gained added impetus. National fronts were formed to fight fascism. Partisan units gradually grew into people's liberation armies, whose military operations increased in scale.

The Red Army's victories evidenced the might of the socialist state, the solidity of the Soviet peoples and their unity round the Communist Party. The Party guided and inspired the officers and men on the battle-lines and the workers in the factories. Loyalty to the Party was marked strikingly by its rapid expansion. In 1942 alone, the accession in candidate membership amounted to 1,368,000, and in 1943 to 1,787,000.

A radical improvement was achieved in the civilian war effort by dint of the heroic contribution of the people and the organisational ability of the Communist Party. The war industries expanded. Arms production increased tangibly over that in the first period of the war: by 69 per cent for aircraft, 31 per cent for tanks and self-propelled guns, and 60 per cent for artillery ammunition. All things considered, it was a magnificent feat.

Firm trust in early victory prompted the Soviet people to rebuild war-demolished factories and looted farms while the bitter fighting continued. In 1943 the Government and the Party Central Committee adopted important decisions on economic rehabilitation in liberated areas, and good headway was made in putting them into effect. In the last three months of the year industries in the liberated territory produced 6,500,000 tons of coal, 15,000 tons of oil and 172 million kwh of electric power. The whole country helped the collective and state farms to get back on their feet. Houses, schools, university buildings and hospitals were restored or built anew. By the end of the year the people in nine regions and terri-

10. OPERATIONS IN 3 RD PERIOD OF THE WAR Dec. 1943–May 1945


10. OPERATIONS IN 3 RD PERIOD OF THE WAR Dec. 1943–May 1945
NORTHERN SECTOR
KARELIAN FRONT
LENINGRAD FRONT
BALTIC FLEET
VOLKHOV FRONT (as of Feb. 14)
2nd BALTIC FRONT
1st BALTIC FRONT
WESTERN FRONT (3rd BYELORUSSIAN FRONT as of Apr.24)
2nd BYELORUSSIAN FRONT (as of Apr.23)
BYELORUSSIAN FRONT (1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT as of Feb.24)
1st UKRAINIAN FRONT
2nd UKRAINIAN FRONT
3rd UKRAINIAN FRONT
4th UKRAINIAN FRONT
BLACK SEA FLEET
FINNISH TROOPS
GERMAN NAVY
ARMY GROUP F
BULGARIAN TROOPS
ALBANIAN TROOPS
Line by Dec. 1943
Soviet attacks in winter campaign, end of 1943 to May 12, 1944
Line by mid-June 1944
Soviet attacks in summer and autumn 1944
Line by end of 1944
Soviet attacks in final campaign, Jan.1,1945 – end of war in Europe
Line of contact for Soviet and Allied troops at end of war
Attacks by Polish, Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Albanian troops
8.V 1945 Signing of Surrender Instrument
km 100 0 100 200 300 km

tories of the Russian Federation from which the nazis had been driven out built some 327,000 houses with Government aid.

The international situation of the Soviet Union improved, its prestige in the world grew considerably. This was borne out, among other things, by the Moscow and Teheran conferences, and, particularly, by the decision reached at Teheran on opening the second front in May 1944.

The military victories in the second period were evidence of grown strength. Seventy-eight infantry divisions were either formed anew or reformed from infantry brigades and other units. Infantry corps commands were reinstituted, 126 of them being activated in 1943. By the end of 1943 the Red Army had five tank armies, 24 tank and 13 motorised corps, 80 separate tank brigades, and 106 separate tank and 43 self-propelled artillery regiments. The tank armies facilitated deep, effective ground operations. Artillery, too, was greatly improved. Towards the end of the second period it consisted of six artillery corps, 26 artillery divisions, seven Guards rocket launcher divisions, 20 separate artillery and 11 mortar brigades, 50 anti-tank artillery brigades and 140 regiments.

By July 1943 the Army had 2-2.5 times as many automatic weapons as at the beginning of the period, nearly twice as many anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns and almost twice as many tanks and aircraft. So equipped, the troops could breach rapidly the deep positional defences of the enemy and develop success by swift offensive action.

Encouraged by their victories and the support of the nation, the soldiers fought with peerless skill and dedication. Each battle created new heroes. From October 1942 to April 1943 some 420,000 officers and men were decorated with Orders and medals, and as many as 797,000 from April to October.

A structural reorganisation of Party and Komsomol groups in the Army enhanced the influence of Communists at all levels. The Party's political work centred chiefly on the slogan advanced by the Central Committee: "Forward, rout the German invaders and drive them out of the country!"

The victories of the second period were evidence of the further growth of Soviet military science. Rapidly developing strategic offensives highlighted strategy. In the two campaigns of the period, strategic offensives developed from counter-offensives, and the general offensive from a succession of operations along the front and in depth, usually by a group of fronts.

Questions of organisation and the breaching of enemy defences, the depth of which had been considerably increased, were solved with the utmost success in the context of operational art. Manoeuvring after completing a breach was raised to an art. Improved organisation of armoured and motorised troops and their better use in combat in co-operation with other arms and air played an important part in these developments. Soviet troops learned to encircle and destroy large enemy concentrations, and to force powerful natural barriers such as rivers and lakes, doing it, as a rule, on the march and along large frontages. Though the accent lay on offensives, the Red Army also carried out defensive operations in some directions. The distinctive feature of Soviet defence in that period was the deep disposition of front and army formations, coupled with intensive activity.

Red Army tactics, too, improved, characterised by determined action, manoeuvrability and the massing of forces and means in the area of the main thrust. In the summer of 1943 the troops adopted deep dispositioning, as a result of which the attack frontage and the breaching areas were

narrowed while tactical density increased. Dispositioning in depth was also applied in defence. Engineers adapted the terrain accordingly, covering the tactical zone of defence with a system of interconnected trenches running the whole length and breadth of the front.

Soviet military art was continuously perfected, basing itself on the development of technical resources, greater combat tempering and the prowess of the Red Army soldier.

In 1943 the Red Army inflicted tremendous losses on the enemy. According to German High Command figures casualties of the ground forces alone (exclusive of the satellite armies) exceeded 5,188,000 men from June 1941 to November 1943. Considering the casualties suffered by the Luftwaffe and the German Navy, it was clear that Germany could not recover from these losses and was on the brink of disaster. As a result of the Red Army victories, a radical turn was accomplished in the Great Patriotic War and the entire course of the Second World War changed in favour of the anti-fascist coalition.

Part IV

COLLAPSE OF NAZI GERMANY

Chapter Twelve

RED ARMY OFFENSIVE IN THE WINTER AND SPRING OF 1944

1. BEFORE THE OFFENSIVE

The grimmest period of the war was now far behind, gone was the year of the turning point. A new, third period was beginning, the period of the enemy's final expulsion from Soviet territory, the liberation of the oppressed European peoples and the collapse of nazi Germany.

The Soviet Union's war-time economy had been further strengthened by the beginning of 1944. Industry was steadily increasing its supply of combat equipment for the Armed Forces. The collective farms were supplying the Red Army and the population with food. Transport was coping with the increasing volume of transportation of troops, munitions and civilian freight. Rehabilitation was started in the liberated areas.

The country was gripped by patriotic enthusiasm, which was mirrored in the intensive labour and political activity of the people. More voluntary donations flowed into the defence fund and assistance to the families of the men at the front was increased.

But the enemy was still strong and a bitter struggle lay ahead. Germany had vast resources for the conduct of the war. In 1943, compared with the preceding year, she more than doubled her output of artillery (75-mm guns and larger), medium and heavy tanks, and aircraft (fighter and attack aircraft).

Strong as Germany was, her economic and political insolvency was becoming more and more pronounced. Her output of armaments and ammunition lagged behind the level reached in the Soviet Union. The nazi propaganda machine, despite its vast arsenal of lies, was unable to conceal the setbacks at the front. A political crisis was maturing. Dissatisfaction with the nazi regime and the war was spreading among the people. The number of anti-fascist organisations grew steadily. The Communist Party became active in uniting the patriotic elements of the German people. Fear of the Red Army was mounting among the monopolists, members of the General Staff, the officers and government officials. An opposition that plotted an attempt on Hitler's life sprang up in the ruling class.

International developments were likewise unfavourable to Germany. Instead of being rent from within, as the nazis hoped, the anti-fascist coalition became more close-knit than ever before. This was borne out primarily by the above-mentioned decision of the Teheran Conference to land Allied troops in Northern France. The Resistance was rapidly gaining momentum in the occupied European countries. The anti-fascist strug-

gle was mounting even in the satellite countries, and popular armed uprisings were becoming imminent in some of them.

On the Soviet-German front—the decisive theatre of the Second World War—the situation was likewise favourable to the Red Army.

Towards the beginning of 1944 the army in the field had 6,165,000 officers and men, 88,900 field guns and mortars, 2,167 rocket launchers, nearly 4,900 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 8,500 aircraft. The fronts consisted of 461 divisions, 80 separate infantry, motorised infantry and tank brigades, 32 fortified areas and 23 tank and motorised corps. A large partisan army was fighting the invaders behind the enemy lines.

The German Command had at its disposal 317 divisions and eight brigades, of which 198 divisions and six brigades were on the Soviet-German front. In addition, it had under it 38 divisions and 18 brigades from the satellite countries. Although the German Armed Forces had somewhat diminished, their strength was still formidable. The operating armies had 6,682,000 effectives, of whom 4,200,000 or 63 per cent were on the Soviet-German front. The satellite armies had more than 706,000 effectives in the field. Altogether, on the Eastern front the enemy had 4,906,000 effectives, over 54,000 field guns and mortars, 5,400 tanks and assault guns and 3,000 aircraft. This was a huge fighting machine, but it ceded superiority to the Soviet Armed Forces.

However, contrary to the assertions of beaten nazi generals and some falsifiers of history, this superiority, although incontestable, was not overwhelming.

General Headquarters planned to start the 1944 winter campaign with an offensive along a vast front extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The main blow was to be struck in the Southwestern theatre with the objective of smashing the huge army groups South and A and liberating the Crimea and the entire territory of the Ukraine west of the Dnieper. Another major component of the plan was the offensive prepared in the Northwestern theatre, where the objective was to crush Army Group North and break the siege of Leningrad. In the Western theatre it was planned to rout Army Group Centre and drive it out of a considerable portion of Byelorussia (Map 10).

The strategic plan of the German Command was set forth in a report from Fieldmarshal Wilhelm Keitel, the Wehrmacht Chief of Staff. The basic points were: "Doggedly contest every inch of ground in the East"; repulse the Anglo-Saxon landing in Northern France; and then seize the initiative and with "the released troops secure a victorious outcome of the war". The nazis continued to regard the Eastern front as the major theatre and planned to concentrate troops in the sectors where they believed the Red Army would strike. Hitler's Headquarters had limited reserves and the army group commanders were, therefore, ordered to create reserves from the armoured troops at their disposal. It was hoped that by manoeuvring these reserves and air strength, the army groups would stop the Soviet offensive.

Like a mirror, this plan reflected the adventurism of Hitler's strategy and the self-assurance of the German generals. The idea of seizing the initiative and winning the war was completely at variance with the real situation. Keitel himself did not believe the plan could be carried out. By this time, as he later admitted, he was convinced that Germany could not win the war, but like many other German generals he still hoped for a split in the anti-fascist coalition which would allow Germany to come to terms with the USA and Britain and end the war.

In planning long-term defence far from Germany's frontiers, the Ger-

man Command, as always, fatally overestimated its own strength and underestimated the potentialities of the Red Army. It would seem that with the nazi strategic defence having only just suffered a heavy defeat on the Dnieper the nazis should have realised that the Red Army would not let them stay entrenched on occupied Soviet territory.

2. BATTLES AT LENINGRAD AND NOVGOROD*

The situation in Leningrad improved markedly after the siege was breached in January 1943. Nonetheless, Leningrad was still a front-line city with the enemy at its gates. German aircraft systematically raided the city, and heavy artillery shelled residential neighbourhoods. This bombardment killed 16,747 and wounded 33,782 civilians.

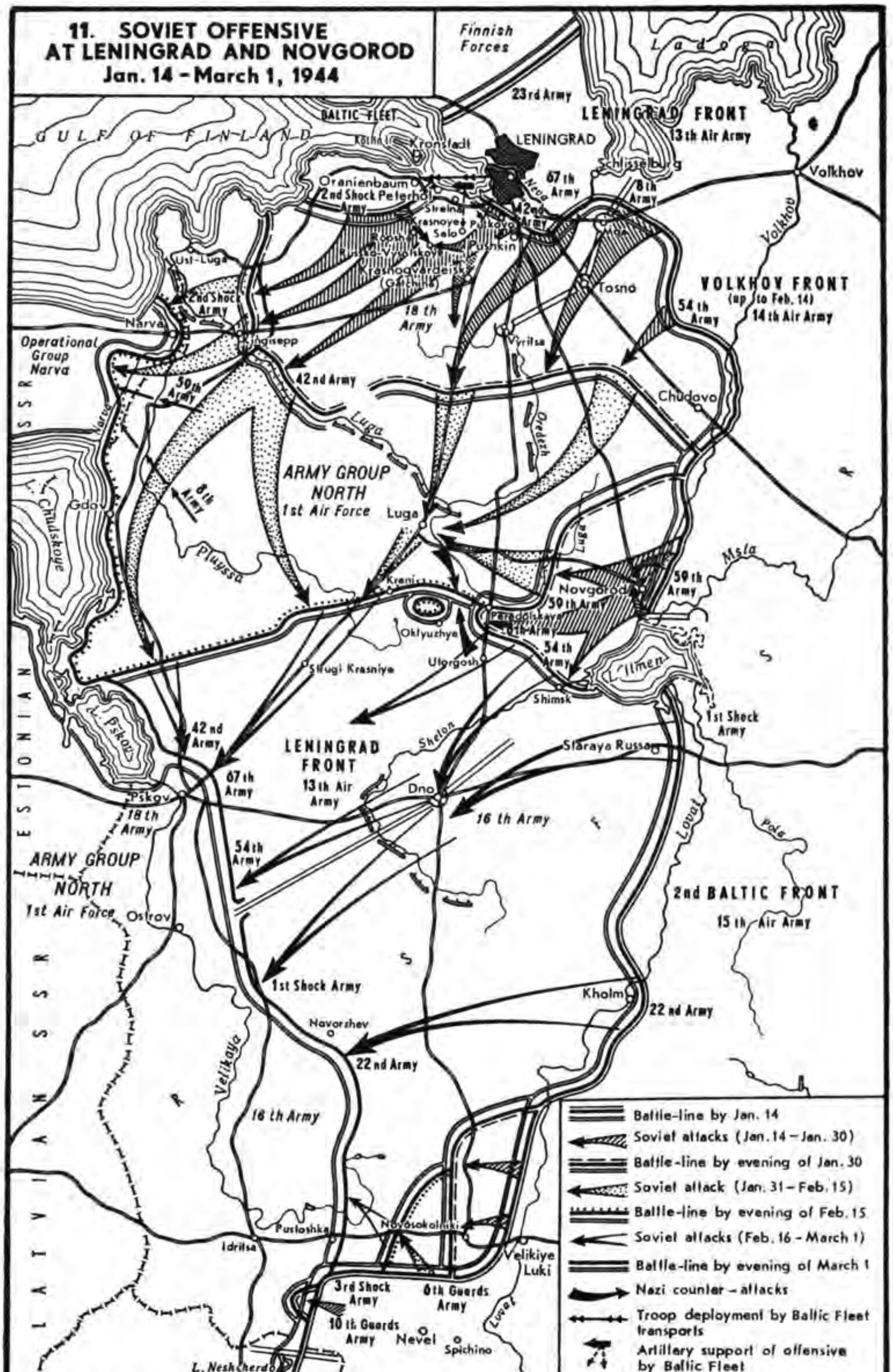
Barbarous as this shelling was, it failed to demoralise the city's population. Under stern front-line conditions the city of Lenin continued to gain strength, the people setting an example of patriotism, staunchness and superb organisation.

The City Committee of the Communist Party (secretaries—A. A. Zhdanov, A. A. Kuznetsov, Y. F. Kapustin) and the City Soviet of Working People's Deputies (Chairman—P. S. Popkov) were the fighting headquarters and soul of Leningrad. Under their leadership, the people worked with unbounded enthusiasm, standing at their posts like soldiers. The industrial plan of the last three months of 1943 was fulfilled and labour productivity soared. In 1943 there was a sharp increase in the output of ammunition, chiefly for heavy artillery. More automatic weapons were being produced. The city was now fully satisfying the Leningrad Front with machine-guns and submachine-guns and also creating a reserve of these weapons. The emulation drive to economise on fuel and electric power continued as did the drive to prepare the houses for the winter. Some 7,000 houses were repaired by the people themselves. At the state farms, ancillary husbandries and individual kitchen-gardens the people of Leningrad grew and harvested 134,000 tons of potatoes and vegetables.

At the beginning of 1944 Leningrad was on the right flank of the firing lines. In the preceding year the city had accumulated strength and power and its population now looked forward to the day of reckoning for their grief, suffering, blood, tears and wounds. That day was steadily drawing nearer.

Resistance to the invaders was growing stiffer in the occupied part of Leningrad Region. The invaders wreaked vengeance on the civilian population for their failure to capture Leningrad. They demolished towns and villages, deported civilians to hard labour camps in Germany and confiscated machines, grain, livestock and household articles. This violence only deepened the people's hatred of them. Heartened by the victories of the Red Army, more and more people joined the partisans. In early 1944 the number of partisans operating in Leningrad Region reached 35,000. They were formed into 13 brigades. Before the start of the Red Army's

* On December 24, 1943, the 1st Ukrainian Front launched its Zhitomir-Berdichev operation, which started the campaign of the winter of 1944. Before dealing with the mammoth battle west of the Dnieper in the Ukraine, we will describe the operations in the vicinity of Leningrad and Novgorod. This sequence is dictated by the need to emphasise the great political, military and moral significance of the lifting of the Leningrad siege and also to give an integral picture of the fighting in the Ukraine west of the Dnieper and in the Crimea.


11. SOVIET OFFENSIVE AT LENINGRAD AND NOVGOROD
Jan. 14 - March 1, 1944
Finnish Forces
Ladoga
23rd Army
LENINGRAD FRONT
13th Air Army
BALTIC FLEET
GULF OF FINLAND
Kronstadt
LENINGRAD
Schlisselburg
Volkhov
Oranienbaum
2nd Shock Army
Peterhof
67th Army
8th Army
42nd Army
Neva
Pushkin
Tosno
VOLKHOV FRONT
(up to Feb. 14)
14th Air Army
54th Army
Ust-Luga
2nd Shock Army
Narva
18th Army
Vyritsa
Operational Group Narva
59th Army
42nd Army
Chudovo
Luga
Oredezh
ARMY GROUP NORTH
1st Air Force
8th Army
Gdov
L. Chudskoye
Plyussa
Luga
Msta
Novgorod
59th Army
Oktyuzhye
Utorgosh
54th Army
Strugi Krasniye
Shimsk
L. Ilmen
1st Shock Army
L. Pskov
42nd Army
LENINGRAD FRONT
13th Air Army
Shelon
Staraya Russa
67th Army
Dno
Pskov
18th Army
16th Army
54th Army
Lovat
Pola
ARMY GROUP NORTH
1st Air Force
Ostrov
2nd BALTIC FRONT
15th Air Army
1st Shock Army
Kholm
22nd Army
Novorzhev
22nd Army
Velikaya
16th Army
Pustoshka
Novosokolniki
Idritsa
Velikiye Luki
3rd Shock Army
6th Guards Army
10th Guards Army
Nevel
Spichino
L. Neshcherdo
ESTONIAN S.S.R.
LATVIAN S.S.R.
BYELORUSSIAN S.S.R.
Battle-line by Jan. 14
Soviet attacks (Jan. 14 - Jan. 30)
Battle-line by evening of Jan. 30
Soviet attack (Jan. 31 - Feb. 15)
Battle-line by evening of Feb. 15
Soviet attacks (Feb. 16 - March 1)
Battle-line by evening of March 1
Nazi counter-attacks
Troop deployment by Baltic Fleet transports
Artillery support of offensive by Baltic Fleet
km 20 0 20 40 60 km

offensive, the main partisan forces were harassing enemy communications around Gdov, Pskov, Strugi Krasniye and Luga.

The German Army Group North (18th and 16th armies) under Field-marshal Georg von Küchler operated at Leningrad and Novgorod. It had 741,000 officers and men, 10,070 field guns and mortars, 385 tanks and assault guns, and 370 aircraft. In the course of 30 months it had built up a strong system of defences, which included reinforced-concrete and wood-and-earth weapon emplacements protected by mine-fields and barbed-wire entanglements.

The Red Army offensive at Leningrad and Novgorod, planned as early as September 1943, was painstakingly prepared. It was decided to commit the Leningrad, Volkhov and 2nd Baltic fronts, supported by the Baltic Fleet, long-range aircraft and partisans. These fronts had 1,241,000 officers and men, 21,600 field guns and mortars, 1,475 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 1,500 aircraft.

Here the plan was that the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts would first rout the enemy 18th Army's flank, Peterhof-Strelna and Novgorod, groups, then advance towards Kingisepp and Luga, complete the rout of the 18th Army and reach the Luga River. Following this operation, all three fronts were to advance towards Narva, Pskov and Idritsa, defeat the 16th Army and liberate the whole of Leningrad and Kalinin regions.

Extensive Party and political work was started among the troops on the eve of the offensive. Many high-ranking officials of the Party regional and city committees were drawn into this work.

The Leningrad Front (commander—General L. A. Govorov; member of the Military Council—General A. A. Zhdanov) started the offensive on January 14, 1944. The 2nd Strike Army under General I. I. Fedyuninsky attacked the enemy from the Oranienbaum bridgehead in the direction of Ropsha. On January 15 the battle was joined by the 42nd Army under General I. I. Maslennikov advancing from the Pulkovo Heights also with Ropsha as its objective (Map 11).

The Germans put up a fierce resistance and every strongpoint had to be taken at the cost of great effort and sacrifice. On January 19 Ropsha was taken by the 2nd Strike Army, supported by the Baltic Fleet, and Krasnoye Selo by the 42nd Army. The enemy group at Peterhof-Strelna was smashed towards nightfall of the same day. Advance units of both these armies made contact near Russko-Vysotskoye.

With its aircraft, guns and shore batteries, the Baltic Fleet (commander —Admiral V. F. Tributs; member of the Military Council—Admiral N. K. Smirnov) covered the Leningrad Front's sea flank and helped it to breach the enemy's defences and destroy his artillery groups.

Events moved with similar rapidity near Novgorod. The Volkhov Front (commander—General K. A. Meretskov; member of the Military Council —General T. F. Shtykov) also began its offensive on January 14. General I. T. Korovnikov's 59th Army displayed great fortitude and skill in breaching the enemy's defences in a forest swamp. This army's southern group, commanded by General T. A. Sviklin, was particularly successful. In the night of January 13-14 it secretly crossed the icebound Lake Ilmen and captured a bridgehead. In order to close the breach made by Soviet troops, the enemy transferred reserves to Novgorod and counter-attacked. But all his efforts were in vain. Novgorod was liberated on January 20.

Thus with the support of the Baltic Fleet and long-range aircraft the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts crushed the German 18th Army's flank groups and cleared the ground for an offensive along the entire front from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ilmen. In the night of January 20-21,

fearing encirclement, the 18th Army began to withdraw from the salient east of Tosno-Chudovo. The Leningrad Front developed its offensive in the direction of Kingisepp and Krasnogvardeisk. On January 30 its troops reached the Luga River in its lower course and crossed it at several points. The Volkhov Front advanced in the direction of Luga and Shimsk. Towards the close of January troops of this Front's right wing and centre captured the Oktyabrskaya Railway, while troops of the left wing, in co-operation with partisan units, seized Peredolskaya Station.

In the latter half of January the 2nd Baltic Front (commander—General M. M. Popov; member of the Military Council—General N. A. Bulganin) pinned down the German 16th Army, preventing it from transferring troops to the area round Leningrad and Novgorod. On January 29 troops of this Front's left wing captured the railway station and town of Novosokolniki.

These offensives hurled the enemy back from Leningrad, and the salute that illumined the sky over the city announced to the whole world that the siege had been finally and irrevocably broken. This was a great victory. The poet Nikolai Tikhonov gives us a description of this unforgettable day: "People wept and laughed with happiness, as with shining eyes they watched the lights of the salute wrest their unconquerable city from the darkness—the spire of the Peter and Paul Cathedral, the old fortress, the esplanades, the Admiralty, St. Isaac's Cathedral, the warships in the Neva, the Nevsky Prospekt."

The Soviet offensive was sustained in the course of the first half of February. The main forces of the Leningrad Front advanced on Narva and Gdov, while its 67th Army, commanded by General V. P. Sviridov, moved towards the town of Luga. On February 1 the 2nd Strike Army forced the Luga River and captured Kingisepp. On the 3rd it reached the Narva River and established a bridgehead. The 42nd Army fought its way across the Luga River south of Kingisepp and on February 4 entered the town of Gdov, which had earlier been liberated by partisans. The Volkhov Front slowly advanced towards Luga from the east.

With the 18th Army unable to stem the Soviet advance, the Germans hastily began to transfer divisions from other sectors of the front to Luga. At the beginning of February they managed to build up a strong group around the town. From Luga and Utorgosh they launched a series of counter-attacks and on February 3 surrounded units of two Soviet divisions and a partisan regiment west of Peredolskaya Station. But they failed to destroy the encircled Soviet force. Under Colonel A. G. Koziyev, commander of the 256th Division, it fought gallantly for two weeks, until the main forces came up.

In the vicinity of Luga bitter fighting raged day and night. On February 12, as a result of an outflanking manoeuvre, Soviet troops annihilated the enemy Luga group and captured the town. By nightfall of February 15 troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts* reached the line running from the Narva River, north of Lake Pskov, to the towns of Kreni and Shimsk.

The retreating 18th Army faced the threat of annihilation, and the 16th Army likewise found itself in a dangerous situation. The German Command ordered the withdrawal of the 16th Army to the west. Its withdrawal was not noted in time by the command of the 2nd Baltic Front

* On February 15, due to the considerable shortening of the firing lines in this theatre, GHQ dissolved the Volkhov Front, transferring its forces to the Leningrad and 2nd Baltic fronts.

with the result that the pursuit was started belatedly. On February 18 troops of this Front occupied Staraya Russa and three days later—the town of Kholm.

On February 22 GHQ set the new task of completing the destruction of Army Group North and commencing the liberation of the Soviet Baltic republics. The Leningrad Front entered Estonia and widened its bridgehead west of the Narva River. Its left flank continued pursuing the enemy in the direction of Pskov, and, together with the 1st Strike Army of the 2nd Baltic Front, which was moving on the heels of the enemy in the direction of Ostrov, captured the important railway junction of Dno on February 24. At the close of February both fronts got as far as the area east of Pskov and Ostrov, troops of the 2nd Baltic Front's left wing reaching the Novorzhev-Pustoshka line. Fierce enemy resistance compelled the armies to halt at the approaches to the frontier of Soviet Latvia.

There had been heavy, continuous fighting for more than six weeks. This taxed the troops physically and morally. The bad weather—thaw, mists and blizzards—added to the difficulties. At the close of February the Soviet troops began to experience a shortage of ammunition and weapons. Moreover, they required reinforcements. On March 1 GHQ ordered the fronts to dig in and prepare for new operations.

The Soviet offensive of January-February at Leningrad and Novgorod ended in victory. The Red Army inflicted a telling defeat on Army Group North, hurling it 220-280 kilometres to the west and destroying three and routing 17 divisions. "The Leningrad victory," M. I. Kalinin said, "is important not only to Leningrad but also to the entire course of the Soviet people's struggle against the German invaders."

This victory was won in hard-fought battles by troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov and 2nd Baltic fronts. A large contribution was made by the Baltic Fleet, the long-range bomber units and the Leningrad partisans. A prominent part in preparing the operation was played by the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, which skilfully and secretly transported troops and equipment of the 2nd Strike Army to the Oranienbaum bridgehead despite heavy ice. Soviet airmen gave the land forces and fleet reliable cover, attacking the enemy's defences and reserves. In January and February the 13th and 14th Air armies under Generals S. D. Rybalchenko and I. P. Zhuravlev flew nearly 13,000 sorties, while airmen of the Baltic Fleet (commander—M. I. Samokhin) flew close to 4,500 missions.

The advancing troops received considerable assistance from the partisans. Operating against the enemy's communication lines, they blew up more than 58,000 rails and 300 bridges and derailed over 130 troop trains. During the offensive they co-operated with Red Army units, jointly with them and independently engaging in battle for towns and villages and attacking enemy transports and individual units. Some 5,000 of the people's avengers were decorated with Orders and medals. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred on, among others, N. G. Vasilyev, A. V. Gherman, K. D. Karitsky, V. I. Nikiforov and I. I. Sergunin.

The inextinguishable desire of the troops to come to grips with the enemy was a decisive factor. Political organs and Party and Komsomol organisations did not for a moment discontinue political work, inspiring the officers and men. Just as when the offensive was being prepared, the accent was placed on briefing the men on the victories won by the Red Army. They were made to understand Leningrad's role in the country's history and in the Great Patriotic War. The Front Command and political

organs wielded enormous political and Party influence on the troops. Of the officers and men of the Leningrad Front, for example, more than 148,000 were Communists and over 101,000 were members of the Komsomol.

During the offensive Soviet troops displayed mass heroism and valour. Many of the units were decorated with titles. In the course of only the first six days of the offensive more than 3,000 troops of the 2nd Strike and 42nd armies were decorated with Orders and medals. Among them was Twice Hero of the Soviet Union Lieutenant-Colonel P. A. Pokryshev. During the siege of Leningrad his regiment shot down nearly 300 aircraft, while he himself destroyed 38 enemy planes. Many officers and men of the Leningrad Front were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Leningrad, city of glorious revolutionary traditions, personified the indomitable spirit of Soviet people and their determination to defend their socialist country no matter what the hardships. The people of Leningrad demonstrated that they were true patriots. They had to make enormous sacrifices, but they did not for a minute doubt that victory would be won. According to the report prepared by the Extraordinary State Commission, 641,803 people died of hunger during the blockade. Many of them are buried in common graves at the Piskarev Cemetery. One of the memorial plaques bears the following words:

". . .They gave their lives
Defending you, Leningrad,
Cradle of the Revolution.
So many lie beneath this eternal granite
That their noble names we cannot list.
But know, you, who gaze at this stone,
Nobody and nothing has been forgotten."

The noted scientist Academician A. A. Baikov expressed his admiration of the people of Leningrad with the following words: "I am a veteran steelmaker and have grown used to thinking that there's nothing tougher than steel. Today I saw my mistake. Indeed, I did make a mistake. It seems there is a metal stronger than steel. It is a noble metal and its name is Soviet people."

The battle for Leningrad had ended. For 900 days Leningraders and Soviet troops, supported and aided by the whole country, heroically defended the cradle of the proletarian revolution in battle and in persevering labour. Nothing broke their will, neither hunger, nor frost, nor bombing, nor shelling. The country highly appraised the feat accomplished by this hero-city. On January 26, 1945, Leningrad was awarded the Order of Lenin. More than 930,000 people were awarded the medal "For the Defence of Leningrad".

The heroic epic of Leningrad, whose concluding page was the offensive of January and February 1944, will never fade. A message from the CC CPSU on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the founding of Leningrad stated: "The 900-day defence of the besieged city—a legendary epic of courage and heroism—evoked the wonder and admiration of contemporaries and shall be forever preserved in the memory of coming generations. The people of Leningrad remained true to their country to the very end. Hero-city is the title that the grateful Soviet people have bestowed on Leningrad."

3. VICTORY IN THE UKRAINE AND THE CRIMEA

While fierce fighting raged in the region of Leningrad and Novgorod, a Soviet offensive got under way in the Southwestern theatre as well. As has already been mentioned, the main thrust of the Red Army's campaign of the winter of 1944 was planned in this theatre.

The free, flowering and rich territories of the Ukraine, lying west of the Dnieper, and the Crimea had been ravaged by the nazi invaders during their two and a half years of occupation. The national economy had been hit severely. In the Ukraine the losses amounted to the astronomical sum of 285,000 million rubles, and in the Crimea to 20,000 million rubles (in prices of 1941). Towns and villages had been sacked and razed to the ground. Many factories and power stations had been dismantled in Nikopol, Krivoi Rog, Nikolayev, Odessa, Simferopol and other industrial centres and the equipment sent to Germany and Rumania. The state and collective farms had been destroyed and their production premises demolished. Educational institutions, clubs, theatres, health homes, hospitals and kindergartens had been either burned down or turned into prisons, barracks, warehouses or houses of entertainment for German soldiers.

The entire territory of the Ukraine west of the Dnieper and the Crimea became an enormous concentration camp. The atrocities committed by the nazi tyrants defy description. They exterminated Soviet people en masse. They deliberately spread infectious diseases. Man-hunts, massacres, the shooting of hostages, and trains packed with people rounded up for slave-labour in Germany were daily occurrences across the length and breadth of the Ukraine. In the Ukraine, mainly in areas along the right bank of the Dnieper, the nazis killed 4,500,000 civilians, and in the Crimea they shot or tortured to death 90,000 people.

In the towns and villages the survivors were brutally and mercilessly exploited. At the operating factories Soviet citizens worked only by compulsion. The labour was backbreaking and the pay pitiful. The rural commandants and so-called "chiefs" forced the peasants to work at bayonet-point.

But this entire system of unrestricted arbitrary rule and plunder, brutality and humiliation failed to break the freedom-loving spirit of Soviet people. Party and Komsomol organisations operated underground in Kirovograd, Krivoi Rog, Odessa, Sevastopol and many other towns, as well as in villages. They headed the Resistance movement, organising sabotage and wrecking. The scale of the partisan war steadily increased. At the beginning of 1944 there were nearly 50,000 armed partisans in the Ukraine west of the Dnieper, in the Crimea and Soviet Moldavia. They had established liaison with regular forces and were helped and supported by hundreds of thousands of patriots, who were the reserve of the partisan army. Among the large partisan units in these areas were those commanded by V. A. Andreyev, V. A. Begma, P. P. Vershigora, A. M. Grabchak, V. S. Kuznetsov, M. A. Makedonsky, S. F. Malikov, Y. I. Melnik, Y. A. Mukhin, M. I. Naumov, A. Z. Odukha, S. A. Oleksenko, A. N. Saburov, A. F. Fyodorov, I. F. Fyodorov, I. I. Sheatov, Y. P. Shkryabach and P. R. Yampolsky. This was a large, formidable and swift-moving army, which pinned down at least 10 enemy divisions, 30 police battalions and many other units.

At the beginning of 1944 the belligerents were massed in great strength in the Ukraine west of the Dnieper. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian

fronts aggregated 2,365,000 officers and men, 28,800 field guns and mortars, 2,040 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 2,370 aircraft. The two German army groups—Manstein's South and Kleist's A—had 1,760,000 officers and men, 16,800 field guns and mortars, 2,200 tanks and assault guns, and 1,460 aircraft. The overall numerical superiority of the Soviet troops was relatively inconsiderable.

GHQ planned to carve up the enemy's defences with powerful thrusts along a 1,400-kilometre front from Ovruch to Kherson, smash them piecemeal and liberate the whole of Ukrainian territory west of the Dnieper (Map 12). The offensive was to start in the eastern regions and roll as far as the Southern Bug-Ingulets line. This was to be followed up by an advance to the Lutsk-Mogilev-Podolsky-Dniester line with the complete rout of the enemy in that sector.

The German Command expected the Red Army to strike its main blow in the south and prepared to meet it with powerful defences. But they never imagined that operations would be started by the Red Army immediately after the battle on the Dnieper.

At the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944 all the four Ukrainian fronts went into action. The offensive was started at the close of December, first by the 1st Ukrainian Front (commander—General N. F. Vatutin; members of the Military Council—Generals N. S. Khrushchev and K. V. Krainyukov). On December 24 the Front's assault group consisting of the 1st Guards, 18th and 38th armies and the 3rd Guards and 1st tank armies moved in the direction of Vinnitsa. The other armies, operating in ancillary directions, took the offensive on December 25-28. The partisans intensified action behind the enemy lines.

The 4th Panzer Army was unable to hold up the Soviet onslaught, and by December 29 German defences were breached along a front nearly 300 kilometres wide and 100 kilometres deep. In early January the Germans concentrated another ten infantry and two panzer divisions against the 1st Ukrainian Front. Bringing large forces into the vicinity of Vinnitsa and Uman they launched two counter-attacks, and there was fierce fighting for nearly two weeks.

On January 14, after having advanced 80-200 kilometres in three weeks, the 1st Ukrainian Front halted its offensive. By reaching the Ilyintsy-Zhashkov line its left-flank armies got a pincer hold on the enemy's left flank, which was still entrenched on the western bank of the Dnieper in the vicinity of Kanev. The prerequisites were thus created for annihilating this group.

The 2nd Ukrainian Front (commander—General I. S. Konev; member of the Military Council—General I. Z. Susaikov) began its offensive on January 5, and by the middle of the same month captured the town of Kirovograd and came face to face with the right flank of an enemy force which later became known as the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky group.

Then, on January 10-11, an offensive was mounted by the 3rd Ukrainian (commander—General R. Y. Malinovsky; member of the Military Council—General A. S. Zheltov) and the 4th Ukrainian (commander—General F. I. Tolbukhin; member of the Military Council—General N. Y. Subbotin) fronts. Their task was to destroy the enemy in the region of Nikopol. After five or six days of heavy fighting they won some ground. It was clear that these fronts, which were short of men and, particularly, of tanks and ammunition, would not secure more decisive results, and their offensive was temporarily halted.

With the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts holding both flanks of the German Korsun-Shevchenkovsky group in a pincer, GHQ ordered

Generals Vatutin and Konev to encircle and destroy this group. At the same time, the right-wing armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front were given the task of capturing the Rovno-Lutsk-Shepetovka region, and the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts, which had been reinforced with men and equipment, were to renew their offensive in the direction of Nikopol.

At the close of January all the Ukrainian fronts resumed their offensive.

On January 24-25 operations were started near the town of Korsun-Shevchenkovsky by the 2nd Ukrainian Front's assault group, which consisted of General A. I. Ryzhov's 4th Guards Army, General I. V. Galanin's 53rd Army and General P. A. Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army. It was supported by General S. K. Goryunov's 5th Air Army. An assault group of the 1st Ukrainian Front, consisting of part of General F. F. Zhmachenko's 40th Army, General S. G. Trofimenko's 27th Army and the newly formed 6th Tank Army under General A. G. Kravchenko, launched an attack from the opposite direction on January 26. This group was supported by the 2nd Air Army under General S. A. Krasovsky.

Concentrated at the base of the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky salient, these groups advanced in converging directions and linked up near Zvenigorodka, forming an inner and outer ring round ten divisions and one brigade by February 3.

This steel ring was methodically tightened. The German positions were favourable for defence, while the Soviet troops had to advance along roads sodden with melt-water. Great difficulty was experienced in transporting ammunition, fuel and food. The troops used hundreds of carts drawn by horses, oxen and even cows. Local inhabitants, liberated from nazi tyranny, helped them by carrying shells, mines and cartridges. Fuel for the tank armies was dropped by aircraft. Soviet airmen blocked the enemy from the air and attacked his supply lines. The situation became hopeless for the surrounded enemy and on February 8 the Soviet Command offered humane terms of surrender. But they were rejected.

The German Command desperately looked for ways of saving the encircled group, directing large forces from other sectors to its rescue. General S. I. Bogdanov's 2nd Tank Army, drawn from the GHQ Reserve, was thrown into the battle. The enemy made futile efforts to break through the ring. True, the German divisions attacking the ring from without got through to the vicinity of Lysyanka at the cost of heavy casualties, while the encircled troops moved to meet them near Shenderovka. A zone only 12 kilometres wide remained between them, but they were unable to cross it.

Matters came to a head on February 17-18. Remnants of the encircled group made a last desperate attempt to break out of the pocket. Massing near Shenderovka, the Germans moved in a southwesterly direction under cover of night and a snowstorm. Units of the 4th Guards and 27th armies met them with hurricane fire. Soviet troops shot the enemy columns down at pointblank range. Only a small group of enemy tanks and armoured carriers with generals and other senior officers managed to escape.

The Korsun-Shevchenkovsky battle ended in an overwhelming defeat for the enemy: 55,000 officers and men were killed or wounded, and over 18,000 were taken prisoner. All the weapons and equipment were abandoned on the field of battle.

On January 27 the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front attacked the enemy in the region of Rovno. The forest-swamps and the thick mud created extremely difficult conditions for offensive operations. Despite enemy forecasts, the Soviet offensive started on January 27 developed

successfully. On February 2 General N. P. Pukhov's 13th Army with the active support of Ukrainian partisans liberated the towns of Lutsk and Rovno. Particularly stiff resistance was encountered in the fighting for Shepetovka. Nonetheless, this important railway junction was captured by General I. D. Chernyakhovsky's 60th Army on February 11.

The 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts, which had resumed their offensive on January 30-31, likewise operated in the extremely difficult conditions caused by the thaw. However, in this offensive troops commanded by General R. Y. Malinovsky broke through the enemy's defences and occupied the town of Apostolovo on February 5. By February 8 General F. I. Tolbukhin's troops had completely cleared the eastern bank of the Dnieper, and on the same day troops of both fronts liberated Nikopol. After a short lull, the 3rd Ukrainian Front attacked the enemy at Krivoi Rog, captured the town on February 22, and advanced to the Ingulets River. The 5th Strike Army of the 4th Ukrainian Front forced the Dnieper and on February 29 reached the line running from Blakitnoye to Kachkarovka. This Front did not participate in the further fighting for the region west of the Dnieper; it was given the assignment of liberating the Crimea.

Ukrainian partisans, underground organisations and the local population were active against the enemy. For example, a partisan formation commanded by S. F. Malikov helped to liberate the town of Korosten. Formations led by V. A. Begma, I. F. Fyodorov and N. V. Taratuta participated in the capture of Rovno.

The January-February offensive inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and created conditions for the second stage of the operation, namely, the final liberation of the Ukraine west of the Dnieper.

The GHQ plan was that the 1st Ukrainian Front would advance from Dubno, Shepetovka, Lubar to Chertkov-Chernovitsy, the 2nd Ukrainian Front from Zvenigorodka to Uman-Jassy, and the 3rd Ukrainian Front from south of Krivoi Rog to Nikolayev-Odessa, the objective being to chop up the enemy's defences, destroy his troops piecemeal and complete the liberation of the Ukraine.

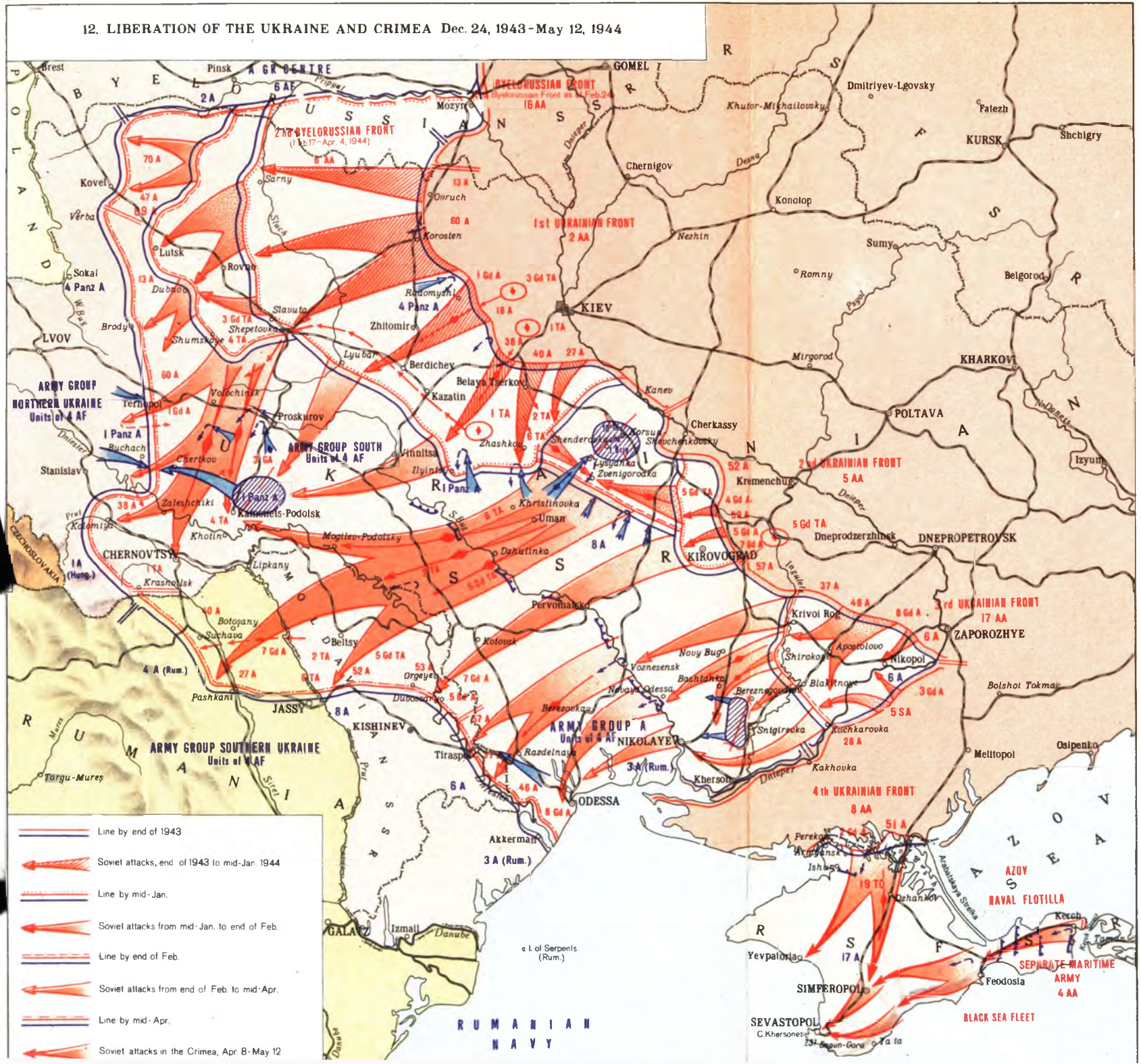
On February 29, while the preparations for this offensive were in full swing, Front Commander General N. F. Vatutin was mortally wounded by Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists. He died on April 15. A tribute from the Communist Party Central Committee, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the People's Commissariat for Defence stated: "In the person of Comrade Vatutin, the state has lost one of its most talented young military leaders who came to the forefront during the Patriotic War." Vatutin was loved and respected by his officers and men. His memory is revered by the people and Armed Forces of the Soviet Union.

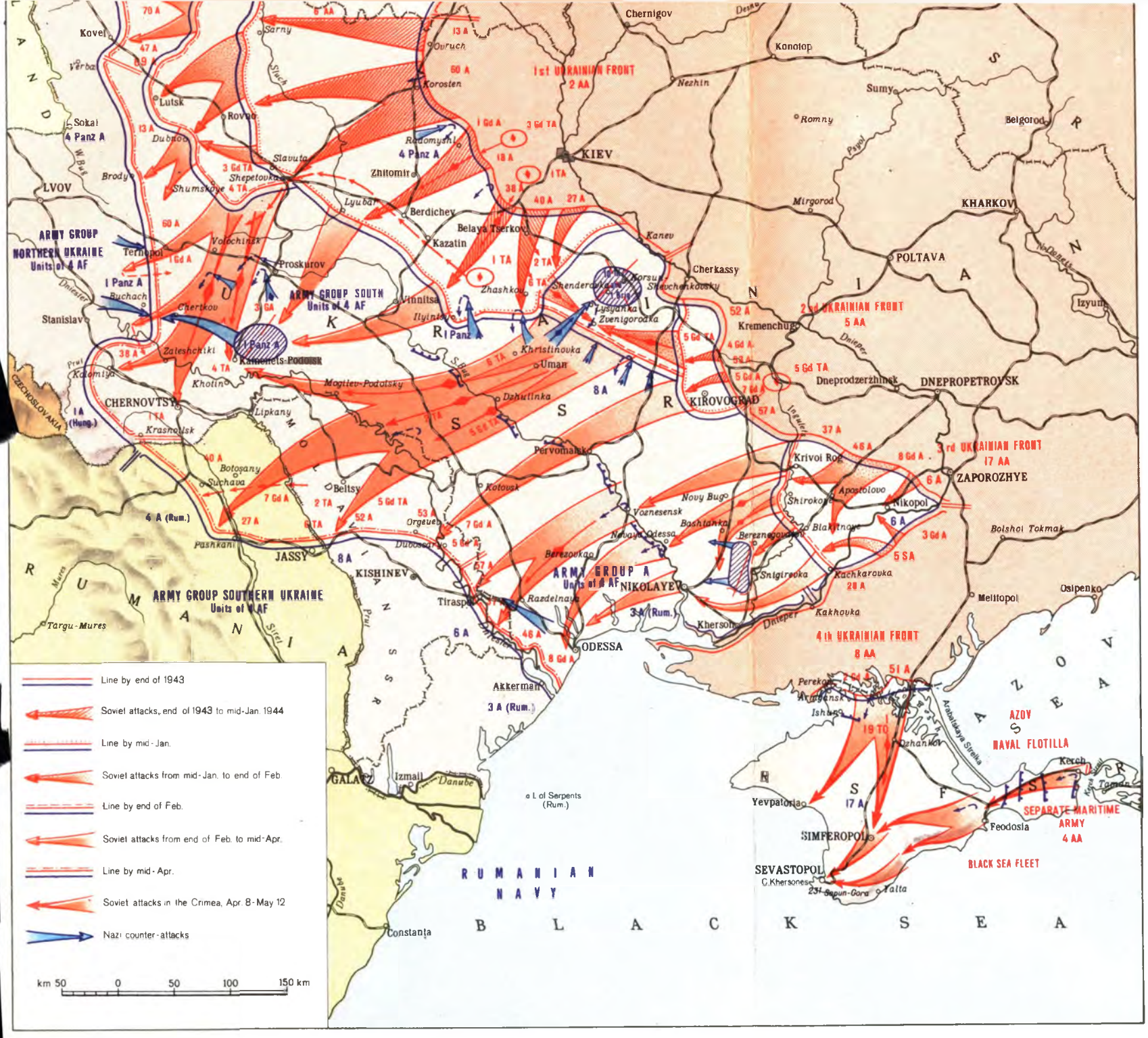
As a preliminary to the offensive the armies were regrouped, reinforced and replenished with munitions and other supplies. In particular they received 754 tanks. On March 1 they had 2.5 times more tanks and self-propelled guns than the enemy. Logistical units brought up ammunition, fuel and food.

In January and February the Germans likewise received considerable reinforcements. Although both army groups had suffered heavy losses they were still a formidable force. The German Command entertained the hope that the Soviet troops were exhausted and would be unable to continue the offensive during the spring thaw.

Early in March the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts resumed operations almost simultaneously in a sector extending from Lutsk to the

12. LIBERATION OF THE UKRAINE AND CRIMEA Dec. 24, 1943 - May 12, 1944




Line by end of 1943
Soviet attacks, end of 1943 to mid-Jan. 1944
Line by mid-Jan.
Soviet attacks from mid-Jan. to end of Feb.
Line by end of Feb.
Soviet attacks from end of Feb. to mid-Apr.
Line by mid-Apr.
Soviet attacks in the Crimea, Apr. 8-May 12
Nazi counter-attacks
km 50 0 50 100 150 km
1st UKRAINIAN FRONT
2nd UKRAINIAN FRONT
3rd UKRAINIAN FRONT
4th UKRAINIAN FRONT
ARMY GROUP NORTHERN UKRAINE
ARMY GROUP SOUTH
ARMY GROUP A
ARMY GROUP SOUTHERN UKRAINE
AZOV NAVAL FLOTILLA
SEPARATE MARITIME ARMY
BLACK SEA FLEET
RUMANIAN NAVY
KIEV
LVOV
KHARKOV
ODESSA
SEVASTOPOL
SIMFEROPOL
NIKOLAYEV
KISHINEV
DNEPROPETROVSK
ZAPOROZHYE
KIROVOGRAD
CHERNOVTSY
JASSY
Chernigov
Konotop
Sumy
Belgorod
POLTAVA
Kremenchug
Cherkassy
Dneprodzerzhinsk
Krivoi Rog
Nikopol
Melitopol
Berdichev
Zhitomir
Belaya Tserkov
Uman
Vinnitsa
Proskurov
Ternopol
Stanislav
Kamenets-Podolsk
Mogilev-Podolsky
Beltsy
Tiraspol
Akkerman
Izmail
Constanta
Yevpatoria
Feodosia
Kerch
Sea of Azov
Black Sea

Dnieper estuary. In the history of wars this was an unprecedented offensive by such a huge number of troops under conditions where roads were impassable.

The offensive was started on March 4 by the 1st Ukrainian Front, whose command had been taken over by Marshal G. K. Zhukov. The 1st Guards and 60th armies, operating in the direction of the main thrust, broke through the enemy's defences in the Shumskoye-Lubar area. On the same day, the battle was joined by two tank armies: General V. M. Badanov's 4th (under the command of General D. D. Lelyushenko as of March 23) and General P. S. Rybalko's 3rd Guards army. Crushing enemy resistance, the assault group reached the Tarnopol-Proskurov area on March 7-11 and in the vicinity of Volochisk it cut the important Lvov-Odessa Railway. Army Group South's main forces were enveloped from the west.

On March 5 the 2nd Ukrainian Front's assault group, consisting of the 27th Army, General K. A. Koroteyev's 52nd Army and General I. K. Smirnov's 4th Guards Army, advanced from Zvenigorodka in the direction of Uman, breaking through the enemy's defences on the same day. Three tank armies—the 2nd, 5th Guards and 6th—were committed in order to allow this success to be developed. The enemy called in his reserves in an effort to halt the Soviet drive. A pitched battle was fought at the approaches to Uman. It ended with the defeat of the nazis and the liberation of Uman on March 10. On March 11 Soviet advanced units reached the Southern Bug near Dzhulinka and forced the river. The offensive of General A. S. Zhadov's 5th Guards Army and General M. S. Shumilov's 7th Guards Army began on March 8. They breached the enemy's defences and advanced in the direction of Pervomaisk.

With the 1st Ukrainian Front on the Tarnopol-Proskurov line and the 2nd Ukrainian Front on the Southern Bug, the German 1st Panzer Army faced the threat of encirclement. To avoid a fresh catastrophe the German Command confronted the 1st Ukrainian Front with nine panzer and six infantry divisions with orders to counter-attack. Heavy fighting raged along the Tarnopol-Volochisk-Proskurov line from March 11 to 19.

The Soviet Command moved into this area General M. Y. Katukov's 1st Tank Army and reinforced the 60th and 1st Guards armies with divisions from the Front reserve. The 13th Army was ordered to advance towards the southwest and reach the town of Brody by March 20.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front renewed its offensive in the Nikolayev-Odessa direction on March 6 against Army Group A. Its assault group, consisting of General V. V. Glagolev's 46th Army and General V. I. Chuikov's 8th Guards Army, broke through the enemy's defences, and was joined by a mechanised cavalry group commanded by General I. A. Pliyev which captured the town of Novy Bug as early as March 8. From this town the mechanised cavalry group wheeled sharply to the south and hit the enemy's rear echelons, thus threatening 13 divisions of the German 6th Army with encirclement in the Bereznegovatoye-Snigiryovka area. Suffering heavy losses, these divisions managed to withdraw in a westerly direction. The 3rd Ukrainian Front's right wing pursued the enemy and reached the Southern Bug near Voznesensk. In the fighting in the area between the Ingulets and the Southern Bug another smashing defeat was inflicted on the German 6th Army. Eight of its divisions were destroyed.

A major success was thus achieved during the first half of March through the joint actions of the three Ukrainian fronts. The enemy's defences were breached over a large sector. Battering down the nazi resistance and forcing the overflowing rivers, Soviet troops advanced

along muddy roads and across sodden fields. The German divisions retreated, abandoning tanks, tractor-drawn artillery, and lorries, which had used up their fuel.

On March 11, in the light of the new situation, GHQ specified the tasks of the fronts. The 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts were given the task of surrounding and annihilating the German 1st Panzer Army in the region of Kamenets-Podolsk, and the 3rd Ukrainian Front had the mission of crossing the Southern Bug, liberating Odessa and reaching the Prut River.

Hitler's Headquarters began hastily transferring reserves to the Lvov area: these consisted of six infantry and two panzer divisions from Germany, Yugoslavia, France and Belgium. In addition, the enemy sought to consolidate his positions along the Southern Bug and prevent any further advance of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts to the west.

On March 21, after wearing down the enemy around the towns of Tarnopol and Proskurov, the 1st Ukrainian Front's assault group resumed its offensive. On the very first day in the sector held by the 60th Army, the 1st and 4th tank armies engaged the enemy in pitched battle. Particularly rapid progress was made by the 1st Tank Army. On March 24 it reached the Dniester, crossing it near Zaleshchiki. Five days later it liberated the town of Chernovitsy. Kamenets-Podolsk was taken by the 4th Tank Army on March 26. The 20th Guards Motorised and the 64th Guards Tank brigades distinguished themselves in these battles. The former dauntlessly forged ahead, rapidly reaching the Dniester; its commander A. K. Babajanyan was created Hero of the Soviet Union. The latter brigade in many ways predetermined the liberation of Chernovitsy; its commander Lieutenant-Colonel I. N. Boiko was created Twice Hero of the Soviet Union. The retreat of the German 1st Panzer Army was cut off when the 1st Ukrainian Front's tank armies occupied the Buchach-Kolomiya-Chernovitsy line.

Utilising the bridgeheads captured by its advance units on the left bank of the Southern Bug, the main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front crossed this important waterway. By March 19 they reached the Dniester near Mogilev-Podolsky, and three days later they crossed this water barrier and established a large bridgehead. The 40th Army approached the town of Khotin. A huge breach was formed in the German defences south of Tarnopol. The German Command sent the Hungarian 1st Army and several German divisions to close this breach.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front likewise reached the Southern Bug, in its lower reaches, and began forcing it on March 18. At the town of Novaya Odessa the river was 200-250 metres wide. Nevertheless, the Germans failed to stop this advance. The Soviet troops crushed the desperate resistance put up by the enemy, surmounted the difficulties caused by the spring thaw and established bridgeheads on the western bank of the river.

Thus, during the first half of March the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts successfully developed their offensive. The German counter-attacks petered out, and the enemy's hopes of entrenching himself along the Southern Bug faded.

On March 22 GHQ once more amended the tasks of the fronts. The 1st Ukrainian Front was to complete the encirclement and destruction of the German 1st Panzer Army near Kamenets-Podolsk. The 2nd Ukrainian Front was to turn southward, advance along both banks of the Dniester, press the enemy to the Black Sea and prevent his retreat beyond the river. In the sector of the 1st Ukrainian Front events developed very rapidly at the close of March. This Front, in co-operation with the 2nd Ukrainian Front, surrounded a large enemy group of 21 divisions north

of Kamenets-Podolsk. However, the 1st Ukrainian Front Command was unable to create strong internal and external rings. The Germans took advantage of this to avoid total defeat. Suffering huge losses in men and equipment, they fought their way to the vicinity of Buchach, where they linked up with the divisions that were helping them to escape from the pocket.

Meanwhile, troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front pursued the retreating enemy and on March 26 along a wide sector reached the Prut River—the frontier between the Soviet Union and Rumania. This was a major development. News of this great victory spread like lightning through the country and the Red Army, evoking legitimate pride and jubilation. The fact that the Red Army was now on the state frontier was of tremendous international significance, for it was fresh proof of the imminent defeat of Hitler Germany and her satellites.

In an effort to neutralise the pressure of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, the German Command moved six infantry divisions from the 6th Army into its sector, and brought the fresh Rumanian 4th Army into the region round Jassy. But this did not stop the Soviet offensive. At the end of March and beginning of April troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were already fighting in Soviet Moldavia and in Rumania.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front, too, continued to advance. On March 28 its forces took the town of Nikolayev. In the fighting for this town heroism was displayed by 67 men of a task force commanded by Senior Lieutenant K. F. Olshansky and political instructor Captain A. F. Golovlyov. This task force was landed in the port of Nikolayev to clear the way for the troops storming the city. Against this small force the enemy used three infantry battalions supported by artillery and tanks. In the unequal battle 55 men lost their lives. The others fought on until the arrival of the main body of troops. All 67 were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Pressure on the left flank and rear of the German 6th Army forced it to abandon its positions. Following closely on the heels of the retreating enemy, troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front liberated Odessa on April 10. Two days later they captured Tiraspol, crossed the Dniester and occupied a bridgehead on its western bank.

The Soviet people revere the memory of the defenders of Odessa. For two and a half months, in the autumn of 1941, they had contained large enemy forces when the nazi hordes were pushing towards Moscow. They had honourably discharged their duty and left Odessa only when they were ordered to do so by the Supreme Command. The city had been occupied but not subjugated. The partisans and underground workers, headed by the city Party organisation, had continued to put up a determined resistance. The heroic defence of Odessa and the valour displayed by the troops in the liberation of the town had strikingly demonstrated the Soviet people's selfless devotion to their socialist motherland. Some 25,000 people were decorated with the "For the Defence of Odessa" Medal. Odessa itself was given the title of Hero-City.

The offensive in March and the first half of April swept the army groups South and A before it and carried the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts to the Verba-Kolomiya-Jassy-Orgeyev-Dubossary line and farther along the Dniester to the Black Sea.

This successful offensive placed the enemy 17th Army, which was in occupation of the Crimea, in an untenable position. It had more than 195,000 officers and men, roughly 3,600 field guns and mortars, 215 tanks and assault guns, and 148 aircraft.

The task of liberating the Crimea was given to the 4th Ukrainian Front,

the Separate Maritime Army commanded by General A. I. Yeremenko, the Black Sea Fleet under Admiral F. S. Oktyabrsky and Admiral S. G. Gorshkov's Azov Naval Flotilla. The land forces consisted of close to 470,000 effectives with 5,982 field guns and mortars, 559 tanks and self-propelled guns and 1,250 aircraft. A considerable role in destroying the Rumanian-German group in the Crimea was assigned to the partisans.

Initially, it was planned to start the offensive in the Crimea simultaneously with the liberation of Krivoi Rog by the 3rd Ukrainian Front and a drive by that Front in the direction of Nikolayev and Odessa. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief, however, suggested postponing the operation in the Crimea, strengthening the 3rd Ukrainian Front at the expense of the 4th, gaining Odessa and launching the Crimean offensive after Soviet troops had reached the Soviet-Rumanian frontier.

The offensive in the Crimea began on April 8, when Soviet troops were fighting on the outskirts of Odessa and had entered Northwestern Rumania. General G. F. Zakharov's 2nd Guards Army attacked the Perekop fortifications, capturing the town of Armyansk, but enemy resistance prevented any further advance. Meanwhile, units of the 51st Army under General Y. G. Kreizer, which were striking the main blow from bridgeheads south of the Sivash, broke through the first line of resistance. This compelled the enemy to beat a retreat before both Soviet armies. The 19th Tank Corps was brought into the 51st Army's zone to pursue the enemy. Mobile units of both armies likewise pursued the enemy. The Separate Maritime Army joined the battle in the night of April 10-11, and on April 11 captured Kerch from where it pursued the retreating enemy along the southern coast of the Crimea.

On April 12 the enemy hastily withdrew to Sevastopol, seeking the protection of its fortifications. The 19th Tank Corps and the mobile units unceasingly attacked the enemy, inflicting heavy losses on him. The 8th and 4th Air armies commanded by Generals T. T. Khryukin and K. A. Vershinin respectively operated very effectively, pounding ports and hitting ships at sea. Submarines and torpedo boats attacked enemy convoys. And blows were struck behind the enemy's lines by partisan formations under M. A. Makedonsky, P. R. Yampolsky and V. S. Kuznetsov.

On April 15 the mobile units of the 4th Ukrainian Front and, on the next day, of the Separate Maritime Army* reached the outer ring of fortifications at Sevastopol. The position of the enemy's Crimean group became absolutely hopeless.

Having prepared for a decisive battle, troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front began the assault of the Sevastopol fortifications. This assault was spearheaded, on May 5, by units of the 2nd Guards Army, which moved in the direction of Northern Bay. In the course of two days they captured two and in some places three lines of trenches. The 51st and Maritime armies started their attack on May 7. The fighting was particularly heavy at Sapun-Gora, which was the key to the German defences of Sevastopol. Men of the 63rd, 10th and 11th Guards Infantry corps (commanded by Generals P. K. Koshevoi, K. P. Neverov and S. Y. Rozhdestvensky) carried their red banners to the summit of the mountain with unflinching courage and doggedness. Where one banner-bearer fell, another took his place and the assault continued unabated. Unable to withstand this devastating assault, the enemy abandoned one position after another.

* On April 18 the Separate Maritime Army was renamed the Maritime Army and included in the 4th Ukrainian Front. Its command was taken over by General K. S. Melnik.

The hero-city of Sevastopol, a city of glorious battle traditions, was liberated on May 9. The remnants of the enemy group fled to Cape Khersones, where they were either killed or taken prisoner. The Black Sea became the grave of many who tried to escape on ships. The Red Army offensive in the Crimea was completed on May 12. In the language of figures, the Crimea disaster cost the nazis 100,000 men in killed and prisoners and all their combat equipment in that area.

In 1941-42 it took the nazis 250 days to capture Sevastopol, but in 1944 the Red Army flattened the enemy's powerful fortifications in the Crimea in 35 days and captured Sevastopol within five days.

The courage and valour of Soviet troops were highly appraised by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government: 126 men were decorated with the title Hero of the Soviet Union, and thousands of others received Orders and medals. The medal "For the Defence of Sevastopol" was instituted in December 1942.

In the victorious offensive in the Ukraine (west of the Dnieper) and the Crimea the Red Army destroyed 10 divisions and one brigade. Moreover, the enemy dissolved eight divisions, while 68 divisions lost 50-66 per cent of their effectives. Major economic regions were recovered from the nazis with the result that the strategic situation changed radically in the south. Soviet troops approached the Carpathian Mountains, splitting the enemy's defences and driving a wedge between his troops north and south of these mountains. The Black Sea Fleet, which had returned to its principal bases, now operated along the coast of Rumania. This crushing defeat alarmed the Rumanian, Bulgarian and Hungarian ruling classes and still further shook German influence in Turkey. It now became possible to extend direct assistance to the peoples of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria in their struggle against the nazi invaders.

In this successful offensive, in extraordinarily difficult conditions, the Red Army once more displayed its great military skill. Sodden fields and overflowing rivers hampered manoeuvrability. Lorries, tractors and even tanks got stuck in the thick mud. There was a shortage of airfields and difficulty was experienced in bringing up the means for crossing rivers. Tremendous effort had to be expended to clear the roads of wrecked and abandoned enemy equipment. All this complicated operations and demanded enormous moral and physical endurance.

The success of such a large-scale offensive in such unfavourable conditions astonished the Soviet Union's Allies. The US newspaper *New York Herald Tribune,* for instance, assessed the Soviet offensive as "one of the amazing developments of the war". The superior skill of the Red Army commanders was, in effect, admitted by the German High Command as well. Hitler relieved Manstein and Kleist of their commands, and many generals—divisional commanders and town commandants—were arrested and put on trial.

The conspicuous successes in the Ukraine and the Crimea were predetermined by the high morale, staunchness and heroism of the Soviet troops, with Communists setting the example. At the beginning of the offensive the Ukrainian fronts had in their ranks nearly 558,000 Communists. This ensured Party influence in all links of the fronts, beginning with the different headquarters and ending with subunits. The front and army military councils, political departments and Party and Komsomol organisations conducted systematic political work among the troops. The ideological content of this work mirrored the various demands made of the front and rear and conformed to the tasks set before

the Ukrainian fronts. When the troops reached the state frontier, the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government vis-à-vis the European peoples was explained exhaustively to them.

The officers and men were influenced by the personal example set in battle by Communists and the inspiring slogans of the Communist Party.

The battles in the Ukraine, the Crimea, at Leningrad and at Novgorod were, as planned by GHQ, the principal operations of the winter campaign.

As planned, the units operating in the central sector of the Soviet-German front advanced in the direction of Vitebsk and Bobruisk. In the heavy fighting near Vitebsk during the first half of January troops of the 1st Baltic Front annihilated two enemy divisions; several other German divisions were badly mauled. But the town itself was not captured. In February the offensive was resumed in co-operation with the Western Front. Bitter fighting ensued, but Vitebsk remained in German hands. While inflicting heavy casualties on the Germans, the Soviet troops themselves suffered serious losses, particularly troops of the Western Front. In January-February troops of the Byelorussian Front took the towns of Mozyr, Kalinkovichi and Rogachev, forced the Dnieper and established a bridgehead on the western bank. But they were unable to capture Bobruisk and advance towards Minsk, as was demanded by the plan.

The three fronts of the Western sector thus fell short of their objectives in the winter campaign. The main reason for these setbacks, as was admitted by the General Staff and established by a commission of the State Defence Committee, was that the Front command had provided unsatisfactory leadership of the operations and that some commanders and staffs had flagrantly violated the rules of organisation and the conduct of offensive operations. Some of the groups had not been properly organised. There were objective reasons as well. The Western Front had too many units and had to conduct operations in four directions. This greatly encumbered troop control, and the lack of roads hampered manoeuvrability. Lastly, like the other fronts in this sector, the Western Front had not been able to count on considerable manpower and material reinforcements while the operations were in progress, because GHQ had sent its available reinforcements to the fronts operating in the south and northwest.

In its decision of April 12, 1944, on the report by the commission, the State Defence Committee noted the grave shortcomings in the Western Front command's direction of operations and drew the corresponding organisational conclusions. Somewhat later this Front was divided into the 3rd and 2nd Byelorussian fronts. Yet, despite the setbacks, the offensive in the Western theatre was of vital significance. It tied down Army Group Centre, preventing the transfer of its divisions to the Leningrad area and the Ukraine.

In the course of these operations the Soviet troops had enveloped Vitebsk on two sides, and liberated Rogachev, Kalinkovichi and Mozyr. They had occupied more advantageous lines, from which the famous Byelorussian operation was started in the summer of 1944.

On the whole the winter campaign brought the Red Army smashing victories. As a result of that campaign the enemy lost 30 divisions and six brigades, and 142 divisions and one brigade lost from 50 to 75 per cent of their effectives. The Wehrmacht lost more than a million officers and men, 20,000 field guns and mortars, 8,400 tanks and assault guns and about 5,000 aircraft.

The invaders were driven out of 329,000 square kilometres of Soviet territory, which before the war had had a population of some 19,000,000. The state frontier was restored over a distance of 400 kilometres and the Red Army occupied Northeastern Rumania, for the first time moving the front-line into a country at war with the Soviet Union.

On April 2, after the Red Army had entered Rumania, the Soviet Government stated that it "does not pursue the purpose of acquiring any part of Rumanian territory or changing the social system in Rumania; the entry of Soviet troops into Rumania is dictated solely by military requirements and the continuing resistance of enemy troops". This statement made it clear that the USSR was leaving to the liberated peoples the right to decide their own destiny. On April 12 humane armistice terms were offered Rumania, but the anti-popular Antonescu Government, which had tied itself to Hitler's chariot, rejected them and thereby doomed itself to total defeat and destruction.

Chapter Thirteen

IN THE MAIN DIRECTION

1. PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS. BEGINNING OF THE 1944 SUMMER-AUTUMN CAMPAIGN

In the winter and spring of 1944 the Soviet Union steadily increased its economic potential. During the first six months of the year it produced 16,000 aircraft, nearly 14,000 medium and heavy tanks and self-propelled guns, 26,000 field guns of 76-mm calibre and higher (exclusive of anti-aircraft guns), and more than 90 million shells, bombs and mines.

Within the same period German industry continued increasing its output, reaching its war-time peak in July. But in the period August-December the output of coal, electric power, steel and other key heavy industry items began to shrink rapidly. Although the output of some types of weapons was still high as a result of the desperate attempts to mobilise everything in order to compensate for losses and increase armament production, the signs that a catastrophe would hit the war industry were becoming steadily more clear-cut.

The political situation in Germany herself was becoming more and more aggravated under the impact of the continuous military setbacks. In face of imminent military collapse, the ruling circles sought to preserve monopoly capitalist rule and decided to get rid of Hitler. This led to a conspiracy involving capitalists, high-ranking civil servants, diplomats and generals. It was joined by some German patriots from among the officers and Social-Democrats. The aim was to depose Hitler before the Red Army entered Germany. The reactionary leaders counted on forming a government composed of representatives of monopoly capital and the General Staff who were not very deeply compromised by collaboration with the nazis. They calculated that such a government would be able to prevent any revolutionary action by the people and sign a separate peace with Britain and the USA.

An attempt was made on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944, at his headquarters near Rastenburg, East Prussia. This attempt failed and the nazis took savage reprisals against the conspirators.

The international situation, too, was not comforting for Germany. Heartened by the victories of the Red Army, occupied but not conquered, Europe intensified the struggle against the nazi oppressors. Large armed people's liberation forces operated in many European countries. In the satellite countries the position of the ruling classes was shaken.

On the whole, the situation favoured the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces. The conditions were on hand for striking fresh paralysing blows at the enemy. Another favourable factor was that on June 6, 1944, US

Units of the 2nd Shock and 42nd armies of the Leningrad Front meet near Ropsha, January 19, 1944

Soviet troops force a salt marsh near Odessa, April 1944

Sappers lay flooring for tanks, 1st Ukrainian Front, April 1944

Marshal of the Soviet Union I. S. Konev (right), Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, and Chief of Staff Colonel-General M. V. Zakharov pore over a map, the Ukraine, March 1944

Soldiers set up a frontier sign at the frontier with Rumania, March 1944

Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front enter Rumania in pursuit of the retreating enemy, March 1944

General I. K. Bagramyan (left), Commander of the 1st Baltic Front, and Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General V. V. Kurasov during the Byelorussian campaign

General of the Army I. D. Chernyakhovsky (right), Commander of the 3rd Byelorussian Front, and Chief of Staff Colonel-General A. P. Pokrovsky

Left to right: General of the Army G. F. Zakharov, Commander of the 2nd Byelorussian Front, Lieutenant-General N. Y. Subbotin, Member of the Front Military Council, and Air Colonel-General K. A. Vershinin plan an air strike

Headquarters of the Byelorussian Front. Major-General I. I. Boikov, Chief of Operations, and General of the Army K. K. Rokossovsky. In the background: Front Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General M. S. Malinin and member of the Front Military Council Lieutenant-General K. F. Telegin

Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky (left) and Tank Marshal P. A. Rotmistrov cross the Berezina

German officers and men taken prisoner near Minsk

Thousands of German prisoners of war with captured generals in the lead convoyed through Moscow, July 1944

Lithuanian partisans show Soviet engineers where a bridge had been mined by the nazis, 1944

Corpses of executed Soviet civilians prepared for burning by the nazi monsters, Klooga death camp, Estonia, 1944

Letts greet Red Armymen, October 1944

A group of partisans line up before starting out on a combat assignment, 2nd Lettish Partisan Brigade, March 1944

Restoring the frontier, 1944

Artillerymen chalk a "message"
for the enemy

At the frontier of nazi Germany,
August 1944

Soviet and Polish officers coordinate action, a suburb of Warsaw, 1944

A lull. Soviet and Polish troops in a trench, 1st Byelorussian Front

Soviet flour for the people of Warsaw

Inhabitants of Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, cheer troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front, September 1944

Red Army units greeted in Bucharest, August 1944

Rumanian units on their way to the front for joint action with the Red Army, September 1944

A National-Democratic Front demonstration in Bucharest, November 1944

and British troops had landed in Northern France. As a result of the Soviet Union's victories, the spreading partisan war and the situation in which armed uprisings were maturing in a number of European countries it was becoming obvious that the Red Army could bring nazi Germany to her knees without the assistance of the Anglo-American troops. Apprehensive of the Soviet Union's growing might and fearing the wrath of their own people, who were protesting against the delay in taking decisive action against the nazi invaders in Western Europe, the US and British ruling circles could no longer put off opening the second front.

However, the Soviet-German front remained the decisive theatre of the war even after the Allied landing in France. As before, Germany concentrated her main forces in the East. Nonetheless with the opening of the Second Front the German troops in Western Europe could no longer be regarded solely as a potential reserve spearheaded against the Red Army. Moreover, to stiffen the Western front and replenish its losses, the German Command now had to divert part of its current reinforcements from the Soviet-German front. An SS corps was transferred to the Western front.

The Anglo-US landing in Western Europe was a major success of the anti-Hitler coalition. Germany now had to fight on two fronts, something that Bismarck, Moltke Senior and other prominent politicians and ideologists of German militarism had repeatedly warned against. The coordinated blows at nazi Germany from the East and West hastened the final and complete victory of the anti-nazi coalition. This conformed to the vital interests of the USSR, the working people of the USA and Britain, and the freedom-loving peoples of other countries.

The situation on the Soviet-German front had undergone a marked change by the summer of 1944. The Red Army's powerful offensive of the winter and spring in the northwest and southwest had, as we have seen, cost the enemy enormous losses in men and equipment.

Armies many millions strong were facing each other on the 4,450-kilometre Soviet-German front. The combat strength of the Red Army consisted of nearly 6,500,000 effectives, 83,200 field guns and mortars, some 8,000 tanks and self-propelled guns and 11,800 aircraft. On the Eastern front the nazi bloc had 4,000,000 men, about 49,000 field guns and mortars, more than 5,200 tanks and assault guns and about 2,800 aircraft. Thus, in January-May 1944 the Red Army was stronger than ever before. The German Army, on the contrary, was thinning out despite the desperate attempts of the German Command to replenish losses. However, in the summer of 1944 Germany was still well armed and powerful.

That summer the Communist Party and the Soviet Government set the Red Army major political objectives and the concomitant decisive strategic tasks. It had to drive the last of the invaders out of Soviet territory and begin the liberation of Poland, Czechoslovakia and other European countries.

In the campaign of the summer and autumn of 1944 GHQ called for a steady advance in different sectors of the front. This campaign was opened by the Leningrad and Karelian fronts, whose task was to crush the Finnish Army and liberate the Karelian Isthmus and Southern Karelia. This was an important but not the key objective of the campaign.

The main blow was to be delivered in the centre of the Soviet-German front, and the political objective was to liberate Byelorussia, part of Lithuania, the western regions of the Ukraine and the eastern regions of Poland. To achieve this objective it was necessary to destroy the German army groups Centre and Northern Ukraine.

A feature of the offensive in this direction was that it had to develop consecutively. The first to start the offensive against Army Group Centre was the 1st Baltic Front, the 3rd and 2nd Byelorussian fronts and the right wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front. Their approach to the Druya-Svenčionys-Stolbtsi-Zhitkovichi line was the signal for the start of the attack on Army Group Northern Ukraine by the left wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front and the 1st Ukrainian Front. Thus, the zone in which the main blow was to be struck stretched initially from Polotsk to Mozyr and then it was to be widened in the south up to the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. The main blow, therefore, was to be dealt by the Red Army at the German Byelorussian and Lvov groups. Moreover, it was planned to use the Red Army's successes in Byelorussia for an offensive by the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts. The 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts had to prepare for an offensive in a southwesterly direction, to the Balkans. This operation depended on the outcome of the preceding action.

The Soviet Supreme Command felt the leaders of the anti-fascist coalition had to be informed of its plans for the summer of 1944. On June 6 Stalin wrote to Churchill: "The Soviet offensive, organised under the agreement reached at Teheran, is to begin in mid-June in a key sector of the front. The Soviet general offensive is to develop by stages through the successive commitment of armies. At the close of June and in the course of July the offensive operations will turn into a Soviet general offensive."

The plan of the German Command for the summer of 1944 was to organise the stiffest possible resistance in the East, repulse the Anglo-US invasion in France, seize the initiative and turn the course of the war in its favour. But this was an unrealistic plan which did not take the obtaining strategic situation into account. The Wehrmacht leaders hoped the USSR would clash with the USA and Britain and were, therefore, eager to gain time. As we have already noted, Keitel had long ago come to the conclusion that Germany could not win by military means and that the war had to be continued until a split occurred in the anti-Hitlerite coalition. He believed that such a split was inevitable.

The nazi Command considered that in the summer the main events on the Soviet-German front would take place in the Southwesterly direction, south of Polessye. It therefore kept 117 divisions in that area and 96 divisions in the Westerly and Northwesterly directions. Furthermore, it believed that there would be a Soviet offensive also in the Baltic. This was forecast on the basis of the results of the winter campaign. The German Command felt that the Soviet objective was to knock Germany's satellites out of the war and thereby compel Sweden and Turkey to stop their supplies of strategic raw materials to Germany. The Wehrmacht's High Command clung to this mistake almost right up to the start of the Soviet offensive in Byelorussia, with the result that it did not regroup its forces and, in particular, did not build up the necessary armoured strength.

Politically, the strategic plan of the German Command was founded on blind faith that the anti-Hitler coalition would fall apart in the course of the war. This made the plan for defensive action by the Wehrmacht unrealistic and unfeasible.

The furious battles of the summer of 1944 began, as the Soviet Supreme Command envisaged, with the offensive of the Leningrad and Karelian fronts. Co-operating with the Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga and Onega flotillas, they inflicted two consecutive blows on the Finnish Army.

On June 10, after artillery and air preparation, General D. N. Gusev, commander of the Leningrad Front's 21st Army, moved his troops against the enemy's strongly fortified positions on the Karelian Isthmus. They achieved major success on the very first day, forcing the Sestra River and pushing the enemy back over a distance of 12-17 kilometres. On June 11 the battle was joined by the neighbouring 23rd Army under General A. I. Cherepanov. Front commander General L. A. Govorov reinforced the advancing troops from his reserves. In four days the attacking armies reached the enemy's second and most powerful line of defences and changed the direction of their onslaught from Kivennap to the seaboard and approached the enemy's third line of defences on June 17, breaching it on the same day. On June 20 the hammer and sickle was raised over Vyborg. This offensive was supported by ships and landing forces of the Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga Flotilla and by the Fleet air arm and the 13th Air Army.

The Finns transferred four divisions and one brigade from Southern Karelia to the Karelian Isthmus in an effort to halt the Red Army. This was exactly what the Soviet Command had counted on, and on June 21 an offensive was mounted by the Karelian Front under General K. A. Meretskov. On the very first day General F. D. Gorelenko's 32nd Army covered 16 kilometres. The 7th Army, commanded by General A. N. Krutikov, crossed the Svir River in the vicinity of Lodeinoye Polye and drove a wedge 5-6 kilometres deep into the enemy's defences. The broad Svir River was crossed along its entire length by June 24. However, in the initial phase of the battle the enemy, thanks to his strongly fortified positions, managed to slow down the Soviet advance. General Headquarters ordered an intensification of the onslaught. On June 26, assisted by a task force landed by the Ladoga Flotilla (commander—Rear Admiral V. S. Cherokov), the 7th Army captured the town of Olonets. Two days later, in an outflanking manoeuvre, in which the Onega task force also took part, it liberated Petrozavodsk, capital of the Karelo-Finnish SSR.

In their retreat, the Finnish fascists mined and destroyed roads and blew up bridges. On July 10, despite the impassable roads and tenacious resistance, Soviet troops reached the Suvilahti and the Loimola and occupied the town of Pitkjaranta, which was an important stronghold in the enemy's system of defences. In the period June 11-20, advancing across extremely difficult terrain, they liberated Suojarvi, Liusvara, Jagljajarvi and other towns. This was followed by bitter fighting in the vicinity of Ilomantsi and Vjartsils. A halt to the offensive was ordered on August 9 by GHQ.

In the course of this offensive the Finns were forced to retreat 110 kilometres in the Karelian Isthmus and 200-250 kilometres in Southern Karelia. The northern part of Leningrad Region was cleared of the enemy. The population of Petrozavodsk breathed the air of freedom. The Kirov Railway and the White Sea-Baltic Canal—important lines of communication linking the Extreme North with the Central regions—were once more in Soviet hands.

The defeat of the Finnish Army compelled the Government of Finland to hasten with its decision to withdraw from the war. Finland sought to sign an armistice with the USSR as early as January 1944, following the German defeat at Leningrad, but pressure from the nazis and wavering among the Finnish ruling circles did not allow Finland to take the necessary steps in that direction. Now with the Red Army at Finland's 1941 frontiers, the question of withdrawing from the war became extremely acute. Economically Finland was exhausted. Anti-war sentiments were

mounting among the people. The German Army was retreating and suffering one defeat after another. Small wonder that even the Finnish reactionaries realised how hopeless it was to continue the war. On August 25 Finland offered to begin talks with the Soviet Union and on September 4, in compliance with the demand of the Soviet Government, she severed relations with Germany. An armistice agreement* was signed in Moscow on September 19. In drawing up this agreement the USSR was guided by the humane, democratic principles underlying its relations with all countries, small countries in particular.

2. EVE OF THE LIBERATION OF BYELORUSSIA

For three long years the Byelorussian people had languished in nazi captivity. The nazis had laid waste to entire towns, demolished numerous factories, set fire to 1,200,000 village buildings and completely destroyed the collective farms. They had reduced to ruins the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences and all its institutes, institutions of higher learning, nearly 7,000 schools, as well as theatres, clubs, museums and hospitals. The losses inflicted on the republic amounted to 75,000 million rubles. Essentially, the nazis had looted or destroyed the Byelorussian people's entire social wealth.

But the most bitter consequence of the nazi occupation was the enormous loss of human lives. In Byelorussia the nazis killed more than 2,200,000 civilians and prisoners of war.

The republic was dotted with prisons and concentration camps. Over 200,000 people were killed in only one of these camps—in the region of Bolshoi and Maly Trostenets near Minsk. In the village of Masyukovshchina they killed 80,000 war prisoners and civilians. In the Minsk ghetto they put to death at least 90,000 Jews. They shot people without trial, killed them by suffocation in gas chambers, set police dogs on them, and buried or burned them alive. Tens of thousands died in prisons from hunger. Some 380,000, mainly youths and girls, were deported for slave labour to Germany. A German woman in Prussia wrote cynically to her son, F. Lehrman, who was in the Army: "We've just received a good worker—a girl from Byelorussia. I've looked at the muscles on her arms and legs. She'll work." The terrible threat of complete annihilation hung over the Byelorussian people. Under Operation East, three-fourths of Byelorussia's population were to be resettled to West Siberia or exterminated, and the rest were to be Germanised.

But the brutality of the nazi invaders did not break the will of the people. They remained proud and unconquerable. Byelorussian patriots relentlessly fought the foreign enslavers. This struggle was directed by the Communist Party of Byelorussia and its Central Committee (Secretary—P. K. Ponomarenko) on the basis of instructions from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A ramified network of Party and Komsomol underground organisations operated in the republic. Altogether these had 11,042 Communists and over 31,000 Kom-

* One of the terms of the armistice agreement was that Finland would expel or disarm all German forces still in her territory. This commitment was carried out in October-November 1944, when German troops were forced out of Finland's northern regions. This military action by Finland played a favourable role in creating the foundation for the mutual trust and respect that underlie the good-neighbourly relations between Finland and the Soviet Union to this day.

somol members. Numerous non-Party anti-fascist organisations helped the Communist Party of Byelorussia.

A partisan struggle raged in Byelorussia throughout the three years of occupation. There were more than 370,000 fighting men in the partisan brigades and detachments. Over 70,000 underground workers were active in towns and villages. Partisans and underground workers killed enemy soldiers, officers, generals, officials and the traitors serving them, raided enemy headquarters, wrecked communication lines, derailed trains and disrupted the administrative and economic measures of the German Command. This people's war did not abate for a single moment in both town and countryside. The partisans kept the German Army in a state of constant tension and fear. Just retribution awaited the invaders everywhere. Behind the enemy's lines the partisan detachments and brigades, despite their losses (about 25,000 men were killed), were a formidable force. In the summer of 1944 the 150 brigades and 49 detachments fighting in the occupied part of Byelorussia had a total of over 143,000 men. They were led by many skilled partisan commanders, among whom were I. D. Vetrov, F. F. Kapusta, V. I. Kozlov, V. Y. Lobanok, R. N. Machulsky, S. I. Sikorsky, S. G. Sidorenko-Soldatenko and V. Y. Chernyshev.

Extensive educational work was conducted among the people by the underground Party organisations and the partisan brigades and detachments. Newspapers were published by all the Party committees and many of the partisan units and formations. Leaflets were issued frequently, and Soviet Information Bureau communiques were circulated. Meetings and talks were arranged for the population. In short, the people of Byelorussia were kept abreast of developments behind the Soviet firing lines.

The partisans controlled large areas, particularly in Oktyabrsky, Kopatkevichi, Zhitkovichi, Lyuban, Starobin, Gantsevichi, Klichev, Begoml, Ushach, Surazh and Mekhov districts. At the end of 1943 they were virtual masters of more than half of the republic, clearing the invaders out of thousands of villages and more than 20 district centres. As before the war, Soviet organs of power functioned in these areas. The invaders sent punitive forces into these territories repeatedly, particularly in the spring of 1944. They ruthlessly burned down villages and exterminated the inhabitants down to the last woman and child. Although part of the partisan territory was reoccupied, the Germans never gained complete control of it.

The entire population—men, women and children—gave the partisans every possible assistance. The Byelorussians knew that the Red Army would come and awaited their liberation from the east, from Moscow. Confident that victory was at hand they intensified their war of attrition. The ardent address adopted by the 6th Session of the Byelorussian Supreme Soviet in Gomel in March 1944 said, in part: "Our dear brothers and sisters, victory is near. Take heart.... Fan the flames of the people's partisan movement.... Victory is within reach, and we shall win it."

In Byelorussia the front-line ran 15-60 kilometres east of Polotsk, Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruisk and farther along the Pripyat to the vicinity of Kovel (Map 13). In this area the enemy had his Army Group Centre and the flank formations of neighbouring army groups—altogether 63 divisions and three brigades with 9,500 field guns and mortars and 900 tanks and assault guns. The land forces had the support of about 1,350 aircraft. The enemy built strong fortifications and turned many of the towns into fortresses. The fortifications were particularly dense near Vitebsk, Bobruisk and Orsha. In depth the enemy built several lines of defence, the last at a distance of 250-270 kilometres from the firing lines.

Why had the enemy built such a deep-echeloned system of defences and maintained so many troops—1,200,000 men (including logistical units)—in Byelorussia? He did not, as we already know, expect the Red Army to strike its main blow in the central sector of the Soviet-German front. The answer is obvious. The loss of Byelorussia would open the door to Poland and East Prussia and threaten the flanks of the German armies in the Baltic and the western regions of the Ukraine. This was what the German Command wished at all costs to avoid.

The 1st Baltic and the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Byelorussian fronts made thorough preparations for the offensive in Byelorussia. As early as the beginning of May 1944 the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in outline briefed the Front commanders on the coming offensive. Plans were drawn up in the strictest secrecy by Front headquarters and then submitted to GHQ. The plan for the offensive, code-named Operation Bagration, was worked out on the basis of these considerations.

This plan was closely scrutinised at a conference at GHQ on May 22-23, which was attended by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and his deputies, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, the commanders of the committed fronts and the members of the military councils. Some amendments were introduced on the insistence of the Front commanders.

The plan for this major operation of 1944 was simple and original. It was to start with converging assaults on the enemy's Vitebsk group by the adjoining wings of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Byelorussian fronts with the object of encircling and destroying it. Two assault groups of the 1st Byelorussian Front's right wing were to envelop the nazi group at Bobruisk from the east and south and annihilate it. Troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front and the left wing of the 3rd Byelorussian Front were to launch frontal attacks: one against Orsha and the other against Mogilev. The simultaneous breaching of the nazi defences at six points had the object of splitting the German forces and weakening their resistance. The liquidation of the Vitebsk and Bobruisk groups would create a wide gap for huge numbers of mobile troops.

At the next stage of the operation the 3rd and 1st Byelorussian fronts were to advance in a pincer movement towards Minsk and encircle the main forces of the 4th Army east of the Byelorussian capital. Possible counter-attacks by Army Group North were to be repulsed by troops of the 1st Baltic Front advancing northwestward. By surrounding the enemy to a depth of 200-250 kilometres the Red Army would form a strategic breach, several hundred kilometres wide, in his defences. Naturally, the enemy would be unable to close it rapidly, with the result that the Soviet Command would have the possibility of bringing in fresh forces, widening the offensive front and liberating the whole of Byelorussia and part of Lithuania and Latvia.

Another aspect of Operation Bagration was that the offensive would be actively supported by partisans, whose task was to disorganise the enemy's operational rear, disrupt the movement of enemy reserves and keep GHQ informed by radio of all enemy movements.

Painstaking preparations were begun for the offensive. The headquarters of the fronts specified the tasks of each army, of each artillery, aircraft, tank, motorised and cavalry corps, of each engineering unit and so on. Everything had to be taken into account and provided for.

General Headquarters representatives Marshals G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevsky co-ordinated the actions of the fronts. They took over these duties early in June 1944, going into all the details of the operation

not only at army level but at the level of divisions and corps. This had far-reaching results.

Attention was focussed on regrouping the troops. In addition to current reinforcements in men and equipment, the fronts received three fresh combined and two tank armies, seven separate tank, motorised and cavalry and eleven air corps. In addition, many separate tank and self-propelled gun regiments and brigades, and artillery, mortar and engineering units and formations were brought up. Two more armies were to be brought into Byelorussia in the course of the operation. The main forces were assembled in the sector of the 3rd Byelorussian Front and the right wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front. In May eight long-range aircraft corps were moved into the area round Chernigov and Kiev, from where they could more effectively support the advancing land forces. The newly-formed Polish 1st Army was included in the 1st Byelorussian Front with the assignment of joining in the offensive in Byelorussia and Eastern Poland.

The four fronts had more than 1,430,000 effectives (166 divisions, 12 tank and motorised corps, 7 fortified areas, 21 infantry brigades and a separate tank and a motorised brigade). They had over 31,000 field guns and mortars, 5,200 tanks and self-propelled guns, and about 5,000 aircraft. About one-fifth of these forces were to be committed two or three weeks after the offensive was started. The enemy, too, could commit only part of his strength at the start of the operation. That gave the Red Army double superiority in men, nearly treble superiority in artillery and mortars, and more than quadruple superiority in tanks and self-propelled guns and in the air. This was an important prerequisite for success. Even greater superiority was created in the breakthrough sectors, by drawing upon or even stripping inactive sectors of the front.

With such huge numbers of men the question of logistics naturally came to the fore. Tremendous quantities of fuel and ammunition had to be supplied for the enormous armada of tanks, aircraft and artillery. At least 13,500 railway carriages were needed for the transportation of one fire unit of shells and mines for the land forces of the four fronts. It was planned to stockpile at least four or five fire units.

About a million and a half men were assembled, each with his own mood and with his thoughts of country and family. But the one thought all had in common was to drive out the enemy, finish him off in Germany, and this meant liberating the European peoples and bringing the war to an end. This mass of men had to be welded together, brought to the peak of condition and prepared to surmount the difficulties that would inevitably be encountered during the long and bitter offensive. Each soldier had to be made aware that the enemy was still strong and would put up a fierce resistance. Communists were the mainstay of the commanders in preparing the troops politically. There were over 630,000 Communists in the four fronts.

The preparations for Operation Bagration were completed on June 22.

The partisans, too, were ready for combat. On June 8 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia drew the attention of the partisan formations and the underground regional and district committees to the need to disorganise enemy communications. On June 20-23 the partisans paralysed traffic on enemy-held railways running to the key sectors of the front and brought traffic on other railways to a halt. In the night of June 19-20 alone they blew up over 40,000 tracks. Colonel G. Teske, Chief of Transportation of Army Group Centre, wrote: "The lightning operation conducted during the night by partisan detachments

halted all railway traffic on individual sections of all the principal communications leading to the breakthrough areas.... This operation was carried out brilliantly."

3. ROUT OF THE ENEMY IN BYELORUSSIA

Operation Bagration was set in motion on June 23, 1944, now a memorable date in the history of Byelorussia.

Troops of the 1st Baltic Front (commander—General I. K. Bagramyan; member of the Military Council—General D. S. Leonov) moved from northeast of Vitebsk towards Beshenkovichi and Lepel in the southwest; the assault group consisted of two armies and a tank corps. Two armies and a mechanised cavalry group of the 3rd Byelorussian Front (commander—General I. D. Chernyakhovsky; member of the Military Council—General V. Y. Makarov) advanced towards Bogushevsk, and two armies and a tank corps pushed towards Orsha. The 5th Guards Tank Army was kept as a battering ram to be used in any one of these directions. The contiguous armies of these two fronts—General A. P. Beloborodov's 43rd and General I. I. Lyudnikov's 39th—had the task of encircling and destroying the German 3rd Panzer Army opposing them near Vitebsk. Two air armies—the 3rd under General N. F. Papivin and the 1st under General T. T. Khryukin—supported the operations of the land forces.

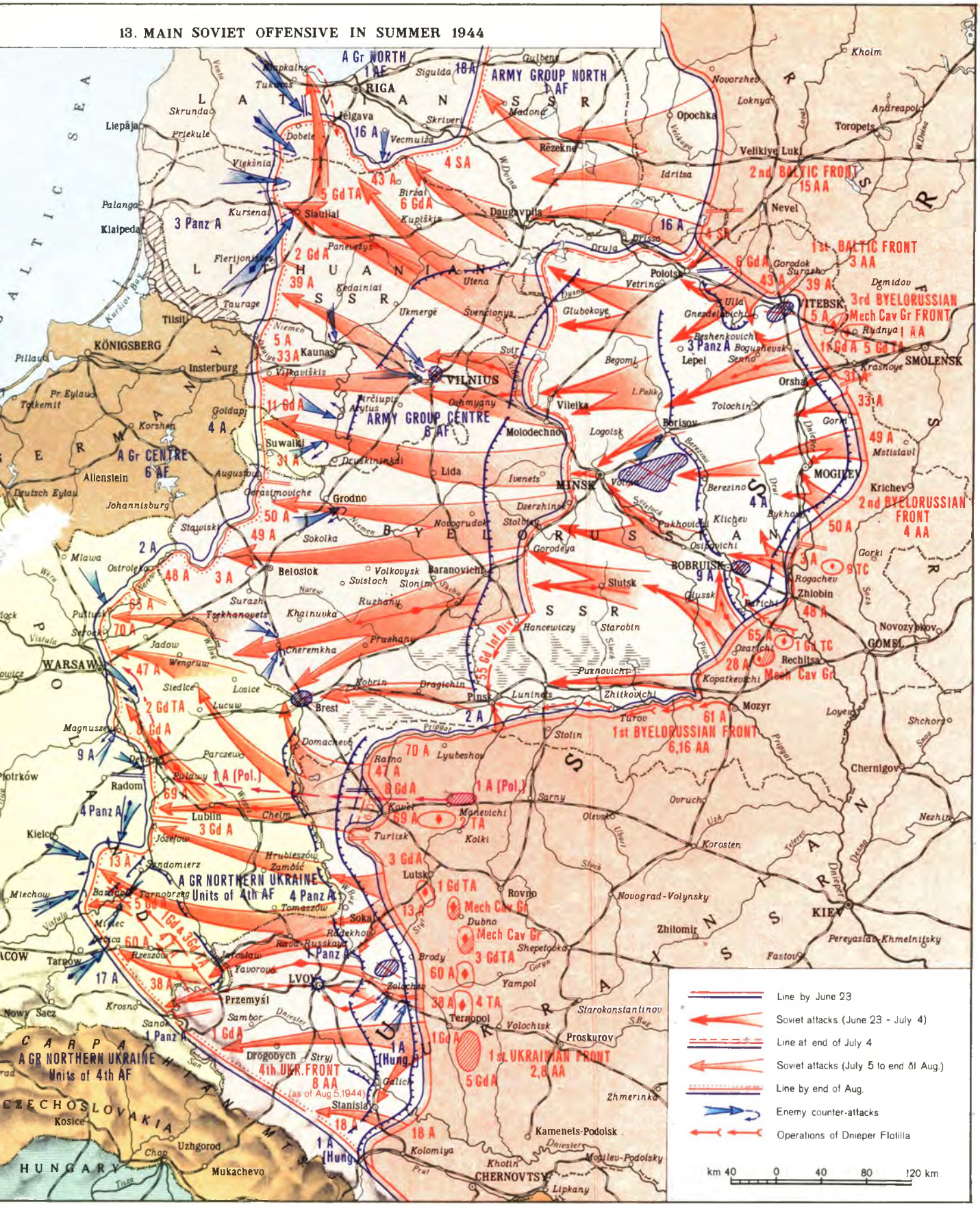
As early as June 24, after swiftly breaking through the German defences, troops of the 1st Baltic Front crossed the Western Dvina at Beshenkovichi and established several bridgeheads. The 43rd Army's 60th Infantry Corps reached the vicinity of Gnezdilovichi, which brought it to within 6-10 kilometres of the 39th Army's 5th Guards Infantry Corps that was advancing from the opposite direction. With the threat of encirclement hanging over them the Germans resisted savagely but they failed to push the Soviet units back. The bridgeheads were widened and contact was established between them. The two armies linked up west of Vitebsk. In the meantime, repulsing countless counter-attacks, the Front's main forces continued their advance. On June 28 they reached the vicinity of Lepel and the area north of the town.

In the course of six days the troops of this Front left the Western Dvina behind them and advanced nearly 90 kilometres. On the right wing the 4th Strike Army approached Polotsk.

On the first day of the offensive, after powerful artillery and air preparation, the 3rd Byelorussian Front made short work of the German defences round Bogushevsk, and on the next day General N. S. Oslikovsky's mechanised cavalry group overtook the infantry formations and entered the region west of Bogushevsk. But in the Orsha direction the enemy put up a fierce resistance. In that area the German artillery suffered little damage and this enabled the Germans to hold up the advancing troops. Little headway was made by both armies, with the result that Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky ordered Marshal P. A. Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army to join the battle in the Bogushevsk direction, i.e., where the offensive was progressing most successfully.

In the Orsha direction very little ground was captured on the third day as well. Seeking at all costs to hold Orsha and the road from it to Borisov and Minsk, the enemy hastily brought up his reserves to this area. It was only on June 26 that the right-wing units of General K. N. Galitsky's 11th Guards Army advanced far enough to allow General A. S. Burdeiny's 2nd Guards Tank Corps to enter the breach north of the motor road.

13. MAIN SOVIET OFFENSIVE IN SUMMER 1944



On the Front's right wing the annihilation of the encircled German Vitebsk group, consisting of over five divisions and many units of the 3rd Panzer Army, was started after the 5th Guards Infantry Corps of the 39th Army linked up with the 43rd Army's 60th Infantry Corps on June 25. The destruction of the enemy group was assigned to the main forces of the 39th Army and some units of the 43rd Army supported by aircraft. The Germans tried to break through to the southwest, launching nearly 25 counter-attacks on June 25 and almost the same number on the next day. But this gained them nothing. On June 27 part of the surrounded units downed arms and those that continued to resist were destroyed.

While fighting was raging near Vitebsk and Orsha, motorised troops of the 3rd Byelorussian Front supported by an air army advanced swiftly to the west. On June 26 Oslikovsky's mechanised cavalry group reached the vicinity of Senno and the 5th Guards Tank Army cut the Minsk motor road near Tolochin. The 2nd Guards Tank Corps skirted round Orsha on the northwest, turned southward and by nightfall cut the motor road west of Orsha. The enemy managed to move up his 5th Panzer Division from Kovel and take up defensive positions east of Borisov. His aim was to stop the 3rd Byelorussian Front's advance along the motor road and ensure the withdrawal of his troops towards Mogilev.

East of Borisov enemy resistance held up the advance of the 5th Guards Tank Army's left flank for almost two days. But it was no longer possible for the enemy to close the breaches. On June 27 the 11th Guards Army and General V. V. Glagolev's 31st Army liberated Orsha. With the support of an air army, the motorised formations approached the Berezina along a 60-kilometre sector on June 28. This was a major success. These troops were quickly followed by infantry, with General N. I. Krylov's 5th Army reaching the river first. Thus, in six days the firing lines were moved 150 kilometres to the west. The enemy's entire system of defences between the Western Dvina and the Dnieper collapsed. The "Smolensk Gates" were left far behind.

Strictly in accordance with the schedule, the 1st Byelorussian Front (commander—General K. K. Rokossovsky; member of the Military Council—General N. A. Bulganin) went into action on June 24 in the direction of Bobruisk.

General A. V. Gorbatov's 3rd Army, General P. L. Romanenko's 48th Army and General B. S. Bakharov's 9th Tank Corps advanced from the Rogachev-Zhlobin sector in the east. Two armies—General P. I. Batov's 65th and General A. A. Luchinsky's 28th—pressed from south of Parichi. Also involved in this action were General I. A. Pliyev's mechanised cavalry group, General M. F. Panov's 1st Guards Tank Corps, and the Dnieper Flotilla commanded by Captain First Rank V. V. Grigoryev. The land forces were supported by the 16th Air Army under General S. I. Rudenko. The two assault groups were to make contact near Bobruisk.

Very little success was scored by the Rogachev assault group on the first day on account of the enemy's desperate resistance, the open swampy terrain, the bad weather and poor reconnaissance. The same picture was observed on the second day as well. The offensive of the Parichi, southern, assault group proceeded more favourably. On the first day of the offensive in that sector the two advancing armies breached the enemy's defences along a wide front, enabling the 65th Army's mobile group—the 1st Guards Tank Corps—to enter the breach and advance 20 kilometres. On the next day, operating skilfully, it came to within 8-10 kilometres southwest of Bobruisk. The infantry corps utilised the tank corps' success for a swift advance northward to Bobruisk and northwestward to

Glussk. General Pliyev's group, which was committed in the sector of these armies, likewise advanced northwestward to form an outer ring round the enemy. In the night of June 26-27 the 1st Guards Tank Corps cut the road from Bobruisk to the west and northwest.

Meanwhile the situation changed also in the Rogachev sector. The 3rd Army commander requested permission to change the direction of the assault by the 9th Tank Corps to the forest-swamp region, where, according to reconnaissance reports available to him, the enemy defences were extremely weak. This request by A. V. Gorbatov was supported by the GHQ representative G. K. Zhukov. On June 26 the 9th Tank Corps forged ahead and reached Bobruisk from the east. By daybreak on June 27 the corps had cut all the roads and seized the ferries northeast of Bobruisk. Over six divisions of the German 9th Army found themselves encircled in the town itself and southeast of it.

The 3rd and 28th armies joined the mobile units on the outer ring round the encircled enemy, while the 48th and 65th armies formed the internal ring. The northwestern sector of the internal ring was not stable, being held by only brigades of two tank corps; the infantry units had not come up. On June 27 the enemy began preparations for a breakthrough to the northwest, hoping to link up with his 4th Army. Evidence of this was found in intercepted wireless messages, and confirmation was seen in the burning down of villages and the blowing up of ammunition dumps. The possibilities for a breakthrough were very real indeed.

In this situation the Front air units were ordered to bomb the enemy. Three hours after these orders were received, 400 bombers and attack aircraft covered by 126 fighters wreaked havoc among the enemy. The aircraft were assisted by land forces, which showed them the firing lines. Flames enveloped the enemy positions, sowing panic. Troops fled, lorries and tanks turned off the road, getting stuck in the mud, while others formed bottlenecks on the roads. Many of the troops tried to swim across the Berezina but were met by withering fire from the Soviet units advancing along the western bank. The battlefield was littered with thousands of mutilated lorries, field guns, tanks and self-propelled guns and with the corpses of enemy officers and men. On June 28 the 48th Army completed the annihilation of the nazi group southeast of Bobruisk. The remnants surrendered.

In Bobruisk itself fighting continued until June 29. After repeated attempts, about 5,000 of the enemy managed to break through the ring. But they were soon intercepted and taken prisoner.

By nightfall of June 29 Soviet troops advanced 100-110 kilometres, operating north and northwest of Osipovichi and east of Slutsk.

While sanguinary fighting was raging round Vitebsk, Orsha and Bobruisk, the 2nd Byelorussian Front (commander—General G. F. Zakharov; member of the Military Council—General L. Z. Mekhlis) began its offensive, concentrating in the centre. General I. T. Grishin's 49th Army moved towards Mogilev, its advanced units supported by General K. A. Vershinin's 4th Air Army crossing the Dnieper on June 26. Bridges were erected swiftly to allow the heavy equipment to cross the river. On June 28 the contiguous units of the 49th and 50th armies (the latter commanded by General I. V. Boldin) stormed and liberated the town of Mogilev, and by nightfall of the next day they entered the area between the Drut and the Dnieper.

Under pressure from four fronts the enemy defences between the Western Dvina and the Pripyat were shattered in six days. The nazis lost their key positions in the Byelorussian salient—around Vitebsk and Bobruisk.

Soviet troops moved swiftly westward, forcing the German 4th Army, which was defending the approaches to Mogilev, to retreat in the direction of Minsk. Mobile formations of the 3rd and 1st Byelorussian fronts bypassed the enemy's flank in depth and made it possible to move towards Minsk.

On June 28-29 GHQ specified the tasks of the fronts. The cardinal point of its directive was that the 3rd and 1st Byelorussian fronts had to reach and capture Minsk by an outflanking manoeuvre from two directions, thereby closing the ring round the German forces retreating towards the Byelorussian capital. The 2nd Byelorussian Front was given the assignment of pursuing the enemy and preventing him from losing contact with Soviet troops. The fronts immediately set about carrying out these tasks.

The 1st Baltic Front was advancing northwestward towards Polotsk and westward in the general direction of Glubokoye. To prevent Soviet troops from entering southeastern Latvia, the Germans had to hold Polotsk. That explains the fierce resistance that was encountered there. However, Polotsk was taken on July 4 as a result of the onslaught of General P. F. Malyshev's 4th Strike Army from the northeast and of the right-flank formations of General I. M. Chistyakov's 6th Guards Army from the south. By this time troops of the centre and left wing had advanced 120-130 kilometres and reached the approaches of Lithuania from the east.

The successes achieved by the 1st Baltic Front ensured the advance of all three Byelorussian fronts towards Minsk and made it possible to drive a deep wedge at the point of contact between army groups Centre and North. They could now be completely isolated from each other.

The developments south of the zone of the 1st Baltic Front's advance were by far the most important. This conformed to the plan of operations.

With its main forces on its left wing, the 3rd Byelorussian Front pursued the enemy in the direction of Borisov and Minsk and on June 29-30 its mechanised cavalry group and 5th Army crossed the Berezina River. General Oslikovsky's group moved forward so rapidly that by July 2 it had covered 120 kilometres and reached the vicinity of Vileika and Molodechno. There it captured a section of the railway running from Minsk to the northwest, to Vilnius. On the same day, another railway—from Minsk to the southwest, to Baranovichi—was cut by a cavalry corps of the 1st Byelorussian Front. Thus both the northwestern and southwestern railways were cut while Soviet troops pressed forward towards Minsk.

In the centre and on the left wing of the Front the enemy's resistance was broken a day later. After heavy fighting the town of Borisov was liberated on July 1. The tank formations that had gained the western bank of the Berezina made for Minsk. At dawn, on July 3, the 2nd Guards Tank Corps broke into the city from the east. At the same time units of Rotmistrov's tank army appeared somewhat north of Minsk. From there they moved in a northwesterly direction and soon cut the only motor road running from Minsk to the northwest.

The tank units of the 3rd Byelorussian Front were followed into Minsk from the southeast by M. F. Panov's 1st Guards Tank Corps of the 1st Byelorussian Front. With seven tank, motorised and cavalry corps gaining Minsk and areas 60-80 kilometres northwest, south and southwest of it, the main forces of the German 4th Army found themselves in a pocket. They were surrounded east of Minsk in a large territory of forests and swamps.

In the meantime, troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front were pursuing the enemy in two directions: Pukhovichi-Minsk and Slutsk-Baranovichi. In the first of these directions the enemy resisted strongly along the Svisloch

River, where he had the fresh 12th Panzer Division. But two Soviet tank corps reached Minsk on July 3 from the southeast and south (as we have already mentioned, the 1st Guards Tank Corps broke into the Byelorussian capital on the same day). They were followed by the 3rd Army. Two armies and a mechanised cavalry group advancing towards Baranovichi encountered resistance only in the vicinity of Slutsk. By nightfall of July 4 they were on the distant approaches of Baranovichi.

In this period an important role was played by the 2nd Byelorussian Front as well. Its troops pursued the enemy without giving them a moment's respite. They intercepted and destroyed enemy columns. Aircraft of the 4th and 16th air armies virtually hung over the German troops, and their task was made all the easier by the fact that in retreating the Germans used only roads. They were afraid of the forests, which were the domain of the partisans. In the end the German Command lost control over its troops.

Near Minsk Soviet troops surrounded a 105,000-strong enemy group consisting of units of the 12th, 27th and 35th army and the 39th and 41st panzer corps of the 4th and 9th armies.

In Minsk fighting raged throughout the whole of July 3, and the city was cleared of the enemy only towards evening. There was jubilation in the streets, where the people welcomed their liberators with flowers. Although the city was horribly scarred, with many buildings reduced to rubble or enveloped in flames, the faces of the people beamed with happiness. They did not hide their tears of joy.

On July 5 the German Command radioed orders to its encircled forces —one group was surrounded east of Minsk and the other southeast of the city—to make every effort to break through the Soviet ring towards the southwest. In the course of several days they doggedly attempted to carry out these orders. In the forests and swamps Soviet troops displayed great manoeuvrability and flexibility, splitting and destroying the enemy forces. Small enemy groups that managed to fight their way out of the ring met the same fate. The main enemy forces were annihilated or taken prisoner on July 7-8, and the remaining scattered groups were mopped up on July 9-11. The prisoners included 12 generals: three corps and nine divisional commanders.

The encirclement and liquidation of the enemy forces east of Minsk was an event of major importance in the development of Soviet military art. It was the first time that in an offensive operation of the Red Army the enemy was surrounded as a result of parallel and frontal pursuit to a depth of 200-250 kilometres from the forward edge of his defences.

Inestimable assistance was rendered the advancing troops by the Byelorussian people, primarily by the partisans. They captured river crossings and villages, cut off the enemy's lines of retreat, demolished railway tracks and derailed trains. The partisans liberated many district centres behind the enemy lines. Near the villages of Brod and Sinichino, on the Berezina River, the Zheleznyak Partisan Brigade held a bridgehead 17 kilometres wide and helped build bridges to enable General A. A. Aslanov's 35th Guards Tank Brigade to cross the river. Partisans acted as guides for troops pursuing the retreating enemy, kept the Soviet Command informed of enemy troop movements and captured identification prisoners and staff documents. They helped to liquidate encircled enemy groups and saved many people from being deported for slave labour in Germany. Tens of thousands of partisans joined the Red Army.

A partisan parade was held in Minsk in mid-July. The Byelorussian people, Party and government honoured their sons and daughters. At about

the same time 57,600 German officers and men taken prisoner in Byelorussia were marched through the broad streets of Moscow. This miserable procession of men, their heads hanging low, was led by their beaten generals.

The first round of the furious battles in Byelorussia ended on July 4. The main forces of the German Army Group Centre were destroyed in 11-12 days. A huge breach some 400 kilometres wide was formed in the very centre of the Soviet-German front. The enemy lacked the forces to close this breach quickly, and this enabled Soviet troops to move swiftly towards the Soviet Union's western frontiers.

General Headquarters issued new directives to the fronts on July 4, ordering the 1st Baltic Front to move its right wing towards Daugavpils, its centre towards Panevezis and Siauliai and its left wing towards Svencionys and Kaunas. Meanwhile the 3rd Byelorussian Front was to advance towards Vilnius on the right wing and Lida on the left with the ultimate objective of crossing the Niemen and securing a bridgehead on the western bank of that wide river. Thus, by mid-July it had not only to clear western Byelorussia of the enemy but also liberate a considerable portion of Lithuania. The 2nd Byelorussian Front was given the task of pursuing the enemy in the direction of Novogrudok and then of Grodno and Belostok. The right wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front was to press forward towards Baranovichi and Brest, capture the latter and establish a bridgehead on the Western Bug. Preparations for an offensive in the direction of Pinsk were made by the 61st Army.

Let us briefly examine the political situation in Lithuania on the eve of the decisive battles on her territory. With unparalleled brutality the nazis carried out their plan of colonising and Germanising Lithuania. In the course of the three years of occupation they annihilated almost one-fourth of the republic's population. In the small town of Paneriai alone they massacred 100,000 people, and killed 80,000 people in the ninth fort of the Kaunas fortress. Or take the monstrous crime in the village of Pirciupis, where the invaders burned every single house, killing all its inhabitants, not sparing even the children. This was a terrible repetition of the fiendish crime committed by the nazis in the Czech village of Lidice, the French village of Oradour and hundreds of villages in Byelorussia and the Ukraine. These crimes will be remembered by many generations of all nations. They will be remembered so that they can never be repeated.

During the three-year occupation, the nazis demolished 80 per cent of Lithuania's factories and destroyed nearly half of the livestock population. Tens of thousands of peasants were deprived of the land which they had received from the Soviet Government in 1940-41. But the Lithuanian people did not submit to the invaders. Led by their Communist Party they rose to defend their freedom. Two underground Party regional committees operated in Lithuania—the Northern Committee headed by M. Sumauskas, and the Southern Committee headed by G. Zimanas—as well as district, town and primary Party and Komsomol organisations. The Vilnius Party Committee was headed by J. T. Vitas. These underground organisations conducted political work among the people and were closely linked with the partisan detachments, giving them every assistance in the struggle against the invaders.

In the summer of 1944 there were 67 active partisan detachments and groups in Lithuania. When the Byelorussian campaign got under way, the Lithuanian Partisan Headquarters stepped up the attacks against enemy garrisons and, in particular, against the German lines of communication. The Lithuanians gave the Red Army all the help they could.

The 1st Baltic Front encountered the stiffest resistance on its right wing. The enemy was aware that any further advance of the Red Army to the northwest would threaten the right wing and rear echelons of Army Group North. He therefore moved five fresh divisions to the area round Daugavpils. The Soviet Command was unable to bring up additional forces to this sector of the Front, with the result that the 6th Guards Army was slowed down. However, in the centre and on the left wing, the Red Army cut the Daugavpils-Vilnius road and by mid-July advanced 140 kilometres to the west. Enemy counter-attacks became more and more frequent along the Utena-Ukmerge line.

The 3rd Byelorussian Front, which had reinforced its right wing, successfully pursued the retreating enemy. It fulfilled its assignment by the middle of the month: the 11th Guards and 39th armies reached and crossed the Niemen at and south of Alytus after advancing 180-200 kilometres in 10-11 days. The Niemen was the last major water barrier at the approaches to East Prussia. The Red Army was now only some 80 kilometres away from its frontiers. This explained the particularly fierce resistance put up by the enemy along the Niemen.

The nazis made every effort to hold Vilnius not only as the capital of Lithuania but also as the most important railway junction on the distant approaches of East Prussia. Despite this resistance the 3rd Guards Motorised and the 29th Tank Corps reached the Lithuanian capital from the northeast and southeast and entered its outskirts as early as July 7-8. Jointly with units of the 5th Army they surrounded the 15,000-strong garrison in the city. Two enemy panzer groups and an airborne task force tried to smash the ring. Protracted fighting set in and the city was liberated only on July 13.

Thus, in 10-11 days troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Byelorussian fronts drove the invaders out of more than one-fourth of Lithuania. The liberation of Vilnius, ancient capital of Lithuania and cradle of its culture and statehood, was a joyous event. Lithuanian partisans took part in the fighting. As soon as the Byelorussian operation was started, they began attacking the enemy's rail and road communications and seized several district centres. They blew up warehouses and bridges and attacked enemy garrisons in the towns and villages. Near Vilnius they saved many villages from being burned down, killing the nazis sent to set them on fire. Eleven Lithuanian partisan detachments entered Vilnius together with the Red Army.

In the course of the hot summer the regiments, divisions and corps of the other two Byelorussian fronts steadily pressed westward.

Part of the 2nd Byelorussian Front's forces were completing the liquidation, as we have already mentioned, of the enemy force surrounded near Minsk. Other units crossed several rivers and advanced nearly 230 kilometres in 10-11 days reaching the Niemen near Grodno. On July 16 the Soviet flag was once again hoisted over this ancient Byelorussian town.

The right wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front ran into strong resistance near Baranovichi, an extremely important railway junction and a powerful strongpoint covering the approaches of Brest. This town was liberated on July 8 as a result of a flanking manoeuvre by Pliyev's mechanised cavalry group and by troops of the 65th and 28th armies advancing from the east. Remnants of the enemy force beat a hasty retreat to Brest. On July 16-17, the Soviet troops pursuing them approached the towns of Swislocz and Pruzhany. Two days earlier, on July 14, the 61st Army (centre of the Front), aided by the Dnieper Flotilla, partisan units and

the 28th Army's 55th Guards Division, which had penetrated the enemy rear, liberated the regional centre of Pinsk and began advancing towards Kobrin.

The successes secured during the first half of July were fully utilised by GHQ. Offensives were mounted by the 2nd Baltic Front on July 10, by the 1st Ukrainian Front on July 13, by the 3rd Baltic Front on July 17, by the left wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front on July 18 and by the Leningrad Front on July 24.

In the second half of July and in August the most important developments took place in the northern and southern sectors of the offensive zone.

In the northern sector Bagramyan's troops shifted their pressure from Kaunas to Siauliai. The Front was reinforced with the 2nd Guards and 51st armies from the GHQ Reserve. The main forces of these armies came up only on July 23-25, but their advance units engaged the enemy as early as July 21 and began a rapid advance to the northwest and west. On July 27 Siauliai was liberated by General Y. G. Kreizer's 51st Army and General V. T. Obukhov's 3rd Guards Motorised Corps. On the same day, the 4th Strike Army of the 2nd Baltic Front supported by the 6th Guards Army entered the town of Daugavpils. On the left wing General P. G. Chanchibadze's 2nd Guards Army drove on to the southwest of Siauliai.

In this situation the Front commander, with the approval of Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky, decided to make for Riga. A directive from GHQ on July 28 ordered the Front to cut the land communications of Army Group North in this area. This task was carried out in four days. The 51st Army, co-operating with the 3rd Guards Motorised Corps, reached the vicinity of Jelgava, while Colonel S. D. Kremer's 8th Guards Motorised Brigade advanced as far as Klapkalns on the coast of the Gulf of Riga. After this the offensive was slowed down and the Soviet troops had to go over to the defensive.

The Hitler Command was determined to liquidate the Siauliai-Jelgava salient by cutting off the units of the three Soviet armies in that area. Eight panzer and motorised divisions were brought up for this purpose and powerful panzer counter-attacks were launched in the direction of Birzai and Siauliai. This compelled GHQ to reinforce the Front with the 5th Guards Tank Army. Heavy defensive battles continued for more than two weeks. The fighting near Siauliai was particularly bitter. The enemy scored some partial success: Soviet troops withdrew and entrenched themselves along the Jelgava-Dobele line.

While the 1st Baltic Front was pushing towards the Gulf of Riga, the operational situation in the sector of the 1st Byelorussian Front underwent a substantial change. At the outset of the Byelorussian offensive the flank groups were separated by the great Polessye swamps stretching for hundreds of kilometres. Now almost the whole of the Polessye region was left behind, and the length of the front-line was more than halved. This made it possible to co-ordinate the offensive along the entire sector and use all the available forces—ten combined, one tank and two air armies. These huge forces were used to drive the enemy out of the whole of Byelorussia and begin the liberation of Poland. This objective was achieved by the Lublin-Brest operation, which was commenced on July 18.

The main burden of this operation fell to the left wing, where in two days General N. I. Gusev's 47th Army, General V. I. Chuikov's 8th Guards Army and General V. Y. Kolpakchi's 69th Army supported by the 6th Air Army under General F. P. Polynin crushed enemy resistance west of Kovel in two days, crossed the Western Bug and entered Poland.

From bridgeheads established by Soviet troops, the 11th Tank Corps, the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps and part of the 8th Guards Army pressed on towards Parczew and Siedlce, while the 2nd Tank Army commanded by General S. I. Bogdanov moved towards Lublin. On July 21 Marshals K. K. Rokossovsky and G. K. Zhukov received a directive from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief ordering them to liberate Lublin not later than on July 26 and to use for this purpose primarily the 2nd Tank Army and the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps. "This," it was underscored in the directive, "is insistently demanded by the political situation and the interests of independent, democratic Poland." The town was captured on July 23, and on the 25th the tank army gained the Vistula near Deblin. Turning this position over to General Z. Berling's Polish 1st Army, the tank army wheeled northwestward and moved along the Vistula towards Praga, an eastern suburb of Warsaw. In the meantime, the right-wing armies reached a locality northwest of Brest. The German troops in the vicinity of Brest thus found themselves behind the Soviet lines. They resisted until July 28. On that day the 28th, 61st and 70th armies commanded by generals A. A. Luchinsky, P. A. Belov and V. S. Popov respectively liberated Brest by assault.

Fierce fighting flared up at the approaches of Praga. The tank army suffered heavy losses. In August the 1st Byelorussian Front's right wing and centre had to slow down considerably. These forces reached the Narew River and secured bridgeheads in the Pultusk-Serock area only towards the end of the month. Early in August they had established bridgeheads on the Vistula at Magnushev and Pulawy. Fighting raged at these bridgeheads throughout August, while at some of them the fighting dragged out into September. But nothing came of the enemy's attempts to restore the situation.

The Polish people gave the Red Army a joyous welcome, hanging out Polish and Soviet flags. Soviet-Polish meetings were held spontaneously in towns and villages. Many Polish patriots helped the Red Army in every possible way, caring for wounded and sick soldiers and paying tribute to those who had fallen.

The 3rd and 2nd Byelorussian fronts likewise advanced in the second half of July and in August. They liberated Belostok on July 27 and Kaunas on August 1. At the close of August both fronts reached the frontiers of East Prussia. The frontier zone swarmed with German troops.

For more than three years Soviet soldiers had dreamed of seeing the frontiers of East Prussia. Even when they were fighting at the walls of Leningrad, attacking the enemy in the winter frost near Moscow and defending Stalingrad, they were sure that day would come. East Prussia, outpost of German militarism and imperialism, protruded far into the east, hanging over Poland like the sword of Damocles. From there invasions had been started against Russia and piratical raids undertaken against the peaceful towns and villages of the Baltic area. Now, at the close of August 1944, Soviet soldiers got their first glimpse of Germany beyond the small and quiet Sheshupe River. Years of unparalleled hardship had been left behind but Soviet troops knew that enormous difficulties still lay ahead.

The brilliant success of the Byelorussian operation was largely due to the Party's excellently organised political work. It is to the credit of the political instructors that the troops had a clear idea of their task and carried it out with a sense of responsibilty to their country. Thousands upon thousands of troops joined the Communist Party before going into battle. In June alone some 40,000 troops of the four fronts were accepted into the Party. Scorning death, Soviet men and officers undauntedly went into

battle and performed feats of unprecedented heroism. For courage displayed in crossing the Western Dvina 145 soldiers of the 1st Baltic Front were decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

On June 25, when the fighting for Vitebsk was at its height, a sapper platoon of the 875th Regiment, 158th Division, under Sergeant F. T. Blokhin was ordered to seize a bridge across the Western Dvina. The platoon made a sudden breakthrough and destroyed the bridge guard. However, the Germans managed to set the fuse alight. Sergeant Blokhin saw the danger. Racing against time, he ran to the fuse and cut it. Today a memorial plaque on the bridge has the following words engraved on it: "In a fierce engagement with the nazi invaders on June 26, 1944, this bridge was saved from destruction by a group of soldiers led by Hero of the Soviet Union F. T. Blokhin."

A monument has been erected in Borisov to Heroes of the Soviet Union Company Party organiser Lieutenant P. N. Rak and Komsomol members Sergeants A. A. Petryaev and A. I. Danilov, who formed the crew of a tank of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Guards Tank Corps. They died liberating the town. On June 29 Lieutenant Rak's tank raced over a mined bridge across the Berezina into Borisov. Soon afterwards the bridge blew up. Cut off from the main body, the tank crew went on fighting, destroying the kommandatura and the headquarters of a German unit and sowing panic among the German troops. The tankmen fought this unequal battle for 16 hours, wearing down the enemy's resistance. This helped the Soviet troops gain possession of the town.

An example of peerless staunchness was also set by Private Yuri Smirnov of the 77th Regiment, 26th Guards Division. Yuri joined the Army after his father, V. A. Smirnov, died a hero's death defending Stalingrad. He was wounded, and after returning to active duty he joined the Komsomol. On June 24, the day when the enemy's defences were breached north of Orsha, Smirnov went into battle with a tank task force. He was seriously wounded again, fell from a tank and was taken prisoner. The nazis vainly sought to make him talk, manhandling him and threatening to shoot him. Finally, the German officers brought a cross into the trench shelter and crucified the young soldier, driving large rusty nails into his hands and feet and then through his forehead. The Red Armyman died without uttering a word. When Soviet troops burst into the trench shelter they found the relevant interrogation protocol, in which these horrible facts were stated with cynical frankness.

Heroic valour was displayed on July 26, 1944, near the Polish village of Gierasimovicze by Communist, Private First Class G. P. Kunavin of the 1021st Regiment, 307th Division. During an offensive action, fire from an enemy pillbox obstructed the company's advance. Without hesitating, Kunavin closed the firing slit with his body and thereby enabled the company to fulfil its task.

On August 9, 1944, the inhabitants of Gierasimovicze village decided that "Teachers shall each year begin their first class with the story of the hero and his comrades, who died so that Polish children would have the right to happiness and freedom. *Children shall listen standing.* May their hearts fill with pride in their fellow Slav, the Russian soldier. May their understanding of life begin with the thought of the fraternity between the Polish and Russian peoples." This injunction is rigidly fulfilled by teachers.

The great offensive in Byelorussia, started on June 23, ended on August 29, 1944. It was one of the Red Army's largest operations in the war. The Soviet forces involved, including reserves sent into action in

the course of the offensive as well as logistical units, consisted of 2,500,000 effectives, more than 45,000 field guns and mortars of all calibre, over 6,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, and some 5,000 combat aircraft (not counting long-range bombers and reconnaissance planes). Opposing them were more than 1,500,000 troops, roughly 17,000 field guns and mortars of various calibre, over 1,500 tanks and assault guns, and more than 2,100 aircraft.

The Red Army defeated Army Group Centre and advanced 550-600 kilometres to the west. Of the enemy divisions and brigades involved in this operation, 50 divisions lost more than half of their effectives and 17 divisions and three brigades were annihilated to a man. This was an overwhelming victory. The Motherland fired 36 salvoes in honour of the four fronts successfully advancing in Byelorussia, Lithuania and Poland.

4. END OF NAZI RULE IN THE UKRAINE

The nazis were in occupation of the western regions of the Ukraine for three years. They mercilessly oppressed the people making every effort to force them to their knees. They stained the ancient Ukrainian land with the blood of innocent people. In the city and region of Lvov alone they killed close to 700,000 Soviet citizens and many Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs, Dutchmen, Englishmen and Americans. Operation East called for the resettlement of two-thirds of this area's population in Siberia. Heinous crimes were committed here by Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists, who were the mainstay of the nazi invaders. Their hands are stained with the blood of hundreds of thousands of Soviet people. The traitors murdered Communist underground workers, Red Army political instructors and partisans and used brute force against the Polish population. With their propaganda they sought to poison the minds of the people and divert them from the struggle.

Instead of bowing their heads to the invaders the population of the western regions of the Ukraine rose against them under the leadership of Communists. A selfless struggle against the invaders was waged by underground Communist and Komsomol organisations.

The partisan struggle spread quickly during the first half of 1944 under the impact of the Red Army's successes. There was a steady influx of local inhabitants into the partisan units. Many formations and units advanced into the western regions from the western bank of the Dnieper. From there some of them moved to the southeastern regions of Poland. By the end of April in the occupied regions of the Ukraine and in the southeastern regions of Poland there were ten partisan formations and 53 detachments, altogether about 9,000 men. In the spring and summer they attacked enemy communication lines in collaboration with Polish partisan detachments. On the eve of the Red Army offensive they brought traffic to a standstill for almost a month on the Lvov-Warsaw and Rawa-Russka-Yaroslav railways, and destroyed 13 large garrisons. This joint struggle against the common enemy strengthened friendship between the Polish and Soviet peoples.

After their defeat in Byelorussia, the Germans, as could be expected, were forced to transfer six divisions, including three panzer divisions, from the western regions of the Ukraine. They thereby substantially weakened their forces facing the 1st Ukrainian Front. Still, when the Red Army started its offensive, Army Group Northern Ukraine consisted

of 34 infantry, one motorised and five panzer divisions and two infantry brigades. These had over 600,000 effectives (plus 300,000 effectives in the logistical units), 900 tanks and assault guns, and 6,300 field guns and mortars. They were supported by 700 aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet. At the approaches of the Vistula and the Carpathians the enemy built a system of defences nearly 50 kilometres in depth. These defences were particularly strong round Lvov, a very important strategic centre and railway and motor-road junction. The enemy attached immense importance to the defence of Lvov, a major strategic strongpoint and a large railway and road junction.

As early as the beginning of June the command of the 1st Ukrainian Front (commander—Marshal I. S. Konev; members of the Military Council—generals N. S. Khrushchev up to August 1, 1944, and K. V. Krainyukov) submitted to GHQ a plan for an offensive. With some amendments this plan was approved. On June 24 the Front was ordered to strike in two directions: smash the enemy group at Rawa-Russka and Lvov and advance to the line running through Khrubeshuv, Tomashuv, Yavorov and Galich. To ensure the advance towards Lvov part of the Front's forces were to strike in the direction of Stanislav. General Headquarters reinforced the Front so that when the offensive was started it had 80 divisions, ten tank and motorised corps, four separate tank and motorised brigades, 13,900 field guns and mortars, and nearly 2,200 tanks and self-propelled guns. There were 843,000 combatant troops (1,200,000 effectives counting the logistical echelons). The land forces had the support of more than 3,000 aircraft of General S. A. Krasovsky's 2nd Air Army.

The concentration of such a large number of troops and equipment on one Front, it must be emphasised, was quite unusual. This was the only case in the war when one Front was given the task of destroying an enemy army group.

The Front commander decided to move his right wing (3rd Guards and 13th armies, 1st Guards Tank Army and General V. K. Baranov's mechanised cavalry group) in the direction of Rawa-Russka and his centre (60th and 38th armies, 3rd Guards and 4th tank armies and General S. V. Sokolov's mechanised cavalry group) in the direction of Lvov. Two armies (1st Guards and 18th) were to advance on the left wing towards Stanislav. The 5th Guards Army was assigned to the second echelon, and an infantry and a tank corps were held in reserve.

Advance units of General V. N. Gordov's 3rd Guards Army and General N. P. Pukhov's 13th Army went into action in the Rawa-Russka sector in the morning of July 13 supported by units of first-echelon divisions. In the south the offensive in the direction of Lvov was started on July 14 by General P. A. Kurochkin's 60th Army and General K. S. Moskalenko's 38th Army. By nightfall of the next day the troops moving towards Rawa-Russka advanced to a depth of 15-20 kilometres after heavy fighting. In the Lvov direction the enemy's defences were not breached in the time given for that operation. Moreover, on July 15 a large enemy group struck a powerful counter-blow south of Zolochev and pressed back the 38th Army.

Mobile troops—General V. K. Baranov's mechanised cavalry group on July 16th and General M. Y. Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Army on July 17th—were sent into the breach made in the northern sector. Soviet cavalry and tanks advanced swiftly in the general direction of Yaroslav and in a movement designed to envelop the German Brody group from the north.

It was extremely difficult to bring tank armies into the battle in the

Lvov direction because there the 60th Army had only a narrow corridor in the enemy defences 4-6 kilometres wide and about 18 kilometres deep that had been formed by the 15th Infantry Corps. General P. S. Rybalko, commander of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, took the daring decision of sending his army into battle through this corridor in the morning of July 16. The Front Military Council gave its approval. In the morning of July 17 this army was followed by General D. D. Lelyushenko's 4th Tank Army. The enemy put up a fierce resistance.

This was the only time in the war that two tank armies engaged in battle in such a narrow sector while powerful enemy counter-attacks were being repulsed on the flanks. It gave evidence of the proficiency of Soviet generals and officers, their iron will and their ability to achieve the set objective in the most intricate situation.

Towards evening of July 18 troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front broke through the German defences in a sector 200 kilometres wide, advanced 50-80 kilometres and surrounded eight divisions near Brody. A major development was the crossing of the Western Bug and the Front's entry into Poland on July 17.

As we have mentioned earlier, a powerful group of the 1st Byelorussian Front's left wing moved from Kovel towards Lublin on July 18. This made the enemy's position still more untenable.

The Germans made desperate attempts to relieve the pressure on their encircled divisions and hold Lvov, but to no avail. The enemy force in the Brody pocket was battered in the course of four days. Attacked from several directions it was cut up and completely wiped out on July 22. The Front's main forces continued their westward offensive, with the right wing registering the most impressive successes. The 13th Army, the 1st Guards Tank Army and General Baranov's mechanised cavalry group gained the San River on July 29 and secured bridgeheads on its western bank near Yaroslav. Meanwhile, the considerable enemy forces transferred to Lvov frustrated the attempts of the 3rd Guards and 4th tank armies to capture the city from the east on July 19-20. The Front commander, therefore, decided to take the city by a deep flanking manoeuvre of tank armies and a simultaneous attack from the east. This plan was carried out brilliantly. In three days the 3rd Guards Tank Army, taking advantage of the successes on the Front's right wing, covered 120 kilometres in an outflanking movement which brought it to the north of Lvov. On July 24 it reached the vicinity of Yavorov and from there it moved in two directions—towards Lvov and towards Przemysl.

The 4th Tank Army operated very efficiently as well. At daybreak on July 22 it entered the southern outskirts of Lvov and engaged the enemy in street fighting.

The 60th Army advanced on Lvov from the east. The enemy garrison began to withdraw to the southwest in an effort to avoid encirclement. The city was liberated on July 27 and on the same day General A. A. Grechko's 1st Guards Army, which had taken the offensive on the Front's left wing on July 21, captured the town of Stanislav.

In the course of 15 days the 1st Ukrainian Front thus inflicted a stinging defeat on Army Group Northern Ukraine and advanced more than 200 kilometres to the west.

Fresh objectives were set by GHQ on July 27 and 28. The principal objective was to smash the enemy reserves that were being brought up, force the Vistula and establish a large bridgehead. This operation had to be carried out by the 1st Ukrainian Front in co-operation with the 1st Byelorussian Front. To achieve this objective the 1st Ukrainian Front

transferred its main effort to its right wing and deployed the 1st and 3rd Guards tank armies for an advance on Sandomierz.

In fulfilment of the new tasks the troops pushed rapidly towards the Vistula with some units moving in the direction of the Carpathians. On July 29 the advanced units of the 3rd Guards and 13th armies and the 1st and 3rd Guards tank armies reached the Vistula and immediately began crossing it. This water barrier was forced at Baranuv against stubborn enemy resistance, and heavy fighting broke out as the enemy tried to prevent any widening of the bridgehead near Sandomierz.

Early in August the Germans launched a powerful counter-attack from the towns of Mielec and Tarnobrzeg in the direction of Baranuv. They hoped to cut off and destroy the troops that had crossed the Vistula. It was only the courage and staunchness of these troops that stopped them. On August 4 the Front commander sent General A. S. Zhadov's fresh 5th Guards Army into battle. It crushed the enemy on the eastern bank of the Vistula and joined the troops in the Sandomierz bridgehead. Subsequently this bridgehead was reinforced with the 4th Tank Army and several infantry corps and artillery and engineer units. Throughout August the enemy continuously counter-attacked but in spite of all his efforts towards the end of the month the bridgehead was enlarged to a width of about 75 kilometres and a depth of 50 kilometres. Army Group Northern Ukraine suffered a crushing defeat: 32 divisions lost from 50 to 70 per cent of their personnel, and eight divisions were completely wiped out.

While the battle for the Sandomierz bridgehead was raging troops of the centre and left wing made steady headway towards Dembica and the Carpathians. Operations in mountainous country required troops with special training and also special methods of control. To meet this requirement GHQ formed the new, 4th Ukrainian Front (commander—General of the Army I. Y. Petrov; member of the Military Council—General L. Z. Mekhlis) consisting of the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front: the 1st Guards and the 18th armies and the administration of the 8th Air Army. At the approaches to the Carpathians the troops encountered dogged resistance and on August 15 GHQ ordered them to go over to the defensive.

The offensive in the Carpathians was renewed in October 1944, and the enemy was soon driven out of the last occupied regions in the Ukraine. Uzhgorod, an important administrative centre of the Transcarpathian Ukraine, was liberated on October 27.

* * *

The Red Army completed its victorious campaign towards the close of August. It won the bitterly fought battle of the summer of 1944 in the main direction of the Soviet-German front. In that battle both sides had a total of more than 6,000,000 officers and men, over 85,000 field guns and mortars of all calibre, about 11,000 tanks and assault guns, and over 10,500 combat aircraft. As a result of its offensive the Red Army liberated Byelorussia and more than three-fourths of Lithuania, drove the last of the enemy out of the Ukraine and began the liberation of Poland. It restored the Soviet state frontier over a distance of more than 950 kilometres from Kaunas to west of Sambor.

Smashing defeats were inflicted on two of the four strategic army groups on the Soviet-German front: Centre and Northern Ukraine. Eighty-two enemy divisions lost from 60 to 70 per cent of their effectives, and 26 were completely destroyed. In the course of the offensive enemy forces

were encircled near Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Minsk and Brody, as well as in Vilnius and Brest. In savage fighting Soviet troops annihilated large enemy reserves that had been transferred from Germany, occupied European countries and neighbouring army groups.

The offensive radically changed the strategic situation. In Byelorussia the front-line was moved 500-600 kilometres to the west, and in the direction of Lvov and Sandomierz it was moved about 300 kilometres. In July and August the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts took advantage of the offensive to improve their position. They advanced 120 and 220 kilometres respectively, sweeping into Estonia and Latvia. Army Group North, which was still holding the Soviet Baltic area, found itself in difficulties when the 1st Baltic Front penetrated the region of Jelgava-Siauliai. The German land communications running through a narrow corridor—not more than 40 kilometres wide—between the Gulf of Riga and Jelgava now became vulnerable, and the situation became extremely favourable for the liberation of Estonia, Latvia and the part of Lithuania still in enemy hands.

The position of Army Group Southern Ukraine, which was on the defensive in Moldavia and Rumania, sharply deteriorated as a result of the successful Red Army offensive in Byelorussia and particularly in the western regions of the Ukraine. The Red Army was now able to strike a powerful blow in the Southwestern theatre, in the direction of Jassy and Bucharest.

Another important result of the Red Army offensive was that it carried troops of five fronts (23 combined, five tank and five air armies) to the frontiers of East Prussia, the Vistula and the Carpathians. From these lines they could now attack the enemy in the sector between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathians, enter East Prussia and gain the approaches of Berlin.

Moreover, the offensive was of tremendous international significance, enhancing the prestige of the Soviet Union, spurring on the struggle against nazism and sowing confusion among the enemy. On August 31 Hitler declared: "I cannot conceive of a worse situation than what we have in the East this year. When Fieldmarshal Model* arrived Army Group Centre was in a desperate position." The immense significance of the Red Army's summer offensive is admitted even by nazi historians, who usually belittle the importance of Soviet achievements. For instance, in *Decisive Battles of the Second World War,* General Hermann Gackenholz writes: "The developments in the summer of 1944 had a much greater impact [than the Battle of Stalingrad—*Ed.*] on Germany's general military position: the defeat of Army Group Centre affected the entire German Eastern front. . . ."

The Red Army's brilliant victories in the summer of 1944 evoked admiration in Britain, the USA, Canada and other Allied countries.

On August 2, 1944, speaking in the House of Commons on the military situation, Winston Churchill declared that ". . . there was no force in the world . . . that would have been able to maul and break the German Army unless it had been subjected to the terrible slaughter and manhandling that has befallen it through the strength of the Russian Soviet armies".

The blow that was struck in the direction of the main thrust in the summer of 1944 was a further brilliant triumph of the Soviet Armed Forces.

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* On June 28, 1944, Model replaced Fieldmarshal Busch as commander of Army Group Centre.

Chapter Fourteen

LIBERATION OF THE SOVIET BALTIC REPUBLICS

1. ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA IN THE AUTUMN OF 1944

In the summer of 1944 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were still languishing under the yoke of nazi occupation, which in the course of three years had brought incalculable suffering to the people. A directive signed by Alfred Rosenberg, the nazi Minister for Occupied Eastern Regions, stated that the aim of the Reich Plenipotentiary in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia was the creation of a German protectorate that subsequently, through the Germanisation of racially suitable elements, German colonisation and the extermination of undesirable elements, would become part of the Greater Reich. The Baltic would become an inner German sea protected by the Greater Reich. Racially "unsuitable" elements were to be destroyed or resettled in the eastern regions of the Soviet Union.

As soon as the German enslavers occupied these republics they deprived the peasants of the land received by them from the Soviet authorities in 1940-41. They drove families out of their homes, sending many to forced labour in Germany, where Soviet people were kept in inhuman conditions. In the towns they took over the best houses. The position of the working people, particularly of the industrial workers, sharply deteriorated as a result of violence and unbridled looting. They were denied all rights. Factory managers had the authority to fix the length of the working day at their own discretion and sentence workers to corporal punishment or to detention in punishment cells. On top of having to work 12-16 hours a day, the workers received hunger rations. The nazi vandals killed 700,000 people in Lithuania (including more than half a million local inhabitants), nearly 314,000 in Latvia and over 125,000 in Estonia.

A small group of traitors—bourgeois nationalists—who were eager to wrest Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania away from the Soviet Union and restore capitalism in these republics, helped to implement the nazis' inhuman policy. They supported the occupation regime and acted as underlings of the Gestapo.

With Communists at their head the working people of the Baltic republics resisted the occupation from the very first days of the war. Despite brutal repressions, factory workers sabotaged the orders of their employers and reduced output. The peasants set fire to the farms of German colonists and disrupted deliveries of farm produce. Anti-fascist committees, which united all strata of the population, were set up in towns and villages. The underground Party organisations became more

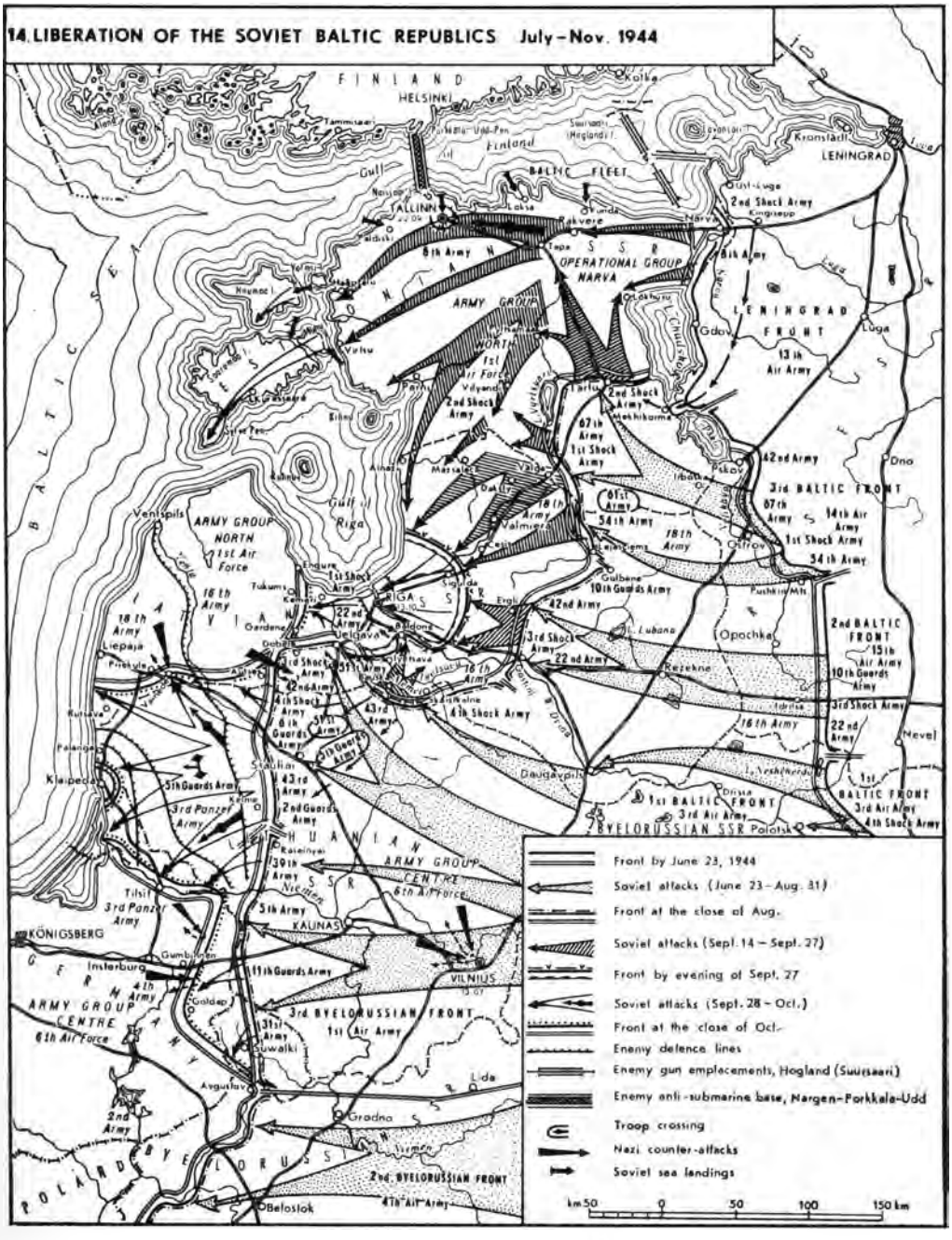
active. A partisan movement was started under their leadership. The scale of this movement grew immensely in the second half of 1942, after republican partisan headquarters were established. The activities of these headquarters were directed by the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The absence of large tracts of forests, the highly ramified system of roads and the dense telephone network compelled the partisans to operate in small detachments and separate groups. Despite this handicap they harassed the enemy and inflicted substantial losses on him. The nazis had to bring in large forces to combat them.

The great courage shown by the Baltic partisans is strikingly illustrated by the following example. A combat group led by the 20-year-old Maria Melnikaite was surrounded by German troops before it could carry out its assignment. The partisans fought like lions, but the odds were heavily against them and they were captured. The nazis tortured them hideously before taking them out to be hanged. On the scaffold, Maria spoke with dignity to her hangmen: "I fought and am dying for Soviet Lithuania. What brought you here, what are you doing in our Lithuania?" Maria died but she was not forgotten; she was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union. I. J. Sudmalis is another partisan whose memory is cherished by the Soviet people. The daring raids led by him kept the nazis in a state of terror. They finally got on his track through a provocateur. In May 1944 the Latvian partisan was executed. Like Maria he was created Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously. The people revere the memory of Estonian Komsomol member Helen Kulman, Hero of the Soviet Union, who was captured by the police during a combat mission and brutally tortured. Before dying she cried to the hangman: "You cannot kill all of us. Estonia will be free!"

The partisan struggle spread rapidly in 1944. In Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia the partisans blew up bridges, derailed enemy troop trains, demolished railway stations and attacked enemy garrisons. In Latvia, for example, in the summer of 1944 the partisan movement embraced almost all districts: three brigades and four detachments operated in that republic. In Latvia partisan activity increased with the approach of the Red Army. The Red Army was actively assisted by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd partisan brigades (commanders—V. P. Samson, P. Ratins and O. P. Oskalns). In Estonia partisan strength increased fivefold in 1944 over 1943. The partisan detachment operating in Virumaa had 390 men. The most famous of the Estonian detachments, under E. Aartei, operated jointly with partisans of Leningrad Region. The large partisan movement in Lithuania facilitated the Red Army's advance to the Soviet-German frontier.

The struggle of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian peoples, who made a large contribution towards the defeat of the nazi invaders, unfolded under favourable conditions. The Red Army offensive in the Northwestern and Western theatres directly affected the situation in the Soviet Baltic republics, where considerable territory had already been liberated by the autumn of 1944.

After successful operations near Leningrad and Novgorod, Soviet troops drew close to the eastern frontiers of the Baltic republics in the winter of 1944. However, attempts to advance in the direction of Tallinn and Riga failed to yield tangible results either in March or April. Units of the Leningrad Front deployed along the Narva River set foot in Estonia; elements of the 3rd Baltic Front were at the eastern approaches of Pskov and Ostrov; units of the 2nd Baltic Front were on a line running east



of Pushkinskiye Gory and Idritsa, and of the 1st Baltic Front—south of Lake Neshcherdo, at the approaches of Polotsk and Vitebsk (Maps 10, 13 and 14).

The successful Soviet advance in Byelorussia in the summer of 1944 led to the liberation of a large part of Lithuania and her capital Vilnius.

Following their defeat in Byelorussia, the nazis transferred part of Army Group North to that area. This allowed the Red Army to launch

an offensive north of the Daugava River (Western Dvina). GHQ had set the fronts operating north of that river offensive tasks as early as July 4. The 2nd Baltic Front mounted an offensive in the direction of Riga on July 10 from the area east of Idritsa. Breaking through the enemy's prepared positions on July 16 it moved hostilities into Latvian territory. Crushing the enemy's powerful resistance and negotiating swamps and forests, the troops advanced and, at the close of August, reached Ergli and occupied Gostini. They were jubilantly welcomed by the population.

Troops of the Latvian 130th Infantry Corps under General D. K. Brantkalns were among the first to step on their native soil. In the liberated townships and villages many of the men found relatives and friends. These troops displayed gallantry and valour in battle.

The 3rd Baltic Front, which joined in the offensive on July 17, likewise broke through into Latvia and Estonia. On August 25 it occupied Tartu and came up to Valga. Narva had been liberated on July 26 by the Leningrad Front operating farther north.

The successful offensive in the Northwestern theatre stemmed directly from the Byelorussian operation of the summer of 1944. In July-August Soviet troops had advanced to a depth of over 200 kilometres, liberating part of Estonia, a large portion of Latvia and most of Lithuania. In early September the front-line ran west of Narva, Lake Chudskoye, Tartu, east of Valga, west of Gulbene, Kruspils, Bauska, Jelgava, and west of Siauliai and Raseiniai.

Having drawn back, troops of Army Group North (operational group Narva and the 18th and 16th armies) and the 3rd Panzer Army from Army Group Centre dug in along a new defensive line running for nearly 1,000 kilometres from the Gulf of Finland to the Niemen.* The enemy Baltic group consisted of 56 divisions (including five panzer and two motorised divisions) and three motorised brigades with a total of over 700,000 effectives, 1,216 tanks and assault guns and about 7,000 field guns and mortars. These forces had the support of some 400 aircraft.

The Soviet Supreme Command set the task of destroying this group and liberating the Baltic peoples to the Leningrad and the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts backed by the Baltic Fleet. These fronts had 125 divisions, seven fortified areas and seven tank and motorised corps, totalling 900,000 officers and men, 17,480 field guns and mortars of 76-mm and larger calibre, and 3,080 tanks and self-propelled guns. The supporting air armies consisted of 2,640 aircraft. Moreover, use was made of the Baltic Fleet's air arm and of long-range bombers.

In planning this offensive GHQ took the considerations of the Front commanders into account. Two columns were to advance on Riga—south and north of the Daugava River. It was calculated that this manoeuvre would split Army Group North and cut it off from the main forces of the German Army.

The 1st Baltic Front was to hold its positions in the centre and on the left wing, and move its right wing from the southeast towards Riga and the Baltic coast and thereby cut off the enemy's retreat to East Prussia. The 3rd (commander—General I. I. Maslennikov; member of the Military Council—General M. V. Rudakov) and 2nd Baltic (commander—General A. I. Yeremenko; member of the Military Council—General V. N. Bogatkin) fronts were likewise oriented on Riga, with the former to advance from south of Lake Vyrtsjarv, and the latter from east of

* On September 21 the 3rd Panzer Army was transferred to Army Group North.

Ergli. The Leningrad Front was to move from the region of Tartu to Rakvere and Tallinn.

During the preparations for the offensive, the commanders, political instructors and Party and Komsomol organisations set the sights of the committed units on the speediest possible liberation of the Soviet Baltic republics and, at the same time, helped the local Party bodies to promote political work among the population. In the liberated areas Army agitators explained the Soviet Union's internal and foreign policy to the population, told them of the Red Army's smashing victories, gave them the facts about the Communist Party's Leninist national policy, and exposed the bourgeois nationalists and their subversive activities. All this strengthened the bonds between the troops and the local population and firmed up the rear of the armies in the field.

Assault groups were formed in the main thrust areas, stocks of ammunition and equipment were built up and advance airfields were built closer to the firing lines. All the officers and men were spurred on by their overriding desire to discharge their duty to their country honourably.

2. THE ENEMY IS DRIVEN OUT OF ESTONIA

The operations that led to the enemy's defeat were started simultaneously by all three Baltic fronts on September 14 and by the Leningrad Front on September 17.

The success of this operation was ensured by the 1st Baltic Front's assault group advancing on the right wing from the region of Bauska. In three days this group advanced more than 50 kilometres and reached the approaches of Baldone and the Daugava River. This placed Army Group North's main forces before the threat of encirclement. Meanwhile the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy despite the fact they did not make much headway. However, the offensive towards Riga developed slowly and the attempts to splinter the enemy group failed. The Soviet troops had to gnaw their way through the enemy's defences methodically, metre by metre.

On September 15 and 16 Colonel-General Ferdinand Schörner, commander of Army Group North, reported to Hitler's Headquarters that in the Baltic area the German troops had lost nearly half their strength and were in no condition to fight prolonged defensive battles. There was only one way out, he said, and that was to withdraw. The German Command, which had formerly refused even to entertain the idea that it would have to relinquish this territory, now ordered its troops to withdraw to prepared rear defences between the Gulf of Riga and the Daugava River, 60-90 kilometres away from Riga.

This shortened the firing lines by more than 300 kilometres and enabled the Germans to release several infantry divisions. This manoeuvre was started with the withdrawal of German troops from Estonia. However, the German Command proved to be unable to effect a planned withdrawal.

On September 17 the Leningrad Front in Estonia launched an offensive on the Tartu sector.

General I. I. Fedyuninsky's 2nd Strike Army, which had been transferred to this sector from Narva, smashed the enemy's defences and advanced some 28 kilometres in two days. On the right flank of this army particularly swift progress was made along the western coast of Lake

Chudskoye by General L. A. Perna's Estonian 8th Infantry Corps. Formed in 1942, this corps had traversed a glorious road of battle and now carried its victorious banners into its native republic.

The 2nd Strike Army forced the German Command to begin withdrawing its troops from the Narva sector as early as the evening of September 18. That same night General F. N. Starikov's 8th Army, which was operating in this sector, went in pursuit of the retreating enemy and made contact with the 2nd Strike Army at the northwestern tip of Lake Chudskoye the next day. Reinforced with the Estonian 8th Infantry Corps, transferred from the 2nd Strike Army, the 8th Army continued to pursue the enemy in the direction of Tallinn, while the 2nd Strike Army pushed forward towards Pärnu.

Advanced units of the 8th Army encountered resistance from rearguards covering the withdrawal of the main forces. But they manoeuvred skilfully and dislodged the enemy from inhabited localities. Estonian troops fought bravely. An illustration of this is the action of 10 Estonian soldiers under Junior Lieutenant K. P. Salma, who broke into a railway station southwest of Rakvere, killed 150 German troops and took 22 prisoners.

The morning of September 22 saw advanced units of the 8th Army at the approaches of Tallinn. Co-operating with the Baltic Fleet they destroyed the enemy units covering the city and at 15.00 hours of the same day liberated the Estonian capital.

On that day the people of Tallinn filled the streets to welcome the Red Army. Their joy knew no bounds when their greetings were answered in their own language by the men of the Estonian Corps. They were free people once more, delivered from nazi bondage.

Units of the Baltic Fleet helped to pursue the enemy. They covered the 8th Army's right flank from the sea and air and landed marine task forces on islands in the Gulf of Finland and in the ports of Kunda, Loksa, Tallinn and Paldiski. The Fleet's air arm attacked the enemy's sea communications and prevented his evacuation from Estonia.

After capturing Tallinn, Marshal L. A. Govorov's troops pressed southwestward, completing the liberation of Estonia. On September 24 the 8th Army occupied the town and port of Haapsalu and by September 26 it cleared the western coast of Estonia. On the same day the 2nd Strike Army crossed into Latvia and made contact with the 3rd Baltic Front, which was advancing towards Riga.

Armed Estonian factory and office workers courageously demined factories, offices and apartment houses.

The whole of continental Estonia was liberated in ten days, and preparations were started for the liberation of the Moonsund Archipelago. The enemy was compelled to withdraw his forces from the Gulf of Finland, enabling the Baltic Fleet to deploy its submarines in the Baltic Sea and establish sea communication with the Baltic republics, Finland and Sweden. Many formations of the Front and Fleet were decorated with Government awards. Formations and units of the Estonian Corps were decorated with Orders of the Red Banner, Suvorov, Kutuzov, Alexander Nevsky and the Red Star. Orders and medals were awarded to nearly 20,000 officers and men. Subsequently, the Estonian formations and units were decorated with the Guards title.

3. THE ENEMY'S FINAL DEFEAT IN LITHUANIA

The successful offensive towards Riga by the right wing of the 1st Baltic Front in mid-September alarmed the German Command. Two counter-attacks, one by the 3rd Panzer Army from southwest of Jelgava and the other by four infantry and two panzer divisions from the vicinity of Baldone, were launched to halt the Soviet advance. These counter-attacks fell short of their objective. Troops of the 1st Baltic Front blunted all of the enemy's efforts and on September 22 captured the town of Baldone.

By this time the enemy's defence potential changed substantially in the vicinity of Riga. The German Command was hastily withdrawing its 18th Army to the strongly fortified Sigulda line 60 kilometres northeast of Riga. The concentration of Army Group North's main forces in the Riga bridgehead sharply increased the density of the enemy's defences in that area.

In this situation GHQ found it expedient to switch the main effort from Riga to Klaipeda, where the enemy had not been reinforced, and on September 24 it set the fronts new tasks. Accordingly, the 1st Baltic Front regrouped its forces, turning its spearhead from Riga to Siauliai with the objective of striking at Klaipeda and gaining the Baltic coast in the entire sector from Liepaja to the Niemen. The 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts were to continue their advance on Riga.

In order to catch the enemy around Klaipeda by surprise the preparations were made quickly and steps were taken to misinform him. The new assignment demanded a major regrouping of the 1st Baltic Front's forces from the right flank to the centre. This intricate manoeuvre was completed in secrecy in six days. Four armies, including one tank army, two separate tank corps and one motorised corps, as well as large support forces, were transferred to the region round Siauliai over distances ranging from 80 to 240 kilometres. This regrouping—a rare case of almost all the forces of a Front being transferred to a new direction—was made possible by efficient administration, precise planning by Front headquarters and excellent camouflage.

The Germans spotted the Soviet movements in the vicinity of Siauliai only on October 2, i.e., two days before the offensive was started. Fearing the encirclement of their main forces they decided to begin the withdrawal of their forces from the Sigulda line to the Riga fortifications in the evening of October 5. Two panzer and one motorised division from the vicinity of Jelgava and some of the units in the Riga beachhead were ordered to Klaipeda. But these transfers were never completed.

The offensive on Klaipeda began on October 5. In spite of the rain and mud, General I. K. Bagramyan's troops broke through the enemy's tactical defence zone on the second day of the offensive and approached his rear lines by nightfall of October 8, driving a wedge into the defences at the approaches of Klaipeda and Tilsit. In the course of four days they advanced 60-90 kilometres in a sector 200 kilometres long. The enemy suffered heavy casualties.

The Lithuanian 16th Division (commander—Colonel A. I. Urbsas), which was part of the 2nd Guards Army, distinguished itself in the offensive on Tilsit. Spurred on by their desire to drive the enemy out of their homeland as quickly as possible, the Lithuanians fought with great fortitude. On October 31, 1944, the division was decorated with the Order of the Red Banner.

In the next stage of the operation the Front's right-wing armies—General P. F. Malyshev's 4th Strike Army and General I. M. Chistyakov's 6th Guards Army—advanced in a northwesterly direction; the armies of the centre—General Y. G. Kreizer's 51st Army, General A. P. Beloborodov's 43rd Army and General V. T. Volsky's 5th Guards Tank Army—pressed on towards the seacoast, while General P. G. Chanchibadze's 2nd Guards Army, which was operating on the left flank, moved towards the lower reaches of the Niemen. However, increasingly stiff enemy resistance slowed down the offensive on the right flank. The 51st Army operated with the greatest success. In two days it covered nearly 60 kilometres in the direction of Liepaja, crossed the southwestern frontier of Latvia in the evening of October 10 and reached the coast west of Rutsava. On the same day the 43rd Army and 5th Guards Tank Army engaged the enemy at the approaches to Klaipeda. The latter army gained the coast near Palanga, north of Klaipeda. On the left flank the 2nd Guards Army continued its advance southwestward and on October 10 gained the northeastern frontier of Klaipeda territory, which the nazi invaders had wrested away from Lithuania in 1939.

With the Red Army on the Baltic seaboard, Army Group North found itself cut off from East Prussia. However, Klaipeda was fiercely defended and the fighting for the town lasted till the end of January 1945. In the Tilsit direction by October 22 Soviet troops drove the enemy from the northern bank of the Niemen and advanced as far as the frontier of East Prussia. Thus, it took three and a half months to hurl the invaders out of Lithuania. Most of the republic was liberated in July and August, and the remaining territory passed into Soviet hands in September and October.

4. LIBERATION IN LATVIA

The German Command made every effort to retain its hold on the town and seaport of Riga, which was a key strategic strongpoint. In the vicinity of Riga, north of the Daugava, the Germans had numerous strongly fortified lines manned by the main forces of Army Group North.

Troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts, operating in the direction of Riga, made very little headway during the first three days of the September offensive (September 14-16). This was due to the fierce resistance put up by the enemy, but there were also serious errors in the organisation of the offensive. Nonetheless, the enemy suffered heavy casualties and was compelled to expend his reserves. By September 22, despite the desperate resistance, Soviet assault groups broke through the main line of defences and on September 27 they approached the Sigulda fortifications.

Most of Latvia was thus liberated in the course of two weeks (September 14-27). But a large part of the republic as well as Estonia's Moonsund Archipelago were still in nazi hands at the close of September. This retained for enemy naval units freedom of action in the Gulf of Riga and in the central region of the Baltic Sea. To maintain this situation the Germans strove to entrench themselves as firmly as possible in the Riga bridgehead and the Moonsund Archipelago.

The first attempts of the Soviet troops to break down the Sigulda line failed. On instructions from Marshal L. A. Govorov, whom GHQ had on October 1 charged with the command of the operations of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts, the necessary amendments were introduced into the operational plans of these two fronts. The preparations for the offensive, set for October 7, were laid more carefully.

Developments, however, introduced further amendments. The successes scored by the 1st Baltic Front in the direction of Klaipeda completely changed the situation. Fearing encirclement the enemy began a hasty withdrawal from the region northeast of Riga in the night of October 5-6. This was spotted by the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts, which went in pursuit of the enemy in the morning of October 6. Four days later they reached the outer line of German defences round Riga. The first Soviet onslaught was beaten back, but the offensive was resumed in the second half of the day and on October 11 a deep wedge was driven into this outer defensive line.

The commander of Army Group North was once again compelled to ask Hitler's Headquarters for permission to withdraw, this time from Riga to the Tukums fortifications. The withdrawal was scheduled for the evening of October 12. However, in face of the Soviet onslaught the enemy found himself unable to hold the new defensive positions even for a single day.

On October 12 Soviet troops captured the outer belt of defences, and in the second half of the day approached the last defensive line running along the western shores of lakes Kis and Juglas. General V. Z. Romanovsky, 67th Army commander, used the 285th Separate Special Purpose Motorised (Amphibian) Battalion to cross Lake Kis. This battalion, which had 76 amphibian vehicles, was subordinated to the commander of the 119th Infantry Corps. The task force was to be landed in two echelons so as to capture bridgeheads and secure the offensive of the army's main forces from isthmuses north and south of the lake. In the night of October 13 the task force seized a bridgehead at Mejaparks and advanced behind the firing lines of the Germans holding the isthmuses between the lakes. This action cleared the way for an offensive by the 67th Army. The enemy panicked and fled to Riga. By 23.00 hours the advancing troops occupied Mejaparks and entered the northeastern part of Riga. By the morning of October 13 they were in possession of most of the city.

The right wing of the 2nd Baltic Front, which had transferred its forces to the south of the Daugava, advanced towards Riga along the river's southern bank. On October 13 the enemy was dislodged from the intermediate positions. On the next day fighting broke out on the immediate approaches of the southwestern part of the city. On the same day the Latvian 130th Infantry Corps, which was skirting Riga from the south, cut the Riga-Jelgava motor road. In face of the threat of encirclement most of the German garrison in Riga fled. The last of the enemy was cleared out of Riga on October 15.

The liberation of the Soviet Baltic republics was, in effect, completed with the enemy's expulsion from Riga. Men of the Latvian 130th Infantry Corps displayed valour and courage in the battles for Latvian towns and villages. "We are proud," wrote the newspaper *Sovietskaya Latvia*, "that the Latvian Corps distinguished itself in the battles for the Soviet motherland, for the liberation of Riga. . . ." In the fighting in September and October 1944 distinction was won by 3,418 officers and men of this corps, for which they were decorated with high Government awards. The corps itself was decorated with the Order of Suvorov 2nd Grade, and the Latvian 308th Division with the Order of the Red Banner.

A mass rally was held in Latvia's liberated capital on October 22, 1944. Workers, peasants and intellectuals warmly greeted the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia and the Government of Latvia and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the Communist Party, Soviet Government and the Red Army for delivering them from nazi tyranny. This

rally vividly demonstrated the inviolable friendship between the Latvian, Russian and other peoples of the Soviet Union.

The 3rd Baltic Front was dissolved after Riga was liberated and the right wing of the 2nd Baltic Front reached the coast. The 1st and 2nd Baltic fronts were ordered to destroy the German group flattened against the sea on the Kurland Peninsula and thereby finally clear Latvian territory. The main forces of Army Group North were blocked on this peninsula between Tukums and Liepaja.

The offensive of the 2nd Baltic Front started in the morning of October 16. However, Soviet troops encountered fierce resistance and on October 19 they halted on the line running from Tukums to Gardene.

All the succeeding attempts to break through the German defences and split their forces met with no success. Although the Soviet Supreme Command desired the earliest possible liquidation of the Kurland group it could not assign additional forces for this purpose. This group remained blocked on the peninsula till the end of the war and surrendered only in May 1945.

While the offensive on Riga and Klaipeda was under way, troops of the Leningrad Front jointly with the Baltic Fleet cleared the enemy out of the Moonsund Archipelago, taking nearly two months (from September 27 to November 24) for this relatively small-scale but difficult operation.

The islands of Vormsi, Muhu and Hiiumaa were occupied by October 5 and in the course of the next five days Soviet forces captured the island of Saaremaa with the exception of a small area where, with an isthmus only 2.5-3 kilometres wide, the enemy had powerful anti-tank and anti-infantry fortifications. After the failure of the first attempts to smash these fortifications, Soviet troops resumed the offensive only when reinforcements were brought up. Aided by naval units, the enemy resisted desperately, but Soviet troops with air and naval support forged ahead. By the morning of November 24 they were in complete possession of the island. That ended the expulsion of the enemy from Estonia.

* * *

In the Northwestern theatre the Soviet Army scored a tremendously important military and political victory. A crushing defeat was inflicted on Army Group North. Of its 59 formations, 26 were routed and three completely destroyed. Its main forces, some 33 divisions, found themselves cut off in Kurland, and three divisions were encircled in Klaipeda.

On the Soviet-German front the strategic situation deteriorated still further for the German troops. Army Group North was cut off from the main German forces. The loss of the Baltic area deprived the Germans of a key bridgehead from which they had threatened the Soviet forces operating in the direction of East Prussia and Poland and which had given them freedom of action in the gulfs of Finland and Riga. The capture of the Moonsund Archipelago once more placed the Soviet Baltic Fleet in control of the entrances to the gulfs of Finland and Riga and enabled it to paralyse enemy communication lanes in the Baltic Sea. The strategic position of the enemy group in East Prussia became precarious. It was now in danger of flank attacks by Soviet troops on the Baltic coast.

In the battles for the Baltic republics Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians fought courageously alongside Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and men of other Soviet peoples. The population of the Baltic area helped

their liberators in every way. Thus, by the joint efforts of all the peoples of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Baltic republics were delivered from nazi oppression.

* * *

By the autumn of 1944 the invaders had been driven from almost all Soviet territory. An enemy force was still hanging on in the Extreme North, but its position had grown from bad to worse when hostilities with Finland ended, and when at the close of September Soviet troops occupied the 1940 Soviet-Finnish frontier in the sector from Ukhta to the Gulf of Finland. In the Barents Sea, the Soviet Northern Fleet, in collaboration with Allied naval forces, considerably weakened the enemy group within the Arctic Circle, won the battle for communication lanes and controlled the coastal zone. The German Command was compelled to begin withdrawing its 20th Alpine Army to northern Finland. Part of this army held a line west of Murmansk.

At the close of September GHQ ordered the Karelian Front and the Northern Fleet (commander—Admiral A. G. Golovko) to drive the enemy out of the Soviet Extreme North and return to the Soviet Union the economically important region of Petsamo. The offensive was started on October 7. In three days, despite the mountainous tundra terrain, troops of General V. I. Shcherbakov's 14th Army, supported by the 7th Air Army under General I. M. Sokolov and a task force landed by the Northern Fleet on the enemy-held coast, in three days broke through the enemy's defences and began to press the enemy towards the sea. Aircraft and naval vessels hindered the enemy's evacuation, sinking some 50 transports and warships. As a result, the enemy was unable to take most of his supplies with him. Petsamo Region was liberated at the close of October, and Soviet troops entered northeastern Norway. This gave a powerful impetus to the Norwegian people's liberation struggle against the nazi invaders and their menials, the Quislings. "The Norwegian people," E. Levlien, Chairman of the Communist Party of Norway, said at the 19th Congress of the CPSU, "shall always be deeply grateful to the Soviet people and the Soviet Army for defeating the German Army and for liberating the northern part of our country from the nazi invaders."

In the Arctic Circle hostilities ceased with the enemy's expulsion from Petsamo Region. On December 5, 1944, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted the medal "For the Defence of the Soviet Extreme North". This medal was awarded to 307,000 officers and men.

Chapter Fifteen

COMMENCEMENT OF THE LIBERATION OF EUROPE

1. IN POLAND

In the spring and summer of 1944 the Red Army drove the nazi hordes out of the Soviet Union, crossed into Poland and Rumania and reached East Prussia. The task before it now was to complete the defeat of the nazi war machine and help the European peoples to get liberated from the nazi yoke. Soviet troops had firm instructions from the Communist Party and the Soviet Government not to interfere in the internal affairs of the liberated states and to give the peoples the right to decide their destiny themselves.

The peoples of Europe regarded the Red Army as their liberator. But while waiting for it they did not remain passive. Headed by Communist and Workers' Parties they heroically fought the nazi oppressors and their "own" ruling classes who feared popular revolutions most of all and therefore betrayed national interests and held up the spread of the anti-fascist movement. The struggle of the masses of the European countries against the nazi enslavers and their accomplices was a large contribution towards the final defeat of nazi Germany.

In July-August 1944 the Red Army brought liberation to one-fourth of Poland, territory east of the Vistula (Map 15).

The nazi invaders had been in occupation of Poland for five years. Nazi policy towards the Poles was stated by Hans Frank, who was appointed Governor-General in 1941: "Henceforth the political role of the Polish people has ended.... We shall wipe out the very concept Poland. Neither Rzeczpospolita nor any other Polish state will ever again be rejuvenated." The nazis deprived Poland of her state independence and dismembered her. The central and eastern territories comprised a so-called Governor-Generalship of the Reich; the western and northern regions were annexed by Germany. The invaders assiduously pursued a policy of turning part of the Polish population into slaves and resettling or exterminating the rest.

A monstrous fascist regime was established. Mass shootings and repressions became daily occurrences, a norm of the nazi "new order". During the occupation the nazis shot or tortured to death six million Poles. They were particularly brutal in their persecution of Communists and other progressive representatives of the Polish people. The country was subjected to unprecedented looting; nearly 40 per cent of the national wealth was destroyed.

But the invaders miscalculated. The Polish people waged a determined struggle for their country's liberation. This struggle steadily broadened under the impact of the Red Army's successes.

The Krajowa Rada Narodowa, highest representative organ of fighting Poland, was formed in the night of December 31, 1944. Created by democratic parties and organisations, it merged on the initiative of the Polish Workers' Party. Boleslaw Bierut was elected chairman. The Krajowa Rada Narodowa declared that its aim was to cement all the anti-fascist forces, democratise the political system, expropriate the landed estates and turn the land over to the peasants and farm labourers, and nationalise the banks, large-scale industry and transport. This was the programme of the people's democratic revolution and it helped to strengthen the alliance between the working class and the peasants and conformed to the aspirations of the broad masses. This organ galvanised the working people into political activity. Local radas narodowa sprang up throughout the country. An extremely important decree was issued by the Krajowa Rada Narodowa; this was the decree forming the People's Army (Armija Ludowa). The new army consisted of those contingents of the Gwardija Ludowa which were operating under the leadership of the Polish Workers' Party and some of the armed detachments led by other democratic parties. General M. Rola-Zymierski was placed in command of the People's Army, which consisted of 11 brigades by July 1944. The armed struggle was waged on a particularly large scale in Lublin and Kielce regions, spreading quickly in Cracow, Rzeszow and Warsaw regions. The People's Army kept the invaders in a state of constant tension and inflicted heavy casualties on them. The fighting became more ferocious with the front-line drawing closer and the penetration of Polish territory by Soviet partisan formations and detachments under P. P. Vershigora, I. N. Banov, V. A. Karasev, G. V. Kovalev, M. Y. Nadelin, V. P. Pelikh, N. A. Prokopyuk, S. A. Sankov, V. P. Chepiga, B. G. Shangin and I. P. Yakovlev. In spring and early summer there was heavy fighting near Rablew, in the Lip, Janow and Sol forests. A major operation was carried out in the latter half of the year against the enemy's railways. Almost all the major battles behind the enemy lines in Poland were fought in close co-operation with Soviet partisans and sometimes even under a joint command.

The large scale and excellent organisation of the struggle of the democratic forces seriously alarmed the émigré Government and its supporters in Poland, as well as the governments of the USA and Britain. The reactionaries morbidly dreaded the victory of the people and a people's Government. For that reason, instead of resisting the German invaders, they did their utmost to undermine the democratic anti-fascist movement, split its ranks and isolate the Polish Workers' Party from the people. They resorted to every possible means, including provocations and acts of terrorism. This split the people politically and hindered and limited the armed struggle of the Home Army (Armija Krajowa). The reactionaries conserved their forces for the restoration of the pre-war order in Poland after her liberation. The governments of the USA and Britain hoped to turn post-war Poland into an anti-Soviet outpost and took steps to assist the reactionaries. The Soviet Government, however, opposed the attempts to ignore the will of the Polish people and impose the émigré Government on Poland.

The struggle between the democratic and reactionary forces grew in intensity when in July 1944 Soviet troops and the Polish 1st Army entered Poland. The policy of upholding the interests of the Polish people, consistently pursued by the Soviet Union, was of immense assistance to the Polish people in their struggle for national and social libera-

tion. Resting on this support, the people went over to decisive action in the summer of 1944. The Polish Committee for National Liberation was set up on July 21 as the central organ of people's power. On the next day this committee adopted a manifesto defining the prospects for a revolution and outlined a programme of democratic reforms. This manifesto proclaimed the restoration of democratic freedoms and the implementation of major social reforms, including a broad agrarian reform. The Government in exile was declared illegal. The foreign policy of the new Poland, the manifesto stated, would be founded on friendship and a firm alliance with the Soviet Union.

The formation of this committee enraged the Polish reactionaries and a fierce offensive was started against the Polish Workers' Party. Detachments were formed with the express purpose of committing acts of wrecking, sabotage and terrorism. Assassination attempts were made on members of the Polish Workers' Party and on Soviet troops. Dirty slander was spread about the Red Army. But the reactionaries failed to split the democratic forces and sow distrust for the Soviet Union.

A statement by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR on Soviet relations towards Poland, and the agreement signed on July 26, 1944, between the Soviet Government and the Polish Committee for National Liberation played a notable role in further enhancing the prestige of the new, people's power and consolidating Soviet-Polish friendship. In the former document it was stressed that the Soviet Union was not out to annex Polish territory or change the political system in Poland. The agreement defined the relations between the Soviet Command and the Polish administration, declaring that as soon as any region ceased to be a zone of hostilities it would be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Polish Committee for National Liberation.

The enhanced prestige of the Polish Committee for National Liberation and of the Polish Workers' Party, the upswing of political activity by the people and the increased sympathy for the Soviet Union knocked the ground from under the feet of the Polish reactionaries. Fearing to lose authority in the country they decided on an armed uprising in Warsaw; in this they had the backing of US and British ruling circles. The purpose was to seize the Polish capital before the Red Army entered it, put the émigré Government in power and thereby forestall the establishment of a people's democratic system.

The uprising was triggered by the Home Army on August 1. Almost immediately it became clear that no preparations had been made. In their haste the organisers had not notified many Home Army units of the time of the uprising, and neither had they alerted other underground organisations. There was a shortage of weapons and ammunition. As a result, only part of the Home Army forces in Warsaw went into action and at once found themselves in grave difficulties. They were unable to seize the strategic points in the city—railway stations and bridges—and were compelled to go over to the defensive. Large German forces were brought into the Polish capital.

The uprising spread despite the lack of preparation. Joined by thousands of people in Warsaw it developed into a large armed action. The inhabitants of Warsaw and the Home Army rank and file were ignorant of the real political aims pursued by the leaders of the uprising. In a heroic stand against the hated enemy, Polish patriots fought for the liberation of their capital and country, for a new Poland. Among

them were People's Army detachments, which were in Warsaw at the time.

But the enemy was much too powerful. The nazis barbarously destroyed the city in fulfilment of Hitler's orders to level Warsaw with the ground. On October 2 the insurgents ceased resistance. The uprising was crushed. Thousands upon thousands of Polish patriots paid with their lives for the criminal gamble of the reactionaries.

Enemies of Soviet-Polish friendship make every effort to charge the Red Army with the responsibility for the failure of the rising. Most frequently they resort to the brazen fabrication that the Soviet Command had deliberately halted the Red Army at the walls of Warsaw in order to doom the rising. To expose this lie it is enough to give the facts of the situation on the Soviet-German front.

The uprising might have been successful if it had started after the Red Army crossed the Vistula. But blinded by their political objectives, its organisers did not take the situation on the Eastern front into account. They began the uprising without notifying the Soviet Government or the Red Army Command. News of the uprising was received only after blood was flowing in the streets of Warsaw and German tanks were running down unarmed people.

Was the Red Army, which had entered Poland after colossal battles lasting nearly forty days in Byelorussia, the western regions of the Ukraine and Lithuania, in a position to continue its offensive without a pause? By no means. The breaching of Army Group Centre's powerful fortifications and the pursuit of the routed enemy had taxed Soviet troops to the utmost both physically and morally. They had suffered heavy casualties in men and equipment. It was necessary to regroup the armies, rebase the aircraft and bring up the rear echelons. Even General Tippelskirch, one of Hitler's leading commanders, subsequently assessed the situation as follows: "The uprising broke out on August 1, when the force of the Russian blow had already petered out." This was no disclosure, not by a long shot. Any person with any military sense at all knows that troops cannot advance non-stop: pauses are required to regroup them, reinforce them with men and equipment and pull up the rear echelons.

Nonetheless the Red Army had followed up its successes with an offensive throughout August and the first half of September. But the enemy restored his defences and was also continuously building up his strength. The 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts made slow headway in face of the fierce resistance put up by the enemy. The battles were hard fought as is evidenced by the fact that during this period the two fronts lost 289,000 officers and men in killed and wounded. An advance on Warsaw across the Vistula would, in the circumstances, have been a sheer adventure because the Red Army had exhausted its possibilities for offensive action.

In spite of this the Soviet Command did everything in its power to help the uprising. An offensive was undertaken towards Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, and an attempt was made to cross the Vistula in the night of September 15-16 with the purpose of establishing a bridgehead and contacting the insurgents. However, units of the Polish 1st Army, which crossed the Vistula with the support of Soviet artillery, encountered strong defensive lines, and were beaten back by enemy counter-attacks. The Soviet Command rendered the insurgents large material assistance. Soviet aircraft flew 2,243 missions, dropping 156 mortars, 505 anti-tank rifles, 2,667 submachine-guns and rifles, 41,780 hand-

grenades, 3,000,000 cartridges, 113 tons of food and 500 kilos of medicaments.

The Warsaw tragedy was the handiwork of Polish reactionaries. It was the culminating point of their treachery on the eve of the Soviet troops' entry into Warsaw and the complete liberation of Poland.

While the émigré Government was doing its sinister work, pushing hundreds of thousands of people to their death, the Polish Committee for National Liberation steadfastly led the people towards the creation of a strong and independent Poland. A new state apparatus began to emerge. A people's army, the Wojsko Polskie, was formed within a short space of time. Towards the close of 1944 this army had 286,000 effectives. Considerable assistance was extended to the new Polish state in this field by the Soviet Union. At the request of the Polish Committee for National Liberation, Soviet military instructors were sent to the Wojsko Polskie, as well as weapons, ammunition and food. During the war the USSR gave Poland 700,000 rifles and submachine-guns, 3,500 field guns, 1,000 tanks, 1,200 aircraft, more than 1,800 lorries and many other armaments.

Revolutionary reforms were initiated in industry. The workers guarded the factories and set up organs of inspection and administration. Factories and banks were nationalised. Of great significance was the land reform carried out on the entire liberated territory in accordance with a decree passed on September 6, 1944. Under the leadership of the Polish Committee for National Liberation the Polish people implemented vital tasks of the people's democratic revolution.

The economy was successfully rehabilitated. Damaged power stations and factories were restored, and railways, bridges and motor roads were rebuilt. Here, too, the Soviet Union rendered extensive assistance. Although fighting was still raging and thousands of Soviet towns lay in ruins, the Soviet Union sent Poland food, capital plant and medicaments.

The Polish Committee for National Liberation had the wholehearted support of the masses, who regarded it as the champion of their interests and the spokesman of their aspirations and hopes. In December 1944 at rallies held in Lublin, Krosno, Lukow, Sandomierz, Vengruv and other towns as well as villages, workers, peasants and intellectuals spoke in favour of turning the Polish Committee for National Liberation into the Provisional Government of Poland.

In accordance with the will of the people, the Krajowa Rada Narodowa transformed the Polish Committee for National Liberation into the Provisional Government of the Polish Republic on December 31. This was a vital step towards the creation of a free, independent and democratic Poland and spelled final defeat for the plans of Polish and international reaction to impose an anti-national émigré Government on the working people. The Polish people took their destiny firmly into their own hands.

Poland's progressive elements thus successfully used the Red Army's entry into their country for a struggle against reactionary forces and for building a new, people's democratic Poland.

Strictly in accordance with instructions from the Party and the Soviet Government, the Red Army did not interfere in Poland's internal affairs. But its presence deterred the reactionaries from armed action and beneficially influenced the activity of the working masses. This conduct, predetermined by the correct policy pursued by the Party and the Government, was followed by the Red Army not only in Poland but also in the other European countries liberated by it.

2. ENEMY DEFEAT AT JASSY AND KISHINEV. LIBERATION OF THE MOLDAVIAN SSR AND RUMANIA

While awaiting orders for an offensive deep into Southeastern Europe, troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts engaged in local fighting for nearly four months. At last, in August, the military and political situation demanded decisive action in the direction of Jassy and Bucharest. This was dictated by the following considerations. First, in the direction of the main thrust Soviet troops had penetrated far westward and now needed a prolonged rest. Their further advance in Poland was fraught with risk because army groups North and Southern Ukraine were poised on the right and left wings of the fronts advancing in the central sector. In order to ensure the success of the offensive in the Warsaw-Berlin direction, the enemy flank groups had to be smashed. In the north this task was tackled by the Leningrad and the three Baltic fronts, and in the south by the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. Second, the anti-fascist struggle in the countries of Southeastern Europe had reached white heat as a result of the Red Army's victorious campaign in the south in the spring and summer of 1944. This turned the Soviet offensive deep into the Balkans into a key factor leading to the rapid maturing of anti-fascist uprisings and a sharp intensification of the Resistance movement. In its turn the great wave of anti-fascist, liberation struggle contributed greatly towards the defeat of the nazi invaders in Southeastern Europe.

Soviet troops were now poised for an advance into Rumania, which was then an active satellite of nazi Germany.

In the summer of 1944 the political situation in Rumania was complex, but was, on the whole, favourable to the Red Army. The Rumanian Army had been fighting for foreign interests for three and a half years. Economically the country was dislocated. The war expenditures had exhausted the treasury. The cost of living had risen sharply, and the loss of hundreds of thousands of Rumanian troops lay heavy on the hearts of the people. Discontent with the war was mounting steadily. Sabotage and wrecking became more and more frequent in industry, and anti-war and anti-Government demonstrations were taking place throughout the country. These anti-war sentiments spread in the army as well.

This situation made the German Command in Rumania fear for the future of the Antonescu military-fascist regime. In the log of Army Group Southern Ukraine (entry of August 1, 1944) it is stated: "The fighting morale of the Rumanians is ebbing.... The Rumanian people are tired of the war and will use any opportunity to withdraw from it.... There is a numerous group who would agree to various coups.... In consequence of the setbacks of the past 18 months he [Antonescu—*Ed.*] is finding himself more and more in isolation."

The political situation in Rumania was strongly influenced by the entry of Soviet troops into the country in the spring of 1944 and by the above-mentioned Soviet Government statement of April 2. The Communist Party of Rumania became more active in preparing for an armed uprising and uniting all of the nation's progressive forces in the anti-fascist struggle. The Social-Democratic Party, which had for many years stubbornly declined unity of action with the Communists, now changed its stand, finally agreeing to set up a united workers' front. In its manifesto, published on May 1, this organisation called upon the people to depose the Antonescu clique.

The Communists decided to establish temporary contact with the

bourgeois-landowner parties in order to unite the nation's effort in the struggle against the fascist government. On June 20 representatives of the Communist, Social-Democratic, National-Royalist and the National-Liberal parties reached agreement on the formation of a National-Democratic Bloc. The key demands of this bloc were: the conclusion of an armistice, withdrawal from the war, abolition of the Antonescu dictatorship and the establishment of a democratic system. The royalists and liberals took this step only because they feared the people. Nonetheless they continued to maintain contact with Antonescu and were, therefore, left out of the preparations for an uprising.

Palace circles, too, supported the opponents of the military-fascist dictatorship. By then King Mihai and his entourage no longer had doubts about Germany's inevitable defeat. They decided to sacrifice the Antonescu clique and come forward as the saviours of the nation. The end goal of these tactics was to preserve capitalist-landowner rule. For their part the Communists found it necessary to use the palace circles for overthrowing Antonescu and taking Rumania out of the war, but they were well aware that this agreement was purely temporary and that after Antonescu was arrested the king would do everything to keep the bourgeoisie and the landowners in power.

On June 14 a secret conference was held between representatives of the Communist Party, patriotic officers and palace circles. After long argument the Communist proposal for an armed uprising was passed. The conference formed a Military Committee to prepare for the uprising, the date for which was to depend on when the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts would start their offensive.

However, the Antonescu Government was still strong enough to suppress an armed uprising and continue the war. It had the backing of a considerable section of reactionary officers and members of the General Staff, as well as of the wavering bourgeois-landowner parties. But the most important factor was that it relied on the German divisions on the Soviet-Rumanian sector of the front and the occupation forces in Rumania. That was the mainspring checking the overthrow of the military-fascist dictatorship.

On the eve of the Red Army offensive the front-line ran from south of Chernovitsy to the southeast, north of Jassy to Orgeyev and farther along the Dniester to the Black Sea (Map 15). South of Tiraspol Soviet troops had secured a bridgehead on the western bank of the Dniester as early as the spring of 1944. The prepared lines hugged the Carpathian foothills on the left and the Black Sea on the right. In the course of four or five months the nazis had built a deeply-echeloned system of defences with a ramified network of engineering installations, and had strongly fortified the towns. Fortifications were also built along the western banks of the Siret and Prut rivers.

In Rumania and Soviet Moldavia the German Command had the strong Army Group Southern Ukraine. True, at the time of the Soviet offensive its position had somewhat deteriorated. In July and August 12 divisions, including one motorised and six panzer divisions, had been transferred from this group to the central sector of the Soviet-German front. After the developments of July and August the neighbouring Army Group Northern Ukraine was unable to help in any way. Moreover, a people's uprising, which would inescapably divert part of the enemy's reserves, was maturing deep in the German rear, in Slovakia.

Army Group Southern Ukraine, commanded by General Hans Friessner, consisted of the German 8th and 6th armies, the Rumanian 4th and 3rd

armies and the German 17th Separate Corps—altogether 47 divisions (three panzer and one motorised) and five brigades (640,000 effectives, 7,600 field guns and mortars of 75-mm and larger calibre, and 400 tanks and assault guns). The group had the support of 810 aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet and a Rumanian Air Corps. Of the 47 divisions 25 were German, the rest, as well as five brigades, were Rumanian. The German Command did not trust the Rumanians very much and deployed their divisions in alternation with German divisions. German divisions were included in the Rumanian corps and the latter were subordinated to the commanders of the German corps. General Friessner and his staff expected the Soviet armies to attack in the sector between the Siret and the Prut and also in the direction of Kishinev. They therefore deployed their main forces in the region between these two rivers and in the Kishinev salient. In the salient they massed 14 crack divisions of the German 6th Army, but the Rumanian divisions on the flanks of this force were less battleworthy.

The partisan detachments fighting in Moldavia undermined the stability of the enemy's rear. Entries in the log of Army Group Southern Ukraine and its 6th Army provide evidence that the German headquarters were kept in a state of jitters by the partisans.

The 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were to breach the enemy's defences at two points far distant from each other (northwest of Jassy and south of Tiraspol). This was to be followed up with an offensive in directions converging on Husi, and Vaslui, and the encirclement and destruction of the enemy force in the Kishinev salient. Soviet troops were to advance 220-230 kilometres, capture the region round Focsani and a sector of the Danube estuary, and reach approximately the line running from the eastern spurs of the Eastern Carpathians to the Danube delta. This plan shows that GHQ had decided to make use of the advantageous configuration of the front-line and the weakly defended flanks of the central German group for its encirclement and destruction.

The two fronts had 90 divisions, six tank and motorised corps, three fortified districts and three brigades, as well as a large number of special units, totalling 930,000 men (exclusive of the logistical units). Their armaments consisted of nearly 16,000 field guns and mortars of 76-mm and larger calibre, about 1,900 tanks and self-propelled guns and 1,760 aircraft.

The 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts had thoroughly prepared for the operation, doing everything possible to ensure success. Both fronts concentrated their main forces in the breakthrough sectors with the result that there they had vast superiority in strength. For example, in tanks and artillery they outnumbered the enemy six to one. The artillery density for the breakthrough was very high even for an operation in 1944 (240-243 field guns and mortars per kilometre of front-line). This density was needed in order to smash an extremely strong defensive line quickly and give the advancing forces operational depth. The commanders of the committed fronts had direct instructions from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to build up this density. In his reminiscences of the Jassy-Kishinev operation Marshal Malinovsky writes: "Initially we planned a breakthrough in a sector 22 kilometres wide. In that case we could have massed up to 220 76-mm and heavier field guns per kilometre. When I reported the operations plan at GHQ Stalin said that 220 field guns per kilometre of front were not enough. I replied that that was all we could muster. In answer to that he suggested that we shorten the attack sector from 22 to 16 kilometres."

Attention was paid to briefing the troops on combat objectives.

There was to be a major offensive on foreign territory. A major question was that of how Soviet troops would behave in Rumanian towns and villages. From the very day of its foundation the Red Army had been educated in the spirit laid down by Lenin, in the spirit of internationalist solidarity with the working people of all countries and there did not seem to be any grounds for anxiety. The difficulty, however, was that for three years the Rumanian Army had been fighting the USSR. On the long road from the Volga to the Dniester troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts had seen a horrible picture of the crimes committed by the nazi invaders. They saw the ruins of once flourishing Russian, Ukrainian and Moldavian towns and villages. This naturally evoked anger, hate and, at times, a desire for vengeance. That was why in Party and political work attention was concentrated on explaining the Communist Party's policy vis-à-vis Rumania. It was explained to the officers and soldiers that the aim of the Soviet Union was not to wreak vengeance but to defeat German nazism, that it was necessary to draw a distinct line between the war criminals and the working people. They were made to understand that the Red Army was entering Rumania not as a conqueror but as the liberator of the Rumanian people from fascist oppression, as the champion of working people.

Before the Byelorussian campaign got under way the German Command believed that the Red Army would strike in the Jassy-Bucharest direction and then deep into the Balkans. Later, as is evidenced by a document of the General Staff of the German land forces dated August 15, it was thought that there was "little probability" that such an offensive would be started. On August 18 the command of Army Group Southern Ukraine finally realised that a large-scale offensive by the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts was imminent. But this was a belated conclusion, for serious counter-measures could hardly be taken 36 hours before the start of the offensive.

A devastating artillery barrage in the morning of August 20 was the signal for the offensive. The enemy's main line of resistance was shelled throughout its depth, i.e., 4-6 kilometres. The offensive of the 3rd Ukrainian Front was preceded by air strikes by the 17th Air Army.

In the course of the first two days of the offensive by the 2nd Ukrainian Front General S. G. Trofimenko's 27th Army and General K. A. Koroteyev's 52nd Army broke through the enemy's defences to a depth of 25 kilometres. General A. G. Kravchenko's 6th Tank Army, sent into action on the first day of the offensive, moved even deeper. The five enemy divisions fighting in the breakthrough area were destroyed on the same day, August 20. In two days the Germans used up virtually all their reserves in this sector. Their frequent counter-attacks had no effect. Soviet troops seized Jassy and the fortified Târgu-Frumos area.

Similar success was registered by the 3rd Ukrainian Front. "Never in the annals of the Front," stated a dispatch from the Political Department of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, "has an attack been so swift as on August 20. As soon as the signal was given, the men rose as one, many to their full stature ... and with cheers charged the enemy's front-line trenches and captured them." Towards the close of Rugust 21, in the direction of the main thrust, General M. N. Sharokhin's 37th Army and General I. T. Shlemin's 46th Army had advanced some 25-30 kilometres, and General V. I. Zhdanov's 4th Guards Motorised Corps advanced nearly 50 kilometres. General N. A. Gagen's 57th Army lagged somewhat behind

on account of the fierce resistance put up by the right-flank divisions of the enemy's 6th Army. On the second day the enemy spent all his reserves. Despite the serious situation at the juncture between the German 6th and the Rumanian 3rd armies, the German Command did not transfer a single division from Kishinev. It mistakenly believed that the attack from the Dniester bridgehead was only an ancillary action and that the 3rd Ukrainian Front would strike its main blow in the direction of Kishinev. The Soviet Command sustained this illusion of the enemy in the course of two or three months by pretending to be concentrating large forces there.

The land forces were energetically supported by the 5th and 17th Air armies, which flew 6,350 sorties in two days. An entry under August 21 in the log of Army Group Southern Ukraine says: "The enemy air fleet is unprecedentedly powerful. It does what it likes." The Black Sea Fleet's air arm attacked enemy warships and ports, particularly Constanta.

Thus, the enemy defences were crushed in two days. For the enemy the situation grew extremely complex. The Rumanian 3rd Army was threatened with isolation from the German 6th Army. The encirclement of the enemy's main forces in the Kishinev salient became possible two or three days after the Soviet offensive was started. The German Command had exhausted its operational reserves and, consequently, was unable to influence developments. The Soviet Front commanders, on the other hand, had 25 fresh infantry divisions poised in the main directions. General Friessner asked Hitler for permission to withdraw from the salient. Hitler wavered. He was afraid of political repercussions in Rumania. Finally he acquiesced to the withdrawal, but stipulated that it had to be effected not earlier than August 22 after nightfall. However, it was too late to do anything. In the evening of August 21 GHQ ordered the two Front commanders to complete the encirclement of the enemy near Husi. "Successful fulfilment of the task of crushing the Kishinev group," the GHQ order stated, "will open for us the road to the main economic and political centres of Rumania. . . ."

Soviet troops wrecked the enemy's intention of "withdrawing according to plan". On August 22 tank units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front advanced 25-30 kilometres, and two motorised corps of the 3rd Ukrainian Front covered 50 kilometres. Tanks from both fronts got to within 35-40 kilometres of the crossings on the Prut while the main forces of the enemy 6th Army were still 80-90 kilometres away. General A. N. Bakhtin's group consisting of the 46th Army's left-flank divisions attacked on the same day. Supported by artillery, aircraft and ships of the Danube Flotilla (commander—Admiral S. G. Gorshkov) they suddenly forced the Dniester Liman, overwhelmed the enemy and occupied Akkerman. The 46th Army enveloped the flanks of the Rumanian 3rd Army to a great depth, and the fate of this army was sealed on August 23. It surrendered after finding itself surrounded.

Late in the evening of August 23 the command of Army Group Southern Ukraine received news of the political upheaval in Rumania—Antonescu was deposed. Shortly afterwards, Hitler ordered the group to withdraw by the shortest route to the semi-sheltered positions in the Carpathians. But Friessner was no longer able to carry out this order. On August 23-24 tanks of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts reached the Prut River in the vicinity of Husi and Leovo from the northwest and east, closing a mammoth ring round units of five German army corps. Unable to organise troop control, the command and staff of the German

6th Army slipped out of the pocket in time. The remnants of the enemy units that had not been encircled retreated in face of the onslaught of Soviet troops operating on the outer ring of the pocket, which had been moved 100-150 kilometres to the southwest. By the evening of August 24, the 2nd Ukrainian Front's mechanised cavalry group was in the vicinity of Bacau, while units of the 6th Tank Army reached the vicinity of Tekuca.

In the course of August 25-26 the ring on the eastern bank of the Prut was gradually tightened. The Soviet Command sent the nazis an ultimatum to capitulate, but this was rejected. In the circumstances, the Red Army was compelled to strike. The 7th and 4th Guards Motorised corps, which had reached the river, played the role of anvil, while the 5th Strike and 57th and 37th armies, advancing from the east and southeast, played the role of sledgehammer. However, a considerable part of the German 6th Army succeeded in crossing to the western bank. There they made a stand for another two days, and a large group with tanks and artillery even broke through to the southwest: the battle formations of the 52nd Army proved to be insufficiently dense. The enemy aimed to fight his way to Hungary via the Carpathians. General R. Y. Malinovsky sent six infantry and one tank corps in pursuit of this group. A hardfought battle raged on a large territory and on September 4 it ended in a Soviet victory.

Eighteen of Army Group Southern Ukraine's 25 German divisions were thus surrounded and wiped out. "This is the largest catastrophe ever to befall the Army Group," reads the entry made on September 5 in the log of Army Group Southern Ukraine.

While the destruction of the encircled group was proceeding, Soviet troops on the outer ring continued their advance. The conditions were very favourable: on their right flank they had to contend with only two battleworthy divisions, and in their centre with the remnants of five mauled divisions. No enemy units operated on the left flank. Far from offering resistance, the Rumanians turned their guns against the nazis in some regions. In the direction of the main blow, troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, supported by aircraft, reached the immediate approaches of Bucharest on August 30. On the right wing, despite the rugged terrain of the Eastern Carpathians, they fought their way across distances of from 20 to 70 kilometres. Troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, advancing along both banks of the Danube, approached the frontier between Bulgaria and Rumania. In eleven days both fronts advanced from 320 to 350 kilometres. Ships of the Danube Flotilla entered ports along the lower reaches of the Danube, while Black Sea Fleet units entered Constanta. Submarines occupied positions off the coast of Rumania.

The area between the Dniester and the Prut was finally cleared of the enemy with the liberation of Moldavia, which like the other Soviet republics occupied by the Germans had suffered enormous losses in lives and property.

With the approval of the nazi overlords, the Rumanian invaders destroyed the republic's independence, turning part of its territory into the Rumanian province of Bessarabia and the other, together with a portion of Ukrainian territory, into the province of Transnistria. The administration consisted of Rumanian officials, gendarmes and police. In addition, it employed bourgeois nationalists, kulaks and ex-convicts. The occupation apparatus operated in line with instructions from Ion Antonescu, who demanded that people should be "driven to work by whip and bullet". The administration was empowered to confiscate any property

at its discretion and to take reprisals for the concealment of food or for the least resistance.

Accordingly, the invaders ruthlessly exploited and pillaged the population. They destroyed 1,037 factory buildings and many schools, hospitals, theatres, clubs and museums. The collective and state farms were abolished and their land was parcelled out to landowners, kulaks, nazi officials and army officers. From Moldavia the invaders carried away 467,000 tons of flour, grain and other food, nearly 200,000 head of cattle, and 300,000 sheep, goats and pigs. The direct loss to the Moldavian economy added up to 15,000 million rubles.

The Rumanian fascists refused to recognise the Moldavian nation. They held Moldavian culture and traditions in contempt and engaged in the physical extermination of the population.

During the occupation 64,000 Moldavians were tortured to death in the dungeons of the Rumanian secret police and in the jails and concentration camps, and 207,000 were arrested and tortured. More than 47,000 Moldavians were used as slave labour. An example of the reign of terror was the Dubossari concentration camp with its brutalities and mass murders, where 7,500 people were killed. In one day alone, September 12, 1941, the fascists shot 2,500 men, women and children. Mothers were forced to hold their infants in outstretched hands while they were shot by the fascists. Moldavian patriots were burned or buried alive.

The Moldavian people fought the invaders shoulder to shoulder with the other Soviet peoples and made a large contribution towards victory. Moldavian underground fighters and partisans actively resisted the enemy, putting out of action 30,000 fascist officers, soldiers and officials, and destroying 300 trains, 20 aircraft, 124 tanks, armoured carriers and armoured cars and a large quantity of other equipment. Orders and medals were awarded to 85,000 soldiers and partisans.

Moldavians eagerly awaited the Red Army. On August 24 General N. E. Berzarin's 5th Strike Army liberated Kishinev, where it was given a jubilant welcome by the population. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the government of Moldavia, which had set up their headquarters in the town of Soroki after returning from evacuation in the spring of 1944, at once moved to Kishinev and initiated measures to heal the wounds inflicted on the national economy.

The powerful onslaught of the Red Army near Jassy and Kishinev hastened the armed uprising of the Rumanian people and predetermined the fate of the Antonescu clique. The uprising, which laid the beginning for a people's democratic revolution, broke out in Bucharest on August 23. For its objectives and by its nature it was an anti-fascist uprising, its principal driving forces being the working class and the soldier masses.

Before the Soviet campaign of June-August commenced meetings and conferences were held in Bucharest between representatives of the Communist Party of Rumania, patriotic officers and palace circles, at which they specified practical questions concerning the preparations for the uprising, the arrest of the Government and the publication of the first documents of the new Government. In the preparations for the uprising the most consistent stand was that of the Communists. The clarity of their objectives and their skilful handling of secret work greatly impressed the patriotic officers.

A conference setting August 24-26 as the date for the uprising was held in Bucharest on August 20 when the Soviet offensive got under

way. But the rapid course of events at the front accelerated the armed action by the people. On August 23 Antonescu convened an emergency meeting of the Government at which the situation at the front was examined and it was decided to mobilise "all the forces of the nation" in order to continue the war. Ion Antonescu and his deputy, Mihai Antonescu, went to the palace to secure the king's support and get him to address the people. This proved to be a convenient opportunity to arrest the dictator, as was envisaged by the plan for the uprising. Influenced by the military catastrophe at Jassy and Kishinev, the king and his retinue arrested the two Antonescus and then a number of other ministers. In the evening of August 23, a patriotic detachment commanded by E. Bodnaras, a leading functionary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Rumania, took the prisoners to a secret house maintained by the Central Committee on the outskirts of the city. They were kept there under guard until their transfer to the Soviet Command. After Antonescu's arrest the military command of Bucharest ordered units of the garrison and patriotic combat detachments to occupy the principal Government offices and military objectives. This plan had been drawn up beforehand by the Military Committee, whose work was directed by the Communist Party of Rumania. The Communist Party of Rumania thus used the king's power to arrest the Antonescu clique and overthrow the fascist government.

As soon as the uprising broke out palace circles together with the royalists and liberals formed a Government with General Sanatescu at its head. This was done against the will of the people and of the Communist Party of Rumania. The Communists demanded the creation of a Government consisting of representatives of all the anti-fascist parties. Most of the members of the new Government were reactionary military and state officials. Each party in the National-Democratic Bloc had only one representative in it. With the formation of this Government its organisers wanted to call a halt to the uprising, considering it necessary to give the nazi troops the possibility of withdrawing from Rumania unmolested.

The king and his supporters created difficulties but could not change the course of events. In the morning of August 24 the Communist Party published a statement calling upon the people to rise against the invaders. Thousands of working people responded, joining the patriotic combat detachments. Together with military units these detachments seized key objectives in the city. Hitler ordered General Friessner to capture the capital. After a heavy bombing raid, the German troops on the outskirts of Bucharest launched a counter-attack. The ensuing fierce fighting continued until August 28. The struggle waged by the people's combat detachments was facilitated by the encirclement of the main body of German troops southeast of Jassy. This predetermined the outcome of the struggle. The insurgents gained victory in the capital. Armed clashes took place also in Ploesti, Brasov and Alba Julia, and in the industrial regions of Banat, and other towns and districts. In this situation Rumania entered the war against nazi Germany.

As soon as news of the uprising in Rumania was received, the Soviet Government confirmed by radio its statement of April 2, 1944, declaring that far from disarming the Rumanian Army the Red Army would help it, provided it turned its guns against the Germans in Rumania herself or against Horthy Hungary with the purpose of liberating Northern Transylvania. In the statement it was underlined that the participation of Rumanian troops in the war against nazi Germany was the only means

for hastening the end of hostilities in Rumania and concluding an armistice agreement.

In the meantime the new Rumanian Government took steps that were, in effect, directed against the plans of the Red Army Supreme Command. On August 29 and 30 representatives of the Sanatescu Government approached Soviet generals on different sectors of the firing lines, requesting them to stop the Red Army offensive along the line running from the Eastern Carpathians to the Danube. The motive for this was to enable the German Command unhurriedly to withdraw its troops to the Carpathians and regroup them with the purpose of continuing the war, and to prevent the Red Army from advancing deep into Rumania, towards the frontiers of Hungary and in the Balkans. Naturally, this was unacceptable to the Soviet Government. Significantly, the Sanatescu Government at the same time debated the question of letting US and British troops into Rumania and went so far as to request the US-British Command to send an airborne force to Bucharest. The calculations of the king and his entourage with regard to the occupation of Rumania by Anglo-US forces were unrealistic, for Soviet troops were already at the gates of Bucharest.

Thus, the Red Army's crushing blows at Army Group Southern Ukraine and its swift advance deep into Rumania left the ruling classes of that country virtually without military support. The anti-fascist uprising ended in a popular victory, its success having been ensured by the favourable external situation created by the Red Army offensive and by the efforts of the Communist Party of Rumania, which had consistently worked to unite all the nation's forces against the fascist dictatorship. The king, the bourgeois-landowner parties and their representatives in the Government were unable to influence developments. The Rumanian Army turned its guns against Germany.

On August 31 Soviet troops entered Bucharest, which had been liberated by patriotic forces. This was of tremendous significance. Consolidation of the victory of the anti-fascist uprising and the Red Army's entry into Rumania's capital fundamentally changed the military situation in Southeastern Europe. At rallies and demonstrations the working people of Bucharest welcomed the Soviet troops and expressed their readiness to fight for democracy, against fascism.

The enemy's defeat at Jassy and Kishinev and the uprising in Rumania opened the door to an offensive in the Southwestern theatre.

On August 29 GHQ ordered the main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front to advance towards Câmpulung and Pitesti on the left wing and then towards the Yugoslav frontier. The right-wing armies had to cross the East Carpathians and develop their offensive in the general direction of Cluj. The 3rd Ukrainian Front was ordered to move up to the Rumanian-Bulgarian frontier.

The 2nd Ukrainian Front had intact almost all the forces that were at its disposal on August 20; its losses had been relatively light. Moreover, on September 6 the Rumanian 4th and 1st armies came under the Front command. The 4th Army was deployed along the northeastern sector of the Rumanian-Hungarian frontier that had been demarcated by the Vienna "Arbitration". The 1st Army was deployed on the western frontier, and the 4th Army Corps on the southeastern sector.

In this new situation the German Command decided to close the southern flank of Army Group Southern Ukraine with Army Group F in Yugoslavia and thereby create a strong defensive line running from

the East Carpathians to the Western Balkans through the South Carpathians.

On September 5 the 2nd Ukrainian Front's 27th, 6th Tank and 53rd armies reached the vicinity of Pitesti without encountering resistance, while advanced units of the tank army approached the town of Turnu-Severin on the frontier of Yugoslavia. Farther to the left no resistance was encountered by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front either. They reached the Rumanian-Bulgarian frontier along a line running from Giurgiu to the Black Sea. On the right wing the 40th and 7th Guards armies made insignificant headway. In the East Carpathians, where the going was heavy, they ran into extremely stiff resistance from surviving German divisions. In the morning of September 5 the Hungarian 2nd Army, reinforced by German divisions, struck at the Rumanian 4th Army from the vicinity of Cluj and advanced 20-30 kilometres. It intended to capture and lock the passes in the South Carpathians before they could be approached by Soviet troops.

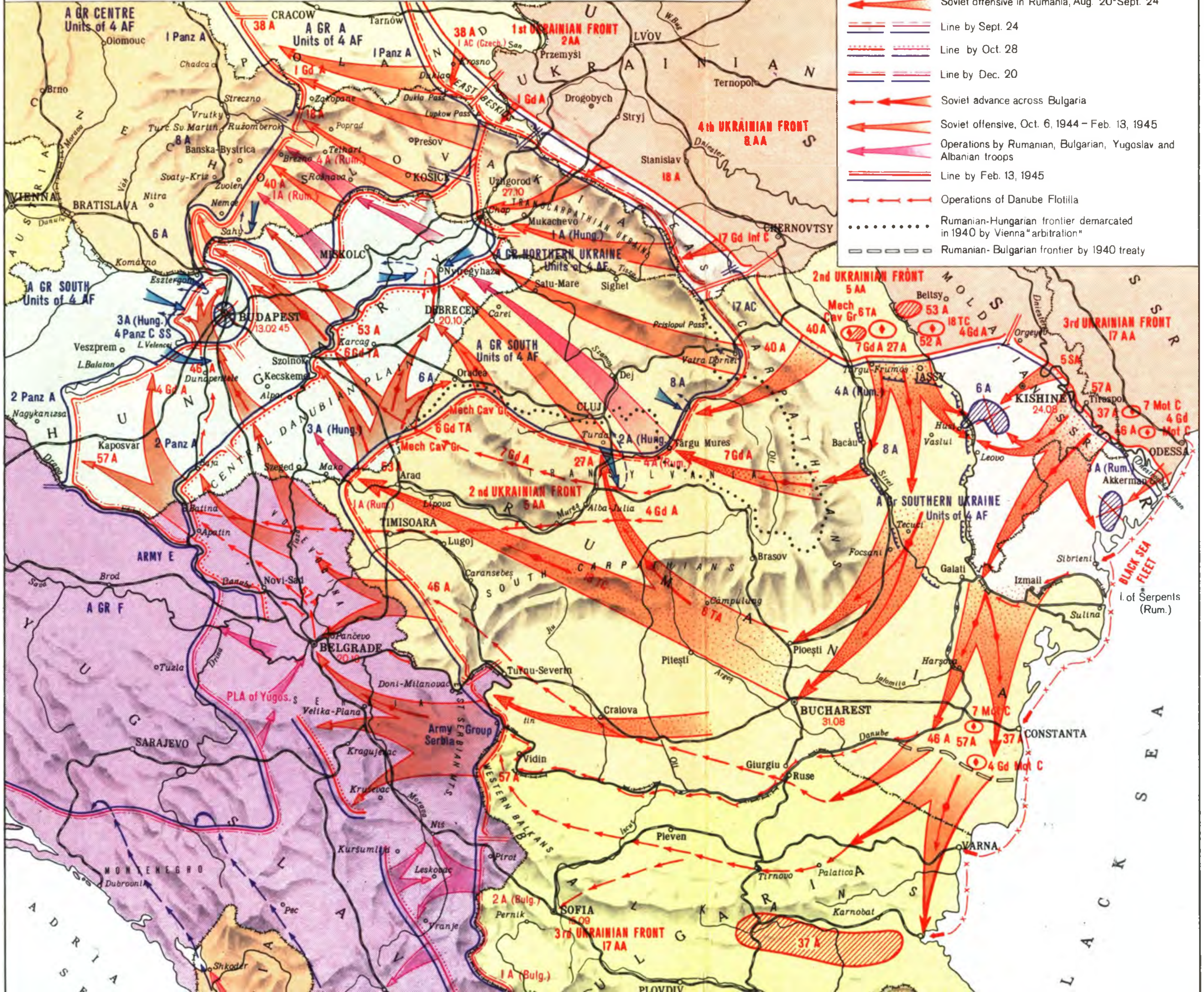
In this changed situation Marshal R. Y. Malinovsky ordered the 6th Tank and 27th armies to swing sharply to the north and, with the support of the 5th Air Army, move to the south of Turda and capture Cluj. The 53rd Army and the 18th Tank Corps were given the task of advancing in a northwesterly direction towards Lugoj and north of the town.

In the course of September 6-15, the Front's right wing crossed the East Carpathians, advancing along a sector from 30 to 130 kilometres wide and reaching the line running from Vatra Dornei to Târgu Mures. The advance was swifter in the centre, the armies covering nearly 250 kilometres. The 6th Tank Army crossed the South Carpathians, gained the southern approaches of Turda and, jointly with the Rumanian 4th Army, hurled the enemy to his starting positions. The fighting near Turda became drawn out. On the Front's left flank General P. D. Govorunenko's 18th Tank Corps advanced towards Lipova, and General I. M. Managarov's 53rd Army approached Caransebes.

But by September 15 the enemy succeeded in restoring a solid front. Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were opposed by 27 German and Hungarian divisions and brigades, including six panzer and motorised divisions. In the western sector the enemy attacked the Rumanian 1st Army. He was determined to keep the advancing left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front out of the Central Danubian Plain. A new directive from GHQ on September 15 ordered the Front to continue its offensive on all sectors, reach and cross the pre-war Rumanian-Hungarian frontier and approach the Tisza in the vicinity of Chop and Szolnok. From there the Front had to move northwards in order to help the 4th Ukrainian Front cross the Carpathians. The latter Front had mounted an offensive as early as September 9 but it was proceeding slowly. At the same time, Marshal Malinovsky was ordered to transfer to the left wing the 46th Army, which had been taken from the 3rd Ukrainian Front. It was to be reinforced by General I. A. Pliyev's mechanised cavalry group from the GHQ Reserve.

However, troops of the right wing and centre fell short of their objectives. Fierce fighting continued to rage near Târgu Mures and Cluj. On the left wing Soviet troops reached the line held by the Rumanian 1st Army, and together with this army drove back the advancing enemy and on September 24 gained the Rumanian-Hungarian frontier near the town of Mako and to the northeast of it. The Front's main thrust had to be transferred from the centre to the left wing and a blow struck

15. SOVIET OPERATIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE Aug. 1944-Feb. 1945




Soviet offensive, Oct. 6, 1944 – Feb. 13, 1945
Operations by Rumanian, Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Albanian troops
Line by Feb. 13, 1945
Operations of Danube Flotilla
Rumanian-Hungarian frontier demarcated in 1940 by Vienna "arbitration"
Rumanian- Bulgarian frontier by 1940 treaty
4th UKRAINIAN FRONT
8 AA
2nd UKRAINIAN FRONT
5 AA
3rd UKRAINIAN FRONT
17 AA
A GR NORTHERN UKRAINE
Units of 4 AF
A GR SOUTHERN UKRAINE
Units of 4 AF
A GR SOUTH
Units of 4 AF
A GR SOUTH
Units of 4 AF
A GR F
A GR E
(Army E as of Nov. 1944)
BUDAPEST
13.02.45
BELGRADE
20.10
BUCHAREST
31.08
SOFIA
16.09
KISHINEV
24.08
ODESSA
VIENNA
BRATISLAVA
DEBRECEN
20.10
MISKOLC
TIMISOARA
CLUJ
IASSY
CHERNOVTSY
CONSTANTA
VARNA
PLOVDIV
TIRANA
21.11
SARAJEVO
Army Group Serbia
PLA of Yugos.
PLA of Alban.
BLACK SEA FLEET
I. of Serpents (Rum.)
Turkish troops
km 40 0 40 80 120 km

northward from Mako. The Front temporarily halted its offensive. It regrouped its forces and prepared for the Debrecen campaign, whose main objectives were in Hungary. The enemy was cleared out of north-western Rumania in the course of that campaign.

The Jassy-Kishinev campaign and the subsequent operations in central and western Rumania took 36 days, from August 20 to September 24. Strategically the enemy's firing lines were shattered over a distance of hundreds of kilometres. Soviet troops advanced 750 kilometres and enveloped the Carpathian group of German and Hungarian troops. The Government communique on the results of the Jassy-Kishinev campaign declared that "strategically, militarily and politically it is one of the largest and most outstanding operations in the present war".

The enemy's defeat at Jassy and Kishinev was the decisive factor in the liberation of Rumania. Rumania reveres the memory of the many thousands of Soviet troops who shed their blood in the fighting on Rumanian soil. Monuments in their honour now stand in Bucharest and a number of other towns.

Led by the Communist Party of Rumania the Rumanian people used the favourable situation to rise against and depose the hated Antonescu regime. When the Red Army entered Rumania it found in the people not a defeated enemy but an ally and friend. Shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army the Rumanian people fought for the final liberation of their homeland and for the incorporation in it of northern Transylvania, which had been forcibly wrested away. Nothing came of the Anglo-US plan of establishing in Rumania a regime after the "Greek model". The presence of Soviet troops and the correct tactics employed by the Communist Party of Rumania precluded a civil war and created the conditions for an unhampered class struggle and a relatively peaceful development of the revolution in Rumania.

On September 12, 1944, an armistice agreement was signed in Moscow by the governments of the USSR, USA, Britain and Rumania. This agreement recorded Rumania's inclusion in the anti-fascist struggle and provided for the establishment in that country of an Allied Control Commission under the general supervision of the Soviet High Command. In addition, it envisaged the disbandment of pro-nazi organisations, the banning of propaganda against the anti-fascist coalition, the release of anti-fascists from the gaols, the abolition of discriminatory laws, the trial of war criminals, and so forth. Resting on the principled provisions of this agreement, Rumania's progressive forces undermined the position of the reactionaries. The reactionary majority in the Sanatescu Government opposed any conscientious fulfilment of this agreement. The struggle between the forces of democracy and reaction steadily mounted and finally led to the fall of the Government and the formation of another Government under Sanatescu.

On the initiative of the Communist Party of Rumania the National-Democratic Bloc was enlarged or, to be more exact, reorganised. A National-Democratic Front emerged consisting of representatives of all mass democratic organisations. The royalists and liberals stayed out of this patriotic organisation inasmuch as its programme demanded decisive democratic reforms. The drive to implement this programme brought about the fall of the second Sanatescu Government, but power was seized by a still more reactionary Government with General N. Radescu at its head. Meanwhile, the democratic movement was gaining ground. The reactionaries led by the king were determined to suppress the revolutionary masses by force of arms. Terrorists went on a rampage and demonstrators

were manhandled. Radescu declared that he was, "if necessary, prepared to trigger a civil war". He ordered troops to fire on a 600,000-strong demonstration organised by the National-Democratic Front. This set off a wave of protests and under pressure from the masses a new Government headed by P. Groza, leader of the Agrarian Front, was set up on March 6, 1945. Most of the portfolios in the Government went to representatives of democratic organisations and parties, including the Communist Party. In effect, this was a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and peasants. The Rumanian people could now start on major social reforms.

Speaking of the role played by the Soviet Armed Forces in creating the political conditions for Rumania s further development, G. Gheorghiu Dej declared: "Rumania's liberation by the Soviet Army signified more than our country's national liberation. It created the conditions and prerequisites for the subsequent overthrow of the ruling landowner and capitalist classes, for launching a popular struggle and implementing revolutionary reforms."

One of the results of the Red Army's operations in Rumania was the establishment of fraternal military co-operation with the Rumanian Army. After Rumania's liberation her army continued to participate in the anti-fascist war, helping, in particular, to liberate Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Alongside the Red Army, it fought the nazis for 260 days, suffering considerable casualties—170,000 killed, wounded or missing. The combat alliance between the Soviet and Rumanian peoples was one of the cardinal factors of Rumania's post-war development along the road of people's democracy and socialist construction.

3. LIBERATION OF BULGARIA

The nazi defeat at Jassy and Kishinev, the August uprising in Rumania and the fact that the 3rd Ukrainian Front had reached the Rumanian-Bulgarian frontier tremendously influenced Bulgaria's internal situation and international position.

In the summer of 1944 the country was in the toils of a severe economic and political crisis. Throughout the war the German monopolists had ruthlessly plundered the Bulgarian people. Economically, the country was exhausted. A large part of the population was on the brink of starvation. The Government, formally sovereign, took its orders from the nazi ambassador in Sofia. The Bulgarian police and military institutions were controlled by the Gestapo.

Led by the Bulgarian Workers' Party, the country's patriotic forces fought for national and social emancipation for over three years. In August 1944 there were 670 committees of the Fatherland Front and these were active in most of the country, conducting anti-fascist propaganda and uniting the people. A well-organised People's Liberation Army, consisting of 11 brigades and 37 detachments totalling over 18,000 men, was active. In addition, there were combat groups which had a total of over 12,000 fighters. The partisans and combat groups could rely on a huge number of people, nearly 200,000, to help and conceal them. The armed struggle became nation-wide. In June and July 1944 the partisans, supported by broad strata of the people, fought 680 actions. The movement was steadily embracing more and more regions and thanks to the efforts of the Bulgarian Workers' Party many soldiers were going over to the partisans.

In July-August 1944 the partisan brigades and detachments began to establish popular rule in some regions. The people were preparing for an armed uprising.

The anti-popular Government of Bulgaria savagely persecuted the partisans. More than 64,000 people were subjected to repressions in the period from January 1942 to the uprising of September 1944. The partisans suffered heavy casualties in their engagements with police and troops. But this did not halt the struggle.

The Bulgarian Workers' Party steadfastly continued to direct the national liberation movement. It had 25,000 members and was loyally assisted by the Young Workers' League, which had nearly 30,000 members. The party was headed by Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov, who were prominent in the international and Bulgarian working-class movement. The struggle brought to the fore many outstanding leaders, Todor Zhivkov and B. Bolgaranov among them.

Formally, Bulgaria was not at war with the USSR. Her rulers did not dare to send the army to the Soviet-German front, for the sympathy of the Bulgarian people lay with the Russian people, who had liberated them from Turkish oppression. However, the reactionary Bulgarian Government gave Germany all the assistance it could. The German Command made use of Bulgaria's airfields, ports and railways. Bulgarian troops were used as occupation forces in Greece and Yugoslavia, thereby releasing German divisions for the war against the Soviet Union and its allies. In the spring and summer of 1944 the Soviet Government made several representations to the Government of Bulgaria, requesting it to sever its alliance with Germany and observe neutrality. In reply the fascist Bulgarian clique resorted to shifts and dodges, one of which was the replacement of the Bojilov Government by the similarly pro-fascist Bagrianov Government. Following the developments in Rumania, the National Committee of the Fatherland Front, acting on the initiative of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers' Party, demanded the transfer of power to the Fatherland Front. This demand was rejected. However, fearing the popular movement the Government proclaimed its neutrality on August 26. But this was only one of its subterfuges. The nazis remained in control of the country.

In face of the hopelessness of Germany's position, Bulgaria's ruling circles were prepared to let the country be occupied by Anglo-American forces rather than let a Fatherland Front Government come to power. In August 1944 they sent their representative to Turkey to contact the Western powers in secret. The British and Americans eagerly sat down to the talks, but time worked against them: Soviet troops were approaching Bulgaria's frontiers, and the workers and peasants with the Bulgarian Workers' Party at their head were only waiting for the signal to rise in arms.

On August 26 a letter on the armed uprising was sent to Party organisations by the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers' Party. This letter called upon the people to overthrow the Bagrianov Government. An appeal was made to the workers to stage political strikes at the factories and demand a Fatherland Front Government. These were to grow into a general political strike. The people responded to this call and the ensuing mass movement brought about the fall of the Bagrianov Government and the formation of a Government headed by Muraviev. The new Prime Minister made a demagogic statement on home and foreign policy, in particular declaring that Bulgaria would observe strict neutrality. But these were empty words. Remnants of German troops

retreating from Rumania were unmolested in Bulgaria. In the circumstances, on September 5, the Soviet Government declared that "not only is Bulgaria in a state of war with the USSR since she had earlier actually been in such a state of war, but the Soviet Union shall from now on consider itself to be in a state of war with Bulgaria". Subsequent developments showed that this facilitated the success of the popular uprising.

The political situation in Bulgaria became increasingly inflamed. Muraviev banned the democratic parties of the Fatherland Front. Naturally, this was not tolerated by the Bulgarian people. The revolutionary crisis of the summer of 1944 grew into a revolutionary situation, and on September 7, when it became clear that the Red Army would enter Bulgaria, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers' Party and General Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army set September 9 as the date for the uprising in Sofia.

GHQ ordered the 3rd Ukrainian Front and the Black Sea Fleet to begin hostilities against Bulgaria on September 8, advance to the line running through Ruse, Palatica, Karnobat and Burgas by September 12 and temporarily halt along that line. It was decided to make the question of a further advance dependent on how the popular armed uprising in Bulgaria would develop.

In this period the Bulgarian Army consisted of 23 divisions and seven brigades, but the 3rd Ukrainian Front was opposed by only four divisions and two brigades. Bulgaria had over 400 aircraft. More than 80 German and Bulgarian warships were concentrated at Varna and Burgas.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front and the Black Sea Fleet had sufficient forces to crush any resistance. In political work the accent during the preparations for the offensive was placed on explaining the reasons for and objectives of the war against Bulgaria.

On September 8 advanced Soviet infantry units entered Bulgaria. They were followed and outstripped by motorised formations, which pushed deep into the country without meeting resistance. The line designated by GHQ was reached on the next day. In other words, 110-160 kilometres were covered in two days. Co-operating with the land forces, ships of the Black Sea Fleet entered the ports of Varna and Burgas. No resistance was encountered from Bulgarian warships either. All the German vessels had been scuttled on orders from the German Command. The crews were taken prisoner. In the evening of September 9 GHQ called a halt to the advance.

The Bulgarian operation turned into a triumphant march of liberation. Everywhere the people turned out to welcome the Red Army, meeting the troops with bread and salt in the villages and showering them with flowers in the towns. The Soviet ambassador in Sofia received very many friendly telegrams.

The Red Army's entry into Bulgaria accelerated the uprising. In Sofia the factory workers went on strike as early as September 6, and meetings and rallies were held. On the next day the heroic miners of Pernik staged a strike, and on September 8 their example was followed by factory workers in other parts of the country. Everywhere political prisoners were released. The Fatherland Front took over the administration in many towns and villages. Partisan brigades and detachments came down from the mountains and occupied militarily important towns.

The armed uprising in Sofia began in the night of September 8-9. The regents, ministers and other representatives of the royalist-fascist clique were arrested. The Bulgarian Army offered no resistance and in many

cases the troops joined the insurgents. The Fatherland Front Government headed by Kimon Georgiev was formed on the same day. A new balance of class forces took shape. The power of the workers and peasants, with the Bulgarian Workers' Party playing the leading role, was established.

The new Government at once embarked upon the fulfilment of the Fatherland Front programme. It declared war on Germany and on the last nazi satellite—Horthy-ruled Hungary. Parliament and the police were disbanded, the state apparatus was purged, the Army was reorganised and fascist organisations were banned. A people's militia was formed. Bulgarian troops were evacuated from Greece and the southeastern regions of Yugoslavia.

The Bulgarian Workers' Party took steps to ensure the fullest participation of the Army in the war against Germany. The army in the field was subordinated to the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. In Yugoslavia and Hungary nearly 200,000 Bulgarian troops fought alongside the Red Army in the course of seven or eight months. Of these 32,000 were killed, wounded or listed missing.

Thus, by entering Bulgaria, the Red Army helped her people to withdraw from the unjust war, take part in the anti-fascist war and begin building a people's democratic state. Favourable conditions emerged for the unhampered development of the class struggle, which led to the consolidation of the new system. The presence of Soviet troops fettered the Bulgarian reactionaries as well as their supporters in foreign countries. "The victory of September 9," states the address of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party to the Bulgarian people on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the socialist revolution in Bulgaria, "was accomplished with decisive assistance from the Soviet Army, the liberator of peoples from nazi tyranny."

4. AID TO THE SLOVAK UPRISING. BEGINNING OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S LIBERATION

The Red Army's successes—the expulsion of the nazis from the eastern regions of Poland and from Rumania and Bulgaria—brought nearer the liberation of the fraternal Czechoslovak people.

Czechoslovakia was one of the first countries to be enslaved by German imperialism. The nazis carved her up. Bohemia and Moravia were incorporated in Germany. Transcarpathian Ukraine and the southern regions of Slovakia were given to Hungary. The rest of Slovakia was declared an "independent state", but, in effect, its policy was directed and controlled by the nazis. A reign of terror and repressions was instituted by the invaders in the Czech regions and by the traitor clique headed by Joseph Tiso in Slovakia. Nevertheless, the national liberation movement, led by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, spread rapidly.

As early as 1939 in face of the situation in Slovakia the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia adopted a decision to give organisational independence to its Slovak part—the Communist Party of Slovakia. But unity was preserved throughout the war. The work of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was guided by a directing centre that was in Moscow and was headed by Klement Gottwald. Although the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia suffered heavy

casualties its central leadership and local organisations continued to function underground.

In 1944 the anti-fascist struggle grew to immense proportions under the impact of the Red Army's victories and thanks to the correct policy and extensive organisational activity of the leading organs of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. National committees, which rallied the patriotic forces, sprang up in towns and villages. The scale of the national liberation struggle was particularly large in Slovakia. Strikes were organised more and more frequently at the factories, peasant action became more united and the national committees more active. The armed struggle grew.

Extensive assistance was rendered this movement by the Soviet Union. Soviet troops reached the immediate approaches of the Czechoslovak frontier in April 1944, and on May 8 a Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement was signed to cover the relations between the Soviet High Command and the Czechoslovak administration after the Red Army entered Czechoslovakia. One of the provisions of this agreement was that the Soviet Command would have jurisdiction only in the zone of hostilities and only in matters concerning the conduct of the war.

In the summer of 1944 Soviet and Czechoslovak partisan groups were transported from the USSR to Slovakia at the request of the Czechoslovak leadership and on the basis of the Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement. The liberation movement was supplied with large quantities of weapons, ammunition and other materiel. This activity was directed by the Ukrainian Headquarters of the partisan movement, where R. Slansky and August Sram were the representatives of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Large partisan units consisting mainly of Slovaks were formed round organisational groups. These included the Czechoslovak Stefanik 1st Brigade, the Czechoslovak 2nd Brigade and the Jan Zizka Brigade. Many Soviet partisan groups, detachments and brigades, among them units commanded by P. A. Velichko, A. S. Yegorov, L. Y. Berenstein, Y. P. Volyansky, V. A. Karasev, V. A. Kvitinsky and M. I. Shukayev, infiltrated into Slovakia in the summer of the same year. Some were reinforced by local inhabitants and others merged with Slovak units.

The Slovak and mixed Slovak-Soviet partisan brigades and detachments soon began to undertake major operations against the Germans and the Slovak fascists. A partisan war flared up in August 1944 on the territory stretching from the towns of Chadza, Trencin and Nitra to Transcarpathian Ukraine. Part of the regular Slovak Army joined the partisans. In the second half of August they liberated Brezno, Vrutky, Ruzomberok, Poprad and other towns. Towards the end of the month they were in virtual control of the whole of Central Slovakia and the northern regions of Eastern Slovakia. In the liberated towns and villages the national committees emerged from the underground and took power into their own hands.

The rapid developments sowed panic among the Slovak rulers. Unable to cope with the people by themselves they appealed for assistance to Hitler. German troops entered Slovakia on August 29, evoking an explosion of indignation among the Slovak people. This led to a mass armed struggle. The local anti-fascist actions grew into a popular uprising led by the Communist Party of Slovakia. The town of Banska Bystrica became the political centre of the uprising.

Eighteen districts of Slovakia rose in arms against the nazi invaders. The organised armed force consisted of partisan formations, units of

the Slovak Army, which had gone over to the cause of the people, and units mobilised by the Slovak National Council. But the forces were unequal. The Germans were much stronger numerically and, particularly, in armaments. This enabled them to place the Resistance in an extremely difficult position.

In this situation Zdenek Fierlinger, the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Moscow, asked the Soviet Government for assistance on August 31. The very same day a flight of Slovak military aircraft crossed the Soviet-German front. In one of them was Colonel W. Talski, deputy commander of the East Slovak Corps of the puppet Government's army. He declared that in the event Soviet troops advanced towards Krosno, his corps, which consisted of two divisions, would support them by attacking the enemy in the rear.

On the same day, Marshal I. S. Konev reported the arrival of the Slovak planes and Talski's statement to GHQ and submitted his own considerations for an operation in support of the Resistance fighters. In the evening of September 2 GHQ ordered an offensive at the junction of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts. The objective was to strike out from Krosno to Dukla and farther to Presov, enter Slovakia and link up with the Resistance fighters.

The forces lined up for this operation included: from the 1st Ukrainian Front—General K. S. Moskalenko's 38th Army, a cavalry and a tank corps, as well as the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps under General Ludwik Svoboda which had been formed in the Soviet Union; from the 4th Ukrainian Front—General A. A. Grechko's 1st Guards Army. Considerable air strength was assigned to assist these forces. Beginning on September 5 anti-tank guns and rifles, machine-guns, submachine-guns and ammunition were airlifted to the Resistance fighters.

There was very little time for preparations. Every minute counted. Soviet troops attacked at dawn on September 8. The Germans had strong defences and they put up a fierce resistance. There was bitter fighting for every hill and village, for every defence line. Soviet and Czechoslovak troops displayed exceptional courage. The German Command was determined to prevent Soviet troops from advancing into Slovakia and Transylvania, and soon after the operation was started it began bringing large forces into the area where German defences had been breached. In mid-September the enemy had a 2.3:1 superiority in tanks and self-propelled guns; in manpower the forces were approximately equal. This compelled the Soviet Command to reinforce its troops with two tank corps.

Impelled by their unyielding will for victory the troops surmounted all difficulties and reached the Main Carpathian Range towards the close of September. On October 6 the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps, shoulder to shoulder with Soviet troops, fought its way through the Dukla Pass and set foot on its native soil. This was a solemn historic moment which symbolised the beginning of a new stage in the life of Czechoslovakia. October 6 has since become Czechoslovak People's Army Day. Speaking of the significance of the operation in which Soviet and Czechoslovak troops co-operated, namely, the offensive through the Dukla Pass, Klement Gottwald emphasised: "The slogan 'With the Soviet Union for ever!' was born in the Dukla Pass and it became part of our people's way of thinking."

Until the end of October Soviet and Czechoslovak troops fought bloody battles against a strong enemy putting up tenacious resistance in the mountains. They achieved major tactical success but were unable to break

through and link up with the Resistance fighters. On October 28 the offensive petered out, and the 38th Army and the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps had to fight defensive actions. The Resistance fighters began withdrawing to the mountains. The offensive deep into Slovakia was attended by enormous difficulties. One of the formidable barriers were the East Beskids towering to a height of 850 metres above sea level. Besides, the units committed to this operation had been engaged in the battles round Lvov and Sandomierz, with the result that they were undermanned and short of supplies. Very little time, only five days, had been given them to prepare for the operation. Very few tanks were available to support the infantry. The terrain did not allow using large armoured forces. The planned strike by two Slovak divisions, which would have been of great assistance to the Soviet troops, did not take place. It was forestalled by the nazis, who learned of the plans of the East Slovak Corps.

While Soviet troops and the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps were trying to break through the Dukla Pass to Presov, the partisans and insurgent army were fighting the advancing Germans in Slovakia. Although the partisan detachments were numerically much weaker than the insurgent army they continued to be an active combat force of the uprising.

At the close of October enemy tanks and infantry occupied all the important towns in the territory embraced by the uprising. On October 27 they captured Banska Bystrica, the centre of the uprising. On orders from the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Headquarters of the partisan movement the insurgents took to the mountains. Jan Sverma, national hero of Czechoslovakia, was killed during this retreat. Partisan formations and detachments totalling about 19,000 men were operating behind the German lines early in November. Despite the heavy casualties suffered in the battles against the Germans, the partisan strength grew. These units went on fighting the enemy right until Czechoslovakia's liberation by the Red Army.

The Slovak uprising was one of the major milestones of the struggle of the European peoples against fascism. The Czechoslovak Republic as a state of two equal peoples—Czechs and Slovaks—was proclaimed as a result of the open armed struggle against the nazis and their accomplices. The uprising brought about the disintegration of the "Slovak state" and sparked the national democratic revolution in Czechoslovakia.

The offensive undertaken by Soviet troops from Krosno in the direction of Dukla and Presov is an example of military operations conducted solely in order to support the popular masses who had risen against the invaders and their menials. The strategic situation on the Soviet-German front in September 1944 did not require this difficult offensive. Nonetheless, true to its internationalist duty, the Red Army went to the assistance of the Slovak people. The scale of the fighting, which lasted for more than two months, is best seen from the fact that the Soviet casualties were more than 90,000 men killed or wounded, while the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps lost nearly 6,500 men. The operations in Slovakia and in the direction of Dukla, which made the Germans send large forces to those areas, facilitated the Red Army's advance in the Transcarpathians and, partly, in Hungary. The offensive of Soviet and Czechoslovak troops was of immense significance to the struggle of the Slovak and Czech peoples for the creation of a new Czechoslovakia, and it firmly cemented the friendship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples.

"The Slovak national uprising," Gustav Husak, First Secretary of the

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, said on the 25th anniversary of the uprising, "brought the Czech and Slovak peoples into the ranks of the fighters against fascism. The uprising was a great event in our history because in this struggle it placed our peoples shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet Union, which was the main force in the battle against fascism."

5. LIBERATION OF BELGRADE

At the close of September 1944 troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front reached the Bulgarian-Yugoslav frontier near Vidin. Bulgarian troops were deployed from the vicinity of Pirot to the south, to the junction of the Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Greek frontiers. Preparations were under way for an offensive against the German forces in Yugoslavia.

In September 1944 the political situation in that country was extremely favourable. Yugoslavia had been occupied by the enemy for more than four years and throughout those years her people, led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, had waged a relentless struggle against the invaders.

Organs of people's power—the Anti-Fascist Veche of National Liberation and the National Committee of Liberation—had become firmly established by 1944. They also had local branches. In September 1944 the people's army, according to Yugoslav figures, had close to 400,000 men. The troops were directed by a Supreme Headquarters. Before the arrival of Soviet troops, the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia had repulsed seven major offensives by the enemy. It widened the borders of the regions liberated from the nazi invaders.

The central organs of people's power in Yugoslavia were recognised by the Soviet Government as soon as they were set up. At the same time, the Soviet Government expressed its negative attitude towards the activities of General Dragoljub Mihailovic, War Minister of the Royal Government in exile, who was in command of nationalistic reactionary military formations. As early as 1941 he had shown himself to be a traitor by collaborating with the invaders against the partisans.

A Soviet military mission led by General N. V. Korneyev was sent to the National Committee of Liberation in February 1944. Along with Soviet political support Yugoslavia received material aid. In only the period May-September 1944 a Soviet air division airlifted to the Yugoslav patriots 920 tons of supplies: weapons, ammunition, uniforms, boots, means of communication and medicaments. This aid was substantially increased after Soviet troops reached the Yugoslav frontier.

The British and American governments started helping the PLAY in 1943, and since the autumn of that year they had had military missions accredited to the PLAY Supreme Headquarters. Parallel with this they continued rendering aid to Mihailovic and giving every support to the Royal Government in exile. In the summer of 1944 Churchill pressed Josip Broz Tito to agree to the landing of British troops in Yugoslavia. But military and political developments prevented the British from landing on the Adriatic coast of that country before the completion of the Red Army's operations in Yugoslavia.

Although the Yugoslav peoples achieved substantial successes in the struggle for their country's liberation they were unable to drive out the enemy. The enemy's superiority, particularly in weapons, was much too great. In September 1944 all the key towns, railways and motor roads were still in the hands of the invaders. It became possible to expel the enemy from the whole of Yugoslavia only after Soviet troops reached

the western regions of Bulgaria. Early in September Tito requested the Soviet Government to send the Red Army into Yugoslavia.

The response was immediate, and all the cardinal questions concerning the operation of Soviet and Bulgarian troops in Yugoslavia and co-ordination with the PLAY were settled that same month.

At the start of the Red Army offensive on Belgrade the Germans had nine divisions and eight brigades in Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania. Several Hungarian divisions were in occupation of the province of Vojevodina. In addition, in Yugoslavia the local Quislings had some 270,000 men under their command.

As a result of the changed political and strategic situation in the Balkans, the Germans began a gradual withdrawal from Greece to avoid being cut off by the Red Army, which had reached the Bulgarian-Yugoslav frontier. Army Group Serbia, deployed in the eastern regions of Serbia, was to organise the defence of the Serbian-Bulgarian frontier and ensure the evacuation of troops from the south of the Balkan Peninsula.

On September 28 General N. A. Gagen's 57th Army took the offensive, moving from the vicinity of Vidin in the general direction of Belgrade. There was heavy fighting from the very outset. Towns changed hands several times. Part of Army Group Serbia was encircled near Negotin and by October 4 it was wiped out. In the period from September 28 to October 10, the 57th Army, supported by an air army, advanced 130 kilometres in the centre, crossing the East Serbian Mountains, reaching the valley of the Morava and forcing the river near Velika-Plana. The 4th Guards Motorised Corps, which had advanced swiftly from south-eastern Bulgaria, reached the Morava River on October 10. Contact was made with the PLAY 14th Corps, which was actively helping the Red Army. The Danube Flotilla protected the 57th Army's right flank.

Co-operating with the PLAY, the 2nd Ukrainian Front's 46th Army cleared Yugoslav territory along the left bank of the Tisza and the Danube, and Vojevodina province east of the Tisza. This army's 10th Guards Corps captured the town of Pancevo, situated close to Belgrade, on the left bank of the Danube, thereby considerably facilitating the advance of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. The Bulgarian 2nd Army was approaching the town of Leskovac, and the Yugoslav 13th Corps was advancing towards that town from the west.

On October 12 the 4th Guards Motorised Corps launched an assault on Belgrade from a bridgehead. Jointly with part of the Yugoslav 1st Corps it crushed enemy resistance south of Belgrade and on October 14 gained the outskirts of the Yugoslav capital. Meanwhile the Yugoslav 12th Corps seized control of all the roads south of the Sava River leading from Belgrade to the southwest. The fighting for the city grew protracted because part of the forces had to be diverted for the liquidation of the 20,000-strong enemy group encircled southeast of Belgrade. This group was destroyed only on October 19. But fierce fighting continued to rage in the city itself and near Kragujevac. The Yugoslav capital was finally liberated on October 20.

The Soviet forces engaged in the battle for Belgrade consisted of the 4th Guards Motorised Corps, the 73rd Guards, the 106th Guards and 236th Infantry divisions, three artillery brigades, 16 artillery, mortar and self-propelled artillery regiments, one anti-aircraft artillery division and three separate anti-aircraft artillery regiments. The Yugoslavs were represented by the 1st, 5th, 6th and 11th divisions, and units of the 16th, 28th and 36th divisions. These forces were supported by the 17th Air

Army and the Danube Flotilla. Friendship between the Soviet and Yugoslav peoples was sealed with blood in the struggle against the nazi invaders.

Towards the evening of October 21 troops of the 57th Army reached a line running from Belgrade to Kragujevac, and moved farther south. Farther to the left, Bulgarian troops and the PLAY 13th Corps liberated the towns of Nis and Leskovac and approached Kursumlija and Vranje.

Yugoslavia's eastern regions and her capital were thus liberated as a result of joint operations by Soviet, Yugoslav and Bulgarian troops. Army Group F suffered a disastrous defeat. With the loss of the Salonika-Belgrade-Budapest road, the German Command was forced to accelerate the evacuation of its troops from the south of the Balkan Peninsula to northwestern Yugoslavia.

The Red Army's victories against the nazi bloc were the key factor in restoring the national independence of the Yugoslav and many other European peoples. Without the USSR, Josip Broz Tito emphasised in his report to the 5th Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, "it would have been impossible to defeat the nazi invaders, liberate Yugoslavia and build the new Yugoslavia".

In Yugoslavia the Soviet troops had the added incentive of knowing that the peoples of that country had contributed substantially to the common struggle against fascism. The Yugoslavs gave the Red Army a rousing welcome. Red Army units were hospitably received by the population. The people showed their friendliness, presenting the soldiers with flowers and inviting them to their homes. The Yugoslav Government decorated 2,000 Red Army officers and men with Orders and medals. It created 13 Soviet soldiers People's Hero of Yugoslavia.

Soon after the Belgrade operation Soviet troops were transferred to Hungary, but the Soviet Government continued giving every possible assistance to the Yugoslav peoples. In 1944 Yugoslavia received 350 aircraft, 65 T-34 tanks, 579 field guns of various calibre, 170 anti-aircraft guns, more than 3,300 mortars, 500 heavy machine-guns, close to 67,000 automatic rifles, submachine-guns and heavy machine-guns, 53,000 rifles and carbines, and large quantities of other materiel. Fifty thousand tons of grain were sent to Belgrade from Red Army reserves.

Towards the close of 1944 the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia had completely liberated Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The invaders still hung on in northwestern Yugoslavia. The final operation against them was carried out by the Yugoslav Army in the spring of 1945, when the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were advancing on Vienna. The entry of Soviet troops into Austria, the threat that they would advance on Trieste from Bruck and Graz and the cutting off of seven corps of Army Group F enabled the Yugoslav patriots to finish off the enemy. Yugoslavia's liberation was completed on May 15, 1945.

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With the Red Army operating in the Central Balkans, the military and political situation in Greece and Albania underwent a radical change as well. Throughout the war the peoples of these two countries had waged a heroic struggle against the invaders. A National Liberation Army of several tens of thousands of men operated in Albania in 1944. In August of that year it liberated almost the whole of southern Albania and some of the central regions. When the Germans started their withdrawal from the south of the Balkan Peninsula, the popular forces led by the Communist Party of Albania intensified their onslaughts

on the enemy. After 19 days of fighting they liberated Tirana, the capital. By November 29 they expelled the enemy from the northern regions.

In Greece the people fought heroically, and their patriotism and will to drive out the invaders were expressed in the feat accomplished by Manolis Glezos, who tore down the nazi flag from the Acropolis and hoisted the Greek flag in its place. The struggle of the people was organised and led by the Communist Party of Greece. The National Liberation Front united more than a million people, the revolutionary youth organisation had over 400,000 members, and there were nearly 125,000 men in the People's Liberation Army. The foundations for a people's democratic administration were laid long before the final expulsion of the nazis. It had not only central but also local organs. On the eve of the retreat of the German troops from Greece, the National Liberation Front was virtually in control of the country. However, British military intervention began on October 4, i.e., on the very next day after Hitler ordered the withdrawal of German troops from Greece. Documents show that in collusion with their American friends the British imperialists had been preparing this intervention for a long time and speeded it up when the Jassy-Kishinev campaign was at its height. In their baggage train the British brought the Greek king's reactionary émigré Government. They unleashed a criminal predatory war against the National Liberation Army and secured the establishment of a reactionary regime.

6. ENEMY DEFEAT IN HUNGARY

After Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland dropped out of the nazi bloc, Hungary found herself Germany's only satellite in Europe. For 25 years she had been ruled by the bloodthirsty Horthy dictatorship. For over three years her armed forces had been engaged in the piratical war against the USSR and had suffered enormous losses. The country's economy was almost entirely subordinated to the interests of Hitler Germany.

Opposition to nazi Germany and the Horthy regime came from the Hungarian people themselves. There were frequent cases of sabotage and wrecking at the factories and railways, of workers going on strike, of peasants refusing to supply foodstuffs and of people wrecking the military measures of the Hungarian Government. As soon as war broke out, a correct internationalist attitude to it was adopted by the Communist Party of Hungary, which had functioned underground for many years. However it failed to set up a popular front mainly on account of the treacherous stand of the Right leaders of the Social-Democratic Party and the small proprietors' party, who rejected the offer of unity of action with the Communists. Representatives of these parties agreed to form a united Hungarian Front only as late as May 1944.

On August 25 the Hungarian Government examined the situation in the light of the anti-fascist uprising in Rumania and decided that it would make every effort to prevent the Red Army from entering Hungary. It counted on German military assistance. The Hungarian rulers played for time so that the British could occupy Hungary. This fully conformed to Churchill's intentions; he had long cherished the dream of seeing British troops in Southeastern Europe. Horthy made secret representations to the USA and Britain, offering to sign an armistice. The Hungarian "führer" was told to refer this question to

the Soviet Union, whose troops had already crossed the Hungarian frontier. On October 1 a Hungarian mission arrived in Moscow with plenipotentiary powers to sign an armistice agreement on condition the Soviet Union agreed to "US and British participation in the occupation of Hungary" and to the "unmolested withdrawal of German troops".

When Horthy's intentions became known to the German Command it tightened its control over Hungarian military institutions and troops. Large panzer forces were transferred to the area round Budapest, and Horthy was given to understand that brutal reprisals would be taken against any anti-Hitler action by the Hungarians. Horthy, who believed that the Red Army's entry into the country would spark an internal class struggle during which the capitalists and landowners might lose state power and their predominant position in the economy, did not oppose his German masters.

Meanwhile, important developments were taking place in the life of fighting Hungary. In September the Communist Party published an appeal to the people in which, among other things, it brought up two intertwining tasks: "the struggle for an independent Hungary through the expulsion of the imperialist invaders" and "the struggle for the creation of a democratic Hungary through the overthrow of the Hungarian reactionaries". The Hungarian Front was joined by the National Peasants' Party, which was a loyal ally of the Communists. The Executive Committee of the Hungarian Front set about establishing local committees. On the insistence of Left-wing leaders the Social-Democratic Party steered towards a rapprochement with the Communists, and on October 10 the two parties reached agreement on a united front. This strengthened the position of the working class. The forces that subsequently played an active role in the creation of a new, democratic Hungary rapidly united through the efforts of the Communists.

Such was the political situation in the country just before it was entered by the Red Army.

Towards the close of September the 800-kilometre line held by the 2nd Ukrainian Front formed two huge salients and stretched from the Prislopul Pass in the Carpathians to the Danube east of Belgrade. The first of these salients (embracing an area in the Carpathians and the northern part of Transylvania) was wedged into the Soviet positions, and the second (in the western regions of Rumania) was wedged into enemy positions with its apex in the southwestern sector of the Hungarian frontier. In the second half of September this Front received large reinforcements, which brought its strength up to 40 divisions, two fortified areas, eight tank, motorised and cavalry corps and other formations and units. It had 10,200 field guns and mortars, 750 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 1,100 aircraft. Subordinated to it were the Rumanian 1st and 4th armies consisting of 21 divisions. Moreover, it included the Rumanian Tudor Vladimirescu 1st Volunteer Division. Opposed to this Front were Army Group South, instead of the former Army Group Southern Ukraine, and a small part of Army Group F—altogether 32 divisions and five brigades. The enemy group had 3,500 field guns and mortars, 300 tanks and nearly 550 aircraft.

On the right, northeast of the Carpathian watershed, were the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front and facing them were part of the German 1st Panzer Army and the Hungarian 1st Army from Army Group A. On the left, along the Bulgarian frontier, were troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front and the Bulgarian Army, which had started an offensive against Army Group F in Yugoslavia on September 28.

Assessing the strategic situation and taking into account the chaos and wavering among the ruling circles in Hungary, GHQ ordered the 2nd and 4th Ukrainian fronts to smash the forces opposing them and knock Hungary out of the war as an ally of Germany.

In September the German Command had hurriedly built several defensive lines on the distant and immediate approaches to the central regions of Hungary. Its plan was to deal the advancing Soviet troops a counter-blow and prevent them from gaining access to the northern part of Transylvania and to the Central Danubian Plain.

The 2nd Ukrainian Front began its Debrecen operation, on Hungarian territory, on October 6. The preparations for it had been made in the course of the preceding operation; mainly, they involved surmounting immense organisational and supply difficulties. The Front launched its heaviest attack in the centre from northwest of Arad in the direction of Debrecen and Nyiregyhaza, while auxiliary assaults were mounted on the flanks. The objective of this operation was to drive the nazi troops out of eastern Hungary and northern Transylvania.

The offensive got off to an excellent start. General I. M. Managarov's 53rd Army and General I. A. Pliyev's mechanised cavalry group, supported by General S. K. Goryunov's 5th Air Army, routed the Hungarian 3rd Army. In three days Pliyev's group advanced 80-100 kilometres, reaching the vicinity of Karcag and the approaches of Debrecen. The 6th Guards Tank Army, which was very short of tanks, ran into powerful resistance in its drive towards Oradea. Towards the evening of October 8 General I. T. Shlemin's 46th Army, which operated on the left flank, cleared the enemy out of Yugoslav territory east of the Tisza from Szeged to the mouth of the river. A bridgehead was established on the western bank.

With Soviet troops penetrating deep behind its firing lines the enemy Transylvania group found itself in grave difficulties. The Germans stiffened their defences around Oradea and at the approaches of Debrecen, and on October 9-10 began to withdraw before the onslaught of the 2nd Ukrainian Front's right wing. On orders from GHQ the Front swung the main forces of the mechanised cavalry group to the southeast with the objective of capturing the town of Oradea jointly with the 6th Guards Tank Army and then advancing on Debrecen.

The fighting was heavy throughout the period from October 9 to 22. Around Oradea and Debrecen the enemy had large forces, including five panzer divisions. Against dogged resistance the advancing troops broke into Debrecen on October 19 and cleared the enemy out of the town on the next day. On the right wing the 40th, the Rumanian 4th and the 27th armies advanced nearly 120 kilometres and linked up with the right-flank formations of the Front's centre forces that were pushing forward in the direction of Debrecen and Nyiregyhaza. On the left wing the 46th Army established a huge bridgehead between the Tisza and the Danube, its left-flank formations gaining the Danube near the town of Baja.

On October 22 the Front's mechanised cavalry group consisting of five corps gained the vicinity of Nyiregyhaza, an important railway junction linking up the Transylvanian and Budapest groups. However, the enemy launched two counter-attacks—from the east and west—against the flanks of the Soviet troops that had moved far to the north. This compelled the mechanised cavalry group temporarily to abandon Nyiregyhaza.

Aircraft gave the land forces continuous support, flying up to 5,000 sorties.

The Debrecen operation led to the liberation of northern Transylvania and the entire region east of the Tisza. In 23 days Soviet troops advanced from 130 to 275 kilometres up to the line running through Chop, Szolnok and Baja, crossed the Tisza and secured a large bridgehead stretching from Alpar on the Tisza to Baja on the Danube.

While the Debrecen operation was under way, General I. Y. Petrov's 4th Ukrainian Front mounted an offensive with the objective of crossing the Carpathians and reaching Uzhgorod and Mukachevo. However, it failed to achieve any major success either in September or during the first half of October. The enemy utilised the rugged mountainous terrain and put up a strong resistance at the passes. The situation changed when the 2nd Ukrainian Front reached Debrecen. The German troops facing the centre and left wing of the 4th Ukrainian Front began to withdraw on October 15. Uzhgorod and Mukachevo were soon liberated. With the completion of the Debrecen operation the firing line was shortened by several hundred kilometres.

The struggle to liberate the Transcarpathian Ukraine from the German and Hungarian invaders raged for nearly two months. The population joyfully welcomed the Red Army. In accordance with the will of the people the 1st Congress of People's Committees of the Transcarpathian Ukraine, which opened in Mukachevo on November 26, 1944, passed a decision to secede from Czechoslovakia and unite with Soviet Ukraine. On June 29, 1945, the governments of Czechoslovakia and the USSR signed a treaty under which Transcarpathian Ukraine was incorporated in the Soviet Ukraine. This act fulfilled the age-old aspiration of the Ukrainian people and completed the historical process of uniting all Ukrainian territories.

The success of the Debrecen operation forced the Hungarian military mission in Moscow to accept the preliminary terms for an armistice. The main provision was that Hungary would retain her independence but would break off relations with nazi Germany and declare war on her. The USSR agreed to help the Hungarians fight the war. On October 15 the Hungarian radio announced that in view of Germany's imminent defeat Horthy had sued for an armistice with the governments of the USSR, USA and Britain.

However, that was as far as Horthy went. He did not use the possibilities at his disposal to take any military action against the nazi invaders. On the next day the German Command removed Horthy from power, ordering him to resign the regency in writing. He complied with this order. Ferenc Szálasy, the Hungarian fascist ringleader who replaced him, ordered the Army to continue fighting Soviet troops, and this situation was not changed though there was some wavering among the leadership of the Hungarian Army. The Red Army was thus faced with the task of liberating the Hungarian people from nazi tyranny. It had to fight not only German troops but also the Hungarian Army still subordinated to the Germans through Szálasy.

On October 27, after Soviet troops had entered Hungary, the State Defence Committee of the USSR passed a resolution in which it noted that the Red Army had entered that country "not as a conqueror but as the liberator of the Hungarian people from nazi oppression". It defined the authority of the Soviet military administration in the liberated regions and the procedure for establishing normal, genuinely internationalist relations with the Hungarian people.

The correct policy of the Soviet Government and the correct line of behaviour pursued by the Soviet Command helped the democratic forces

in Hungary to gain strength. The Communist organisations came into the open and grew rapidly. The trade unions were revived. Many Hungarian Communists, who had enjoyed political asylum in the Soviet Union, returned, and in Szeged they set up a centre to direct the Party organisations on liberated territory. This centre established contact with the Party's underground Central Committee in Budapest. The Red Army's entry into Hungary gave powerful impetus to the struggle of the people in the regions still held by the Germans.

In this situation and, particularly, in view of the shaky political position of the ruling circles in Hungary, GHQ ordered the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front to resume its offensive with Budapest as the objective. The Budapest operation, which marked the second stage of Hungary's liberation, was started on October 29. Soviet left-flank forces gained the approaches of the Hungarian capital from the south on November 2 but were unable to break through into the city. The Germans had prepared strongly fortified positions and reinforced them with a tank corps. The Soviet troops had to go over to the defensive.

Soon another frontal attack was made in the direction of Budapest, this time from the east, but it was brought to a halt on the city's eastern approaches. Despite their matchless courage and intense desire to hasten the end of the war the Soviet troops were unable to surmount the three powerful horse-shoe defensive zones covering the Hungarian capital. The ends of these zones abutted on the Danube and the troop and weapon density in them was extremely high.

On December 5 the 2nd Ukrainian Front renewed its assaults. This time it was planned to seize Budapest in a pincer movement. The centre forces—the 7th Guards and 6th Guards Tank armies and Pliyev's mechanised cavalry group—attacked from the northeast, and the 46th Army from the Front's left wing moved from the southwest. On December 9 troops of the centre forces got as far as Sahy and the Danube north of Budapest. The 46th Army crossed the Danube, but this crossing was effected in an insufficiently organised manner and with great loss of life. Soviet troops secured a tactical bridgehead but failed to pierce the enemy's defences southwest of Budapest. Meanwhile, the Front's right wing captured the town of Miskolc and advanced to the Czechoslovak frontier north of it.

All further operations against the enemy Budapest group were conducted jointly by the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. At the end of October and at the beginning of November, after the Belgrade operation was completed, the 57th Army and the 3rd Ukrainian Front's support elements were transferred from the Belgrade area to the south of Baja on the left bank of the Danube. The 4th Guards Army from the GHQ Reserve was approaching the same area.

In the night of November 6-7, while the enemy's attention was concentrated on Budapest, the 57th Army began forcing the Danube near the Yugoslav towns of Batina and Apatin. The fighting to secure, enlarge and merge the bridgeheads lasted for 17 days. The offensive, supported by the 17th Air Army, was started as soon as this bridgehead was established. The Danube Flotilla was active in helping the troops cross the broad river. By December 9 the 4th Guards Army's onslaught carried it to lakes Velencei and Balaton. Meanwhile, the 57th Army reached the oil region of Nagykanizsa south of Balaton, but there it was halted by the Margarit line.

However, the opportunity now presented itself of by-passing Budapest from the west. Before Soviet troops reached Lake Velencei, GHQ trans-

Georgi Dimitrov (left) in conversation with Marshal F. I. Tolbukhin, Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, and Colonel-General S. S. Biryuzov

People of Sofia welcome the Red Army, September 1944

Soviet troops march through Belgrade, October 1944

Yugoslav partisans in Belgrade, October 1944

Red Armymen hoist their battle banner in the liberated part of Budapest, 1944

Hungarian peasants receive land

"The land belongs to those who till it", Hungary, 1944

Artillery in action on the Vistula, January 1945

Polish state flag waves once again over Warsaw, January 1945

People of Poznan meet Soviet troops, February 1945

Oswiecim death camp

Corpses of people tortured to death at Oswiecim, 1945

Survivors of Oswiecim liberated by the Red Army, 1945

Soviet troops enter Austria, 3rd Ukrainian Front, April 1945

Street fighting in Vienna, April 1945

Food from the Soviet Government to the people of Vienna, May 1945

Livadia Palace, venue of the Crimea Conference, February 1945

Soviet military delegation at the Crimea Conference. General of the Army A. I. Antonov is seen in the centre

Crimea Conference in session

Signing of nazi Germany's unconditional surrender. Left: Marshal G. K. Zhukov, representing the Soviet Supreme Command. Fieldmarshal Keitel signs the surrender on behalf of the German Command, Karlshorst, May 8, 1945

German troops lay down arms, Berlin, May 1945

They dreamed of conquest

Handshakes across the Elbe, April 25, 1945

Marshal I. S. Konev and General of the Army I. Y. Petrov in conversation with US General Omar Bradley, May 1945

Marshal K. K. Rokossovsky meets British Fieldmarshal Bernard Montgomery southwest of Rostock, 1945

ferred an infantry and a tank corps, as well as General S. I. Gorshkov's mechanised cavalry group (two corps), from the 2nd to the 3rd Ukrainian Front. Soon afterwards, the latter Front was further reinforced by the 46th Army and a motorised corps.

On December 12 GHQ ordered the encirclement and capture of the Hungarian capital by the two committed fronts.

The left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, which was advancing on Budapest, had to deal its main blow from Šahy in a southerly direction, reach the Danube north of Esztergom and cut off the Budapest group's retreat to the northwest. The armies of the right wing had to push towards the Czechoslovak frontier and from there advance in the direction of Roznava and Zvolen. The 3rd Ukrainian Front had to move north from Lake Velencei, gain the Danube near Esztergom and link up with troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Part of its forces had to attack and capture Budapest jointly with the armies of the 2nd Ukrainian Front.

The offensive was started on December 20. Six days later the two fronts linked up near Esztergom to form a ring round the Budapest group of 188,000 men. The line of the external ring ran 50-60 kilometres west of the Hungarian capital. Relying on the powerful fortifications in the city the nazis assumed a circular defence on its outskirts, where they put up a fierce resistance in the hope of receiving aid from without. The enemy was not in the least disturbed that senseless fighting in a large city like Budapest would cause enormous loss of life among the population, which numbered more than a million. Neither did this worry the "national" Government. Szálasy and his ministers fled to the western regions of Hungary, and from there they made their way to Austria.

The liquidation of the Budapest group grew protracted as a result of developments on the outer ring. In January 1945 the German Command launched three powerful counter-attacks with the objective of routing the 3rd Ukrainian Front, breaking the encirclement and restoring the defences along the Danube. When these attacks commenced the enemy had 70 per cent more men and 140 per cent more tanks and assault guns than the 4th Guards Army, which was holding the outer ring. However, the Soviet troops had an approximately 3:1 superiority in field guns and mortars. As the fighting progressed the enemy brought up more strength, chiefly armour.

The first (January 2-6) and third (January 18-26) counter-attacks were especially telling. The first counter-attack, started from the vicinity of Komarno, carried the enemy 25-37 kilometres along the right bank of the Danube, and he was stopped only thanks to the staunchness of Soviet troops and the rapid transfer of tanks and artillery to this area. A key role was played by the 2nd Ukrainian Front's 6th Guards Army, which, on orders from GHQ, advanced along the left bank of the Danube. By gaining the vicinity of Komarno, i.e., the flank and rear of the enemy, it forced him to cut short his offensive. The second German counter-attack launched somewhat farther south had no success.

The third counter-attack launched from north of Lake Balaton proved to be the most powerful and dangerous. The enemy rapidly advanced towards the Danube near Dunapentele and cut the 3rd Ukrainian Front in two on the western bank of the river. This greatly impeded troop control, demanding a high degree of organisational skill on the part of commanders.

GHQ transferred large forces from the 2nd to the 3rd Ukrainian Front

in order to close this breach. Two assault groups were formed: one north and the other south of the breakthrough area. These groups attacked on January 27 and by February 7 restored the outer ring along approximately the line existing prior to the German counter-attacks. In many ways this success was due to the excellent co-ordination between the air armies of the two fronts.

The following examples illustrate the tenacity that was displayed by Soviet troops in defensive fighting.

During the enemy's second counter-assault the positions held by the 5th Guards Airborne Division were attacked by 100 tanks and two regiments of motorised infantry. Two Soviet regiments found themselves cut off from the main body, but their lines did not waver. A group of soldiers from a company commanded by Lieutenant V. A. Korobiinikov knocked out several enemy tanks at the cost of their own lives. In another sector of the same division 18 German tanks broke through the infantry lines and reached the positions of the 1963rd Anti-Tank Regiment. Junior Lieutenant S. I. Yermolayev's platoon destroyed nine tanks but suffered heavy casualties. The only survivor was Lieutenant Yermolayev, who was wounded and bleeding when another enemy tank approached the Soviet positions. Using up all his ammunition, the Lieutenant grabbed two anti-tank grenades, one in each hand, and threw himself under the tank. For this act of supreme courage S. I. Yermolayev was posthumously created Hero of the Soviet Union. On another sector 28 men under Senior Sergeant M. S. Starikov of the 34th Guards Division were attacked by four tanks and six armoured carriers with infantry. After the attack was repulsed the enemy brought up field guns to support his tanks. This unequal battle raged for five days, with the Soviet troops standing firm. They withdrew, taking their wounded with them, only after they were ordered to do so. Sergeant Starikov was decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and the other Guardsmen were awarded battle Orders.

The liquidation of the enemy force encircled in Budapest proceeded simultaneously with operations along the outer ring. The humane Soviet ultimatum of December 29 demanding a cease-fire was rejected. The truce envoys of the two fronts, Captains Miklos Steinmets and I. A. Ostapenko, who took the ultimatum to the Germans, were killed. The enemy was still hoping for assistance from without and resisted desperately. In Budapest itself the nazis had more than 300 strongpoints. Streets, neighbourhoods and houses were fortified for a prolonged defence. The Soviet forces engaged in this action included four and at times five infantry corps. They pressed forward from one neighbourhood to another, capturing Pest on January 18 and then Buda on February 13. More than 138,000 German troops surrendered. In the fighting for Buda Soviet troops were assisted by the volunteer Buda Regiment consisting of Hungarian officers and men who had gone over to their side. This was of immense political significance.

While fighting continued in and west of Budapest, the main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, co-operating with the 4th Ukrainian Front, advanced in Czechoslovakia, and by the time the Budapest operation ended they had covered 100-150 kilometres, liberating hundreds of towns and villages and reaching the line running from Zakopane to Nemce.

The second stage of the liberation of Hungary ended on February 13, 1945. In the period from October to mid-February Soviet troops routed 40 divisions and three brigades of the enemy and wiped out eight

divisions and five brigades. The German Command continuously built up its forces in Hungary in an all-out effort to retain this last satellite. Army Group South received 37 divisions, including 12 panzer and motorised divisions, and eight brigades. Significantly, by January 5, 1945, 16 panzer and motorised divisions, i.e., half of the enemy armour on the Soviet-German front, were south of the Carpathians. Naturally this slowed down the Soviet offensive (during the Budapest operation Soviet troops advanced only 120-240 kilometres). On the other hand, this concentration of large forces, particularly armour, south of the Carpathians facilitated the task of the Red Army, which in January 1945 began its offensive in the main direction, that of Warsaw and Berlin.

The fighting in Hungary taxed the physical and moral strength of the troops to the utmost. In no operation in 1944 was the defensive fighting as fierce as in Budapest. No encircled enemy group required so much time to be liquidated.

A very big role in smashing the enemy at Budapest was played by political organs and Party and Komsomol organisations. All political work was directed towards the fulfilment of the State Defence Committee decision of October 27. Special attention was paid to maintaining vigilance because the retreating enemy had left behind numerous sabotage groups. Political and Party work among the troops was intensified, particularly during the hard-fought defensive battles.

By mid-February units of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts liberated two-thirds of Hungary. Many of the units were named after the towns liberated by them, and tens of thousands of men were decorated with Orders and medals. A large group of officers and men were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Far-reaching political changes took place in Hungary. On the initiative of the Communists, in December 1944 the Hungarian Front was reorganised into the Hungarian National Front, which, in addition to the four parties in the Hungarian Front, embraced the so-called bourgeois-democratic party and the trade unions. The Programme of National Rejuvenation drawn up by the Communist Party was adopted as the political platform of the Hungarian National Front. Its cardinal aims were: to assist Soviet troops in the expulsion of the nazi invaders; to disband anti-popular organisations; to establish democratic freedoms; to purge the state apparatus; to abolish the feudal system of land-ownership; to establish close friendship with the USSR and good relations and co-operation with neighbouring countries as well as with the USA and Britain; to convene a National Assembly. Democratic elections to the Provisional National Assembly were held by the local committees of the Hungarian National Front in the period December 12-20. Of the 230 delegates, 72 were Communists. On December 22 this higher organ formed a Provisional Government, which proclaimed that it would abide by the programme of the Hungarian National Front. On December 28 this Government declared war on Germany. In January it sent a delegation to Moscow, where, on the 20th of the same month, an armistice was signed which laid a sound foundation for a genuinely independent and democratic Hungary.

* * *

In the summer-autumn 1944 campaign the Soviet Armed Forces honourably discharged their internationalist duty by rendering tremendous assistance to the peoples of Eastern, Southeastern and Central

Europe in their struggle for liberation. The nazi invaders were driven out of Rumania and Bulgaria, a considerable part of Poland and most of Hungary. The Red Army entered the eastern regions of Czechoslovakia, bringing her peoples liberation. Jointly with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, the Red Army cleared the enemy out of Yugoslavia's eastern regions. In the autumn of 1944 the enemy was forced to withdraw from Albania and Greece under the impact of the Red Army's victories and the blows inflicted by the people's armies of those countries. In the fulfilment of its task of liberation the Red Army enjoyed the wholehearted sympathy and active support of the European peoples.

Refusing to continue the unjust war, Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary withdrew from the nazi bloc and declared war on Germany. These major developments were predetermined by three factors: the crushing defeat inflicted on Army Group Southern Ukraine (South) and the forces of the Rumanian and Hungarian reactionaries; the correct, internationalist policy of the Government and Communist Party of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the peoples of the former German satellite countries; the struggle of the people and Communist (Workers') Parties of these countries for withdrawal from the unjust, predatory war.

The Red Army entered the European states as a liberator. In its directives on the conduct of Soviet troops in the countries liberated by them, the State Defence Committee invariably pointed out that the Red Army was entering foreign territory not as a conqueror or a tyrant, but as a liberator, thereby stressing fidelity to the Leninist principle of proletarian internationalism. In 1920, exhorting Red Armymen who were on their way to the Soviet-Polish front, Lenin said: "Let your attitude to the Poles there prove that you are soldiers of a workers' and peasants' republic, that you are coming to them, not as aggressors but as liberators." This key principle of Leninist foreign policy was strictly observed by the Soviet Armed Forces during the Second World War as well.

The Red Army's successful offensive in the Southwestern theatre finally buried the plans of the British reactionary circles to forestall the Soviet military presence in the Balkans. Their plans of armed intervention in Southeastern Europe did not materialise except in Greece. The Red Army and local democratic forces disrupted the intention of the US-British imperialists to move troops into Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Albania and establish anti-popular regimes in those countries.

The presence of Soviet troops in Southeastern Europe fettered the reactionary forces which sought to preserve the old social system. In Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary the reactionaries were deprived of the use of their army, which was their last mainstay against the working people. This enabled the democratic forces to move from strength to strength. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Albania the masses led by the Communist and Workers' Parties set about establishing a new socio-political system along the lines of people's democracy.

Chapter Sixteen

THE SECOND FRONT

1. BEFORE THE LANDING

The Red Army's smashing victories in the first half of 1944 gave tremendous impetus to the liberation struggle.

In France the Resistance movement embraced every region, and the Communist Party was confidently leading the people towards a national uprising.

All the armed organisations had been united early that year. This was followed by an intensification of the partisan war. Communist-led detachments, which had nearly 200,000 men in the summer of 1944, continued to head the partisan movement. They launched major operations in Aisne, Haute-Savoie, Dordogne and other departments. Entire regions were cleared of the enemy before the arrival of Allied troops. Soviet people likewise contributed to the liberation of France. More than 30 partisan detachments consisting of Soviet citizens operated in France early in 1944. These were people who had escaped from war prisoners' camps or from slave labour. Eloquent evidence of the scale of the armed resistance is that the Germans used troops, police, gendarmerie and local units, some 500,000 in all, against the partisans. By their heroic struggle the French people undermined the strength of nazi Germany and facilitated the landing and offensive of the Anglo-US forces.

In Italy, as in France, the main role in organising the mass Resistance movement was played by the Communist Party. In September 1943, when the Germans occupied North Italy, the Communists were the first to form combat units, beginning with partisan detachments and groups and ending with Garibaldi partisan assault brigades. The Committee of National Liberation of North Italy, which led the struggle of the people, was formed in January 1944 on the initiative of the Italian Communist Party.

The Resistance movement steadily acquired a mass character. A political strike, which soon embraced the entire occupied part of Italy and involved 1,200,000 workers, was started on March 1. This was the first general strike in Europe under the nazis and it was instrumental in preparing the ground for a national uprising.

The armed struggle likewise gained momentum thanks to the Central Command of the Freedom Volunteers Corps, in which the leading role was played by the Left wing headed by the Communist Luigi Longo. The mounting resistance put up by the Italian patriots seriously alarmed the invaders, so much so that Fieldmarshal Kesselring, German commander in Italy, had to admit that the armed struggle of the partisans was a formidable threat to the German Army.

In Belgium, too, the scale of the Resistance movement grew steadily. Of the political organisations in the Independence and Liberation Front, the Communist Party was the most influential among the people. At the beginning of 1944 the armed detachments had more than 150,000 men. The partisan army and the patriotic militia were the most active and combatworthy of these forces. The people's avengers gave the enemy no peace day or night, the struggle being particularly tense in the Ardennes.

Resistance to the invaders and their accomplices gathered momentum in the Netherlands and Denmark long before the Anglo-American forces landed in these countries.

The ruling circles of the USA and Britain feared the growth of the national liberation struggle in Western Europe, regarding it as a threat to post-war anti-popular bourgeois regimes, to governments subservient to their will. While using the liberation struggle to weaken their imperialist rival, the US and British rulers took steps to prevent national uprisings and social reforms in the occupied countries. The British limited the supply of arms to the Resistance in these countries and denied weapons to detachments influenced by Communists. The partisans fought with weapons captured from the enemy.

The prospect of the Red Army defeating nazi Germany, and of the Resistance movement spreading under the impact of Soviet victories, and the growing struggle of the popular masses against the existing social order—all this made the governments of the USA and Britain reconsider their plans for the conduct of the war and hasten the fulfilment of the Teheran Conference decision on the invasion of Northern France. This operation, code-named Overlord, was the main Anglo-American effort. Parallel with Overlord, it was planned to carry out an ancillary operation, coded Anvil, in Southern France. The post of Commander-in-Chief in the European theatre was given to US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, with British Air Marshal Arthur Tedder as his First Deputy. The British General Henry Wilson was appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean theatre.

Prior to launching Overlord the Allied Command planned to clear the Germans out of Central Italy and reach the Po Valley in order to give the US and British armies the possibility of advancing on Vienna after they had taken North Italy (Map 16).

In Italy the Allied 15th Army Group (British 8th and US 5th armies) seized Sicily and Sardinia and, at the close of 1943, reached the German defensive line running from Ortona to the Garigliano River. Here they ran into dogged resistance and the fighting became protracted. At the beginning of 1944 the 15th Army Group (commander—British Field-marshal Harold Alexander) consisted of 19 divisions and was supported by some 4,000 aircraft. The Allied fleet had more than 3,000 warships of various types.

Italy's capitulation put the German Command in insuperable difficulties. Compelled to send almost all its reserves to the Eastern front, it was unable to assign adequate forces to hold Italy. In that country it had the 10th and 14th armies, which were subordinated to the Southwest Command. Altogether, in Italy the Germans had 21 divisions and about 370 aircraft.

The Anglo-US Command looked forward to an easy victory in Italy. Early in 1944 Allied troops made three attempts to break through the enemy's defences on the Garigliano River and capture Rome. At the end of March, after the failure of these attempts they halted their offensive

and began deploying for a new attack. The number of divisions was increased to 28, and the offensive was resumed on May 11. The Allied troops breached the German lines, went in pursuit of the enemy and on June 4 occupied Rome without encountering any resistance. Then they slowly advanced northward after the retreating enemy. Despite the favourable conditions, the plan to occupy Central Italy and gain the Po Valley before the invasion of Normandy was not carried out.

The Allies began preparing for Overlord at the beginning of 1944. Before the landing was effected the forces assembled on the British Isles consisted of four armies: the United States 1st and 3rd, the British 2nd and the Canadian 1st. These armies had a total of 37 divisions (23 infantry, 10 armoured and four airborne) and 12 brigades. The strength of the divisions was: British—18,000 men in an infantry division and 14,000 men in an armoured division; US—over 14,000 men in an infantry division and 11,000 men in an armoured division. Each US armoured division had over 260 tanks. The Allied fleet consisted of six battleships, two monitors, 22 cruisers, 93 destroyers, 159 other light vessels (excluding torpedo boats and mine-layers), 255 mine-sweepers and over 6,000 transports and landing craft. The land and naval forces were supported by nearly 11,000 aircraft. More than 2,300 transport aircraft and some 2,600 gliders were assigned for airlifting troops. The Allied expeditionary forces totalled 2,876,000 effectives.

On the Western front the Germans had 61 divisions, including one motorised and 10 panzer divisions. Although the enemy had many divisions in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, his actual combat strength was far below that of the US and British forces. The German divisions were undermanned and poorly armed. In Western Europe a German infantry division had 8,000-11,000 effectives, and a tank division consisted of 90-130 tanks. The German 3rd Air Army had no more than 500 aircraft.

All German troops came under Army Group B and Army Group G, with Fieldmarshal Rundstedt as the over-all commander in the West. Army Group B (commander—Fieldmarshal Rommel), which consisted of the 7th and 15th armies and the 88th Separate Army Corps, was deployed in the Netherlands, Belgium and Northern France. It had 36 divisions, including three panzer divisions, and held a coastline of over 1,300 kilometres. Pas-de-Calais, which the German Command regarded as the most likely place of an Allied landing, was the most heavily guarded. In the Bay of the Seine, Normandy, the Germans had insignificant forces. Army Group G, consisting of the 1st and 19th armies, held a 900-kilometre sector on the western and southern coast of France. It was commanded by General Johannes Blaskowitz and had 12 divisions, including three panzer divisions. The German Commander-in-Chief in the West had a reserve of 13 divisions, including one motorised and four panzer divisions. The panzer and motorised divisions belonged to Panzer Group West.

The Germans began building the so-called Atlantic Wall as early as 1942. But the work proceeded slowly. On the eve of the Allied landing only 68 per cent of the wall was completed in the Calais-Boulogne area and as little as 18 per cent on the coast of the Bay of the Seine.

The over-all situation was thus favourable for an Anglo-US invasion of Normandy. In Western Europe the German forces were scattered over a vast territory. Numerically, they were much weaker than the Anglo-US forces. Moreover, the Allies were in complete control of the sea and the air. In addition, the task of the Allies was made all the more easier

by the fact that the Wehrmacht's main forces continued to be concentrated on the Eastern front. In the course of three years the Red Army had worn them down, and it was now poised for a mammoth summer offensive. Besides ruling out any transfer of German troops from the East to the West, this compelled Hitler to send his strategic reserves to the Eastern front. Lastly, the national liberation movement in France and other occupied Western countries was eroding the German Army from within.

The Allied landing was to be spearheaded by the 21st Army Group (United States 1st, British 2nd and Canadian 1st armies) under British Fieldmarshal Bernard Montgomery, as well as by powerful strategic and tactical air and naval forces. It was planned to land a seaborne force in Normandy and within 20 days form a bridgehead 100 kilometres long and up to 110 kilometres in depth. Later, after a massive build-up of strength, the United States 3rd Army was to be committed and the offensive developed towards the south, southeast and east with the object of gaining, in three months' time, the Seine and Loire rivers, i.e., enlarging the bridgehead to a depth of 250 kilometres. Initially scheduled for early May, the date for Overlord was finally set at June 6, 1944.

2. FIGHTING IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM

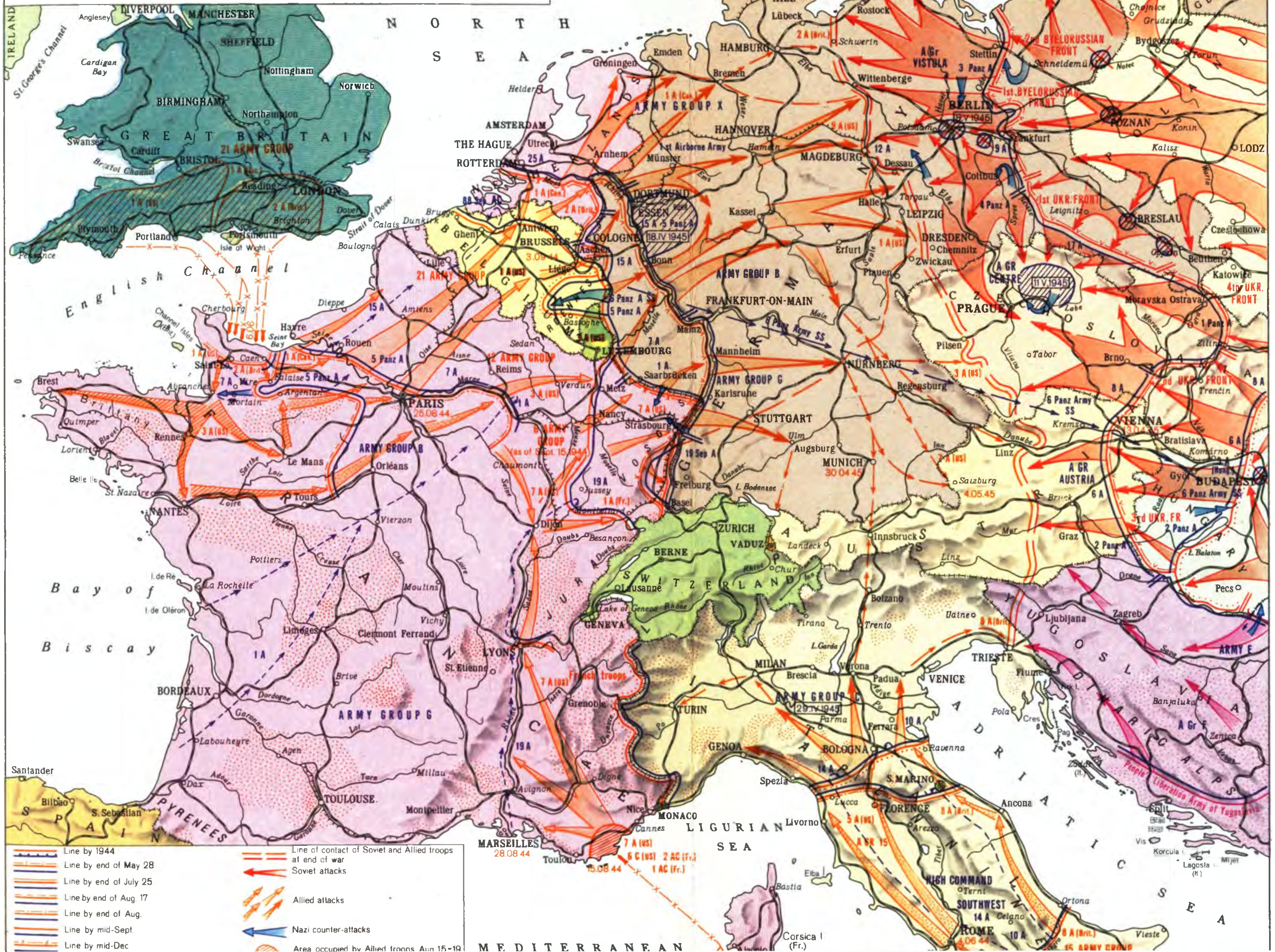
For nearly two months, beginning on April 10, Allied aircraft pounded railways, bridges and airfields in Belgium and Northern France. Anticipating an Anglo-US invasion from the British Isles, the German Command made preparations to use V-1 and V-2 missiles, believing that these new weapons would hinder the concentration and deployment of Allied troops on the southern coast of Britain. Due to technical difficulties, these missiles went into action only on June 13 when the seaborne landing force had already secured a bridgehead in Normandy. Besides, the missiles were directed not at troop concentrations or rear echelons but at the civilian population of London and its suburbs. The "secret weapon" did not justify the high hopes pinned on it by the Hitlerite leadership; it hardly affected the course of the Allied military operations.

In the night of June 5-6 the enemy's defence positions were attacked by 2,000 American and British bombers. While these aircraft were in action, troops were transported across the English Channel. No serious opposition came from German aircraft or warships. An airborne task force of three divisions was parachuted at night in Normandy 10-15 kilometres from the coast.

The landing itself began in the morning of June 6 at five points along the coast. Allied aircraft had complete mastery of the air.

In this area the Germans had neither the necessary strength nor the fortifications. The individual pockets of resistance and the few batteries were quickly crushed by aircraft and naval artillery. The Germans still believed that the Normandy operation was only a diversion, and that the Allies would land their main forces in the Pas-de-Calais area. The transfer of German troops to Normandy was started only in the evening of June 6. This enabled the task forces landed by naval vessels to link up with the airborne invasion force on the very first day, with little loss of life, and to form three bridgeheads. These bridgeheads were merged by June 8, and by June 12 enlarged to 80 kilometres in length and 17 kilometres in depth with 16 divisions concentrated in them.

16. OPERATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE Jan. 1944-May 1945




G R E A T B R I T A I N
Northampton
Swansea
Cardiff
BRISTOL
Bristol Channel
21 ARMY GROUP
Reading
LONDON
Dover
Brighton
Plymouth
Portland
Portsmouth
Isle of Wight
Strait of Dover
Calais
Boulogne
English Channel
Cherbourg
Channel Isles (Brit.)
Havre
Seine Bay
Rouen
Dieppe
Caen
Saint-Lô
Falaise
5 Panz A
Argentan
Avranches
7 A
Vire
Mortain
Brest
Brittany
Quimper
Lorient
Rennes
3 A (US)
Le Mans
Belle Ile
St. Nazaire
NANTES
Loire
Tours
Orléans
ARMY GROUP B
PARIS
25.08.44
Amiens
15 A
Lille
Dunkirk
Brugge
Ghent
Antwerp
BRUSSELS
3.09.44
Liège
1 A (US)
21 ARMY GROUP
88 Sep AC
AMSTERDAM
THE HAGUE
Utrecht
ROTTERDAM
25 A
Arnhem
1 A (Can.)
2 A (Brit.)
Aachen
COLOGNE
Bonn
DORTMUND
ESSEN
15 A 5 Panz A
18.IV.1945
Münster
1st Airborne Army
HANNOVER
Hameln
MAGDEBURG
9 A (US)
12 A
Dessau
Potsdam
Frankfurt
9 A
Kassel
Halle
Torgau
Elbe
LEIPZIG
Erfurt
1 A (US)
DRESDEN
Chemnitz
Zwickau
Plauen
ARMY GROUP B
FRANKFURT-ON-MAIN
Main
6 Panz Army SS
5 Panz A SS
5 Panz A
Bastogne
3 A (US)
LUXEMBOURG
Mainz
Mannheim
NÜRNBERG
7 A
1 A
Saarbrücken
ARMY GROUP G
Karlsruhe
Metz
Verdun
Nancy
Strasbourg
7 A (US)
STUTTGART
Ulm
Augsburg
MUNICH
30.04.45
Regensburg
Sedan
Reims
12 ARMY GROUP
Aisne
Marne
Oise
6 ARMY GROUP (as of Sept. 15, 1944)
Chaumont
19 A
Jussey
Moselle
Meuse
7 A (US)
1 A (Fr.)
Montbéliard
19 Sep A
Freiburg
Basel
L. Bodensee
Danube
Dijon
Besançon
Doubs
ZURICH
VADUZ
BERNE
SWITZERLAND
Lausanne
Lake of Geneva
Rhône
GENEVA
Chur
Rhine
Inn
Landeck
Innsbruck
Bolzano
Trento
Tirano
L. Garda
Vierzon
Poitiers
I. de Ré
La Rochelle
I. de Oléron
Bay of Biscay
Limoges
Clermont Ferrand
Vichy
Moulins
1 A
LYONS
St. Etienne
Brive
BORDEAUX
Dordogne
Garonne
ARMY GROUP G
Lot
Labouheyre
Agen
Tarn
Millau
Dax
Adour
TOULOUSE
Montpellier
Santander
Bilbao
S. Sebastian
SPAIN
PYRENEES
7 A (US)
French troops
Grenoble
Isère
Durance
Digne
Avignon
Nice
MONACO
Cannes
MARSEILLES
28.08.44
Toulon
15.08.44
7 A (US)
6 C (US)
2 AC (Fr.)
1 AC (Fr.)
LIGURIAN SEA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Corsica I (Fr.)
Bastia
Ajaccio
Porto-Vecchio
Str. of Bonifacio
Palau
Sassari
Sardinia I (It.)
Elba I.
TYRRHENIAN SEA
TURIN
MILAN
Brescia
Verona
Padua
VENICE
ARMY GROUP C
29.IV.1945
Parma
Ferrara
10 A
GENOA
BOLOGNA
Ravenna
14 A
Spezia
S. MARINO
Lucca
FLORENCE
Livorno
5 A (US)
A GR 15
8 A (Brit.)
Arezzo
Tiber
Ancona
HIGH COMMAND SOUTHWEST
Terni
14 A
Celano
ROME
4.06.44
10 A
Valmontone
Anzio
22.01.44
6 C (US)
Ortona
8 A (Brit.)
15 ARMY GROUP
5 A (US)
Sangro
Garigliano
Foggia
Vieste
Bari
NAPLES
Salerno
Potenza
Taranto
ADRIATIC SEA
Udine
8 A (Brit.)
TRIESTE
Fiume
Pola
Cres
Pag
Zadar (It.)
Split
Brac
Hvar
Vis
Korcula I.
Mljet
Lagosta I. (It.)
YUGOSLAVIA
DINARIC ALPS
People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia
Ljubljana
Zagreb
Sava
Banjaluka
A Gr F
Zenica
Vrbas
ARMY E
Drava
Pécs
L. Balaton
HUNGARY
2 Panz A
3rd UKR. FR
6 Panz Army SS
BUDAPEST
Györ
Raab
2 Panz A
Graz
Mur
6 A
Bruck
A GR AUSTRIA
Linz
Salzburg
4.05.45
7 A (US)
Inn
Danube
Krems
6 Panz Army SS
VIENNA
13.04.45
Bratislava
Komárno
Vah
6 A
8 A
Trenčin
2nd UKR. FRONT
Brno
Žilina
1 Panz A
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Tábor
Vltava
Pilsen
3 A (US)
PRAGUE
Labe
A GR CENTRE
11.V.1945
Morava
Moravska Ostrava
4th UKR. FRONT
Katowice
Beuthen
Czestochowa
Oppeln
BRESLAU
17 A
Leignitz
1st UKR. FRONT
4 Panz A
Spree
Neisse
Cottbus
POZNAN
Konin
Kalisz
LODZ
Warta
8.V.1945
Line by 1944
Line by end of May 28
Line by end of July 25
Line by end of Aug. 17
Line by end of Aug.
Line by mid-Sept.
Line by mid-Dec
Line by Jan. 1945
Allied front on March 23 and Soviet front by Apr.
Allied forward units in mid-April
Allied movements from mid-April to end of war
Line of contact of Soviet and Allied troops at end of war
Soviet attacks
Allied attacks
Nazi counter-attacks
Area occupied by Allied troops, Aug. 15-19
Zones of operations of Resistance forces
11.V.1945 Surrender dates
8.V.1945 Signing of Surrender Instrument
km 50 0 50 100 150 km

During the second half of June and in July the American and British troops continued to enlarge the territory seized by them, but the fighting became protracted because of the many shortcomings in organising the offensive. Troops of the United States 1st Army entered Saint-Lo only on July 18. On the next day, after drawn-out fighting, the British 2nd Army captured Caen, an important road junction at the distant approaches of Paris.

By July 25, i.e., in 49 days, the Allied troops had enlarged their bridgehead to 100 kilometres in length and 50 kilometres in depth. The United States 3rd and the Canadian 1st armies were moved into this area. Towards the close of July the forces in the bridgehead consisted of 37 divisions and 13 brigades and had nearly 2,500 tanks. At this time the enemy had 29 divisions and 900 tanks in Normandy.

The slow progress of the Allies worried the ruling circles in the USA and Britain. They saw the Red Army advancing swiftly along an immense front from Petrozavodsk to the Carpathians and dealing the enemy lethal blows. In the period from June 23 to the end of July it advanced 500-600 kilometres in Byelorussia, while in the period from June 6 to July 24 the Allied troops captured a bridgehead only some 50 kilometres in depth. The difference in results was tremendous. According to *The US Army in World War II*, the official American history, the German losses in June-August 1944 in killed, wounded and missing were 917,000 in the East and 294,000 in the West.

Another thing that the US and British ruling circles were aware of was that the Resistance had intensified during the summer of 1944. This obviously alarmed the Allied political and military leadership. The Western press sharply criticised the Anglo-US Command for failing to utilise the favourable situation. Taken together, this made Eisenhower speed up the offensive. On July 20 he had a conference with Montgomery at which they examined the plan for further action. Regarding this conference Eisenhower's aide, Captain Harry C. Butcher, wrote in his diary: "The theme is that military necessity dictates that Montgomery push on with every ounce of strength and zeal. In addition to the purely military need ... there is the political situation to consider. The home fronts of both countries are naturally becoming impatient and querulous; they see the great successes in Russia."

A new offensive was commenced on July 25. It developed slowly during the first three days. On July 27 the American 1st Army broke through the enemy's defences near Saint-Lo and on August 1 it captured the town of Avranches. The American 3rd Army went into action on the same day. These two armies formed the American 12th Army Group under General Omar Bradley. The 21st Army Group, which now consisted of the British 2nd and Canadian 1st armies, mounted an offensive in the direction of the Seine on August 6.

The German Command brought up reserves to the bridgehead and made an attempt to stop the Allied advance, and on August 7 it even launched a counter-attack in the direction of Mortain and Avranches with the purpose of cutting the American units that had broken into Brittany off from their supply base. This counter-attack had no success, but the Germans managed to hold up the American 1st Army along the line running from Mortain to Vire with the result that now only the United States 3rd Army could advance eastward. On August 8 it took Le Mans and on the 10th swung sharply to the north in the direction of Argentan. Meanwhile, the Canadian 1st Army, advancing in the general direction of Argentan from the north, approached Falaise. This created

the conditions for encircling the German 5th Panzer* and 7th armies in the Falaise pocket. On August 12 troops of the United States 3rd Army occupied Argentan, while the Canadian 1st Army gained the vicinity of Falaise on August 14. Advancing from opposite directions they narrowed the bottleneck to 14 kilometres, trapping more than 20 German divisions in the Falaise pocket. However, they were unable to complete the encirclement of these divisions.

Western historians offer various excuses to justify the incomplete success of this operation. But quite obviously the principal reason was that the Allies did not have sufficient forces—only eight divisions—for an outer and inner ring round such a large enemy group. On August 13 the American 3rd Army unexpectedly received orders to slow down its offensive. The reason for this, it was alleged, was that the Allied Command wished the armies advancing from different directions to avoid getting mixed up. As a result, the escape route from the Falaise pocket remained open for a whole week.

On August 12 the German Command decided to withdraw all its forces behind the Seine. The ring round Falaise was closed by the Allies on August 19, only after the most battleworthy German panzer divisions had withdrawn. Part of the 5th Panzer and 7th armies, altogether about 125,000 men, remained in the pocket. In the course of the next three days the Germans breached the Allied lines, but only 30-35,000 troops managed to break out of the ring. By August 26 Army Group B retreated across the Seine.

Meanwhile, in the south of France the United States 7th and the French B armies began Operation Anvil on August 15 in the region west of Cannes. On August 19, after having put up a weak resistance, the German troops retreated from Southwestern and Southern France to the German frontier.

The national liberation struggle was raging throughout France.

As early as August 7, the Communist Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy, Chief of Staff of the Internal Armed Forces of the Paris Area, issued an order of the day emphasising that the Resistance movement could grow into an armed uprising and the Internal Armed Forces had to support it with every means at their disposal. These Armed Forces, consisting of 35,000 men, and the patriotic militia, which had nearly 50,000 men, were readied for combat.

A plan was drawn up for the uprising, the main objective being to liberate Paris with the least possible loss of life among the civilian population and safeguard treasures of world culture. The preparations were laid very carefully, thus providing further striking evidence of the organising and leading role which the French Communist Party played in the Resistance movement.

The situation became favourable for the uprising towards the middle of the month. On August 18 the Paris Liberation Committee and the General Confederation of Labour called the people of Paris to arms. The streets of Paris, which had witnessed the victorious tread of the heroes of the revolution of 1789 and of the glorious Communards of 1871, once again saw the heroism and self-sacrifice of the working people. On August 19-25, 1944, the people rose to arms in every street and suburb. The patriots seized the town halls, railway stations and power stations and attacked and disarmed German troops. Towards the evening of August 22 the patriots were in control of 70 of the

* The 5th Panzer Army was formed on August 6 on the basis of Panzer Group West.

capital's 80 districts. Unable to help the besieged garrison, the German Command in helpless fury ordered the city's wholesale destruction. But this crime was frustrated by the people of Paris. On August 25, Paris, cradle of France's revolutionary traditions, breathed the air of freedom.

The victorious uprising in the French capital accelerated the liberation of the whole country, giving a mighty impetus to the struggle on territory still under the enemy's heel. An uprising broke out in Marseilles on August 21, and within a few days this major port in the south of France was liberated by the French Internal Armed Forces. On August 26 French troops aided by armed civilians cleared the enemy out of Toulon. At the close of the same month French patriots drove the enemy out of Lyons before that town was reached by British and American troops.

The huge scale of the French Resistance alarmed de Gaulle and the Allied Command. The French reactionaries and the ruling circles of the USA and Britain utilised the liberation movement to defeat the enemy and at the same time did everything in their power to prevent the people from taking their country's future into their own hands. They were bent on depriving them of initiative, on disarming them and preventing them from taking part in setting up organs of state power. This was patently in evidence during the uprising in Paris. Through Georges Bidault, Chairman of the Resistance Council, de Gaulle's supporters made an attempt to block the Council decision on the uprising. When this attempt failed an armistice was signed with the German Command and a cease-fire order given over the heads of the people and the leading organs of the Resistance. But nothing came of this, either. This induced de Gaulle to write to Eisenhower and suggest that "Paris should be taken as quickly as possible by French and Allied troops".

When the uprising broke out troops of the United States 3rd Army were 20-50 kilometres away from Paris with no German troops capable of offering serious resistance in their way. Nonetheless, the US Command was in no hurry to send these troops to Paris to help the uprising. With cynical frankness General Omar Bradley told correspondents at the time: "Instead of hammering down its west gates in a frontal attack ... we would first pinch off Paris and thereafter enter it at our leisure.... For while I wouldn't want the French to know I might just as well tell you we're not at all anxious to liberate Paris right now."

Eisenhower ordered the French 2nd Tank Division under General Leclerc to advance on Paris only after a representative of the Internal Armed Forces saw Bradley on August 22 and requested support, chiefly weapons. Advance units of this division entered the capital in the evening of August 24, i.e., when the victory of the uprising was certain. The German garrison surrendered on the next day.

On August 28 General de Gaulle issued a decree disbanding the Internal Armed Forces, but this decree was not implemented. The Internal Armed Forces ended their mission only when the whole of France was liberated.

The close of August saw the Hitler Wehrmacht in a desperate position. The Red Army, which had completed its offensive on the central sector of the Eastern front, had inflicted another major defeat on the German Army in Rumania. Huge losses were suffered by the Germans on the Western front as well. The tense struggle on the Eastern front gave the enemy no opportunity to send any considerable reinforcements to Western Europe. In this situation the German Command decided to

withdraw its troops from Northern France to the Siegfried line on Germany's frontiers. The withdrawal was started on August 28.

Encountering hardly any resistance, the Allied armies started off in pursuit of the enemy along the entire front. Their successful advance, which began early in September, was facilitated by an armed uprising by Belgian patriots, who attacked enemy troops and gained control of towns and whole provinces before the arrival of the Allies. On September 3 British troops entered the Belgian capital, Brussels, which had been liberated by Belgian patriots. By mid-September the firing lines ran along the southern frontier of the Netherlands and Germany's western frontiers up to Luxembourg and from there across French territory from Metz to Jussey and farther to Montbeliard. American assaults on various sectors of the Siegfried line met with no success.

The general plan of further US-British operations in Europe was scrutinised at the second Quebec Conference on September 11-16, 1944. The strategic objectives for the autumn of that year were to consolidate the Allied position in France, breach the Siegfried line, establish bridgeheads on the Rhine, thereby creating conditions for the invasion of Germany, and continue the offensive in Italy. The problem of seizing key regions of Europe before the approach of the Red Army was also discussed. On this score Churchill wrote: "I was very anxious to forestall the Russians in certain areas of Central Europe." At the conference it was decided to subordinate to Eisenhower the newly-formed 6th Army Group consisting of American and French troops that had come up from Southern France with the American General Jacob Devers in command.

On September 22 Eisenhower's Headquarters approved the final plan of operations in Europe. This plan called for an offensive along the entire front. The main effort was assigned to the 21st Army Group, which had to bypass the Ruhr from the north. The 12th Army Group was to advance in the centre with the task of reaching the Rhine south of the Ruhr. The 6th Army Group had to gain the southwestern sector of the Franco-German frontier. This offensive, which lasted for more than two months, carried the Allied troops to the Maas River in the north and the Rhine near Strasbourg in the south. The Allies thus fell short of their original plan. The 12th Army Group failed to reach the Rhine, let alone secure bridgeheads on it. Heavy casualties were suffered, particularly by the infantry. Fighting ceased on the Western front towards the end of November.

In Italy Allied progress was even slower. In early August the Allied 15th Army Group, which was inching its way to the north, approached the enemy Gotha line running south of San Marino along the southwestern slopes of the Tuscan Apennines, and began preparations for a fresh offensive. The general objective remained the same, namely, to reach the Po Valley and then advance on Vienna and Budapest via Trieste. The political situation in North Italy was favourable to the Allies. The Resistance had reached a huge scale in the summer of 1944. The partisans had liberated vast areas and established popular rule in them. Towards the autumn the fascists lost all vestiges of control in the country.

The Allied offensive was resumed on August 26, surmounting the zone of level country by September 5 and assaulting the Gotha line ten days later. The Germans resisted fiercely, slowing the Allied advance to a snail's pace. The Gotha line was breached only towards the end of

the year. However, the Allied troops did not gain the Po Valley and had to spend the winter in the Apennines.

At the close of 1944 the German Command thus managed, with great difficulty, to stabilise the Western front along the Franco-German frontier and hold its position in North Italy. On the Eastern front the Red Army was preparing to deal nazi Germany the final blow. Bitter fighting raged in the direction of Budapest. Once more the nazis' hopes for a split in the anti-Hitler coalition failed to materialise. However, they decided to use the lull to strike a blow in the West. Hitler calculated that a show of strength would force the US and British ruling circles to make concessions and sign a separate peace. The German General Hasso von Manteuffel subsequently wrote that in the event of a German success in the Ardennes he expected the "Allied plans would be put out of joint for a long time ahead. The Allies would have to carry out a basic re-examination of their policy"

The Germans planned to strike from the vicinity of the Ardennes in the general direction of Antwerp and annihilate the Allied troops northeast of the line Antwerp-Brussels-Bastogne. The nazi strategists felt this would bring about a decisive turning point. Towards mid-December the Germans concentrated a strong group of 22 divisions and 2 brigades in the Ardennes.

The German offensive was started by three armies on December 16. They easily pierced the United States 1st Army's defences, and three days later saw German panzer divisions 40 kilometres south of Liége and in the vicinity of Bastogne. This offensive came as a complete surprise to the US-British Command. Finding itself without reserves at this crucial moment it threw into battle all available forces. The Allies lost the initiative and were hard put to it to hold back the enemy onslaught. Towards the close of December the Germans widened the breach to 80 kilometres in length and nearly 100 kilometres in depth. However, by this time they were beginning to lose their wind: all the forces of the assault group had been thrown into battle and the reserves were inadequate for following up the initial success. The situation on the Eastern front did not allow the German Command to transfer any troops to the West.

In the night of December 31, 1944, the nazis struck once again, this time in the forest-clad Vosges in Alsace. By January 5 they had moved 30 kilometres in a southerly direction, and forced the Rhine north of Strasbourg. Fierce battles continued to rage in the Ardennes with neither side making headway. However, the position of the Allies remained difficult and on January 6 Churchill sent Stalin a message, writing: "The battle in the West is very heavy and, at any time, large decisions may be called for from the Supreme Command. You know yourself from your own experience how very anxious the position is when a very broad front has to be defended after temporary loss of the initiative. It is General Eisenhower's great desire and need to know in outline what you plan to do, as this obviously affects all his and our major decisions.... I shall be grateful if you can tell me whether we can count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front, or elsewhere, during January, with any other points you may care to mention."

True to its commitments the Soviet Union went to the assistance of its Allies. On January 12, earlier than planned, the Red Army launched an offensive all the way from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathians. The powerful blows dealt by Soviet troops wrecked the plans of the nazis.

The German offensive in the Ardennes and Alsace came to a halt, while the 6th SS Panzer Army was transferred to the rear and then sent to the Soviet-German front. Soon afterwards the German Command decided to transfer another 16 divisions from the Western to the Eastern front, and at the close of January the German troops withdrew to their starting lines.

The intention of the Hitler leadership to impose another Dunkirk on the Allies collapsed. The Red Army's January offensive enabled the Allied Command to restore the situation and prepare for further offensive operations. The significance of the offensive was admitted by the heads of the British and US governments. In a letter sent to Stalin on January 17, 1945, Churchill wrote: "On behalf of His Majesty's Government, and from the bottom of my heart, I offer you our thanks and congratulations on the immense assault you have launched upon the Eastern front."

Today some US and British historians and generals seek to belittle the significance of the Red Army's assistance to the Allied troops. In fact, some have the audacity to claim that the Red Army's victory in the winter of 1945 was facilitated by the "successes" of the US and British troops in the Ardennes. One of them, the American General Omar Bradley, writes in a book entitled *A Soldier's Story*: "Those bottom-of-the-barrel reserves that might have slowed the Russian onslaught had been squandered instead against us in the Ardennes. Not only was Hitler's misadventure to speed his defeat on the Western front; it was to hasten his collapse on the Eastern front as well." An assertion in the same vein is made by the British historian A. Bryant.

In common with many other American and British generals and researchers, Bradley and Bryant have the objective of exaggerating the significance of the Second Front and belittling the role which the Soviet Union played in defeating nazi Germany. The whole world knows that the Second Front in Western Europe was opened only when it was quite obvious that the Red Army, supported by the anti-fascist movement, could liberate occupied Europe singlehanded. Following the landing of American and British troops in the north of France, the position of nazi Germany undoubtedly deteriorated. She found herself in the pincer of two fronts. A key factor facilitating the operations of US and British troops was the national liberation struggle of the peoples of Western Europe. The Armed Forces of the Allies pinned down the German troops in Western Europe and part of the Wehrmacht's strategic reserves. The German Command continuously reinforced its armies in the East. In the second half of 1944 the Germans transferred 59 divisions and 13 brigades to the Eastern front. This undoubtedly helped the Allies. The Soviet-German front continued to be the main and decisive front of the Second World War.

Chapter Seventeen

LABOUR FEAT OF THE PEOPLE. IDEOLOGICAL WORK OF THE PARTY

1. HEROIC LABOUR BEHIND THE FIRING LINES

The culminating period of the war against nazi Germany demanded a redoubling of the Soviet people's effort both at the front and in the rear. The Red Army's victories were ensured by the uninterruptedly growing economic and spiritual strength of the Soviet Union, and each new victory reinvigorated the rear.

An emulation movement aimed at keeping up a steadily growing stream of supplies for the Red Army involved the whole country. Every effort was made to tap production resources to the utmost, enhance labour productivity and restore the economy in the liberated areas as quickly as possible. Here the decisive role was played by Party, Komsomol and trade union organisations. By the end of 1944 the emulation movement embraced more than 85 per cent of the workers, many of whom were young people. At war and engineering plants, for example, from 40 to 50 per cent of the workers were young men and young women. Emulation among Komsomol-youth teams became the principal form of socialist emulation, providing young workers with excellent training. The number of such teams increased from 10,000 (100,000 workers) in 1942 to 150,000 (nearly 1,000,000 workers) by the beginning of 1945.

In the coal industry many miners followed the fine example set by the Kuzbas miners Y. Y. Devyatkin and V. R. Semykin, who overfulfilled their annual coal output quota several times. The Podzharov high-speed coal-cutting method developed at the mines in the Kizelov Coal Basin became widespread. More and more steelmakers began employing high-speed methods.

A new iron-ore mining method, developed by A. I. Semivolos, rapidly became standard. This method called for the formation of composite teams consisting of miners of different trades. In these teams the precise division of labour ensured uninterrupted high-speed mining with astounding results. At the Valyavko Mine, Krivoi Rog Iron-Ore Basin, for example, teams employing the Semivolos method topped the daily output quota at least five times.

L. T. Golokolosov, a Donbas miner, became a national figure in 1944-45, when he secured a sharp increase in labour productivity. The Vengerovka Mine, where he and the miners following his example worked, more than doubled the pre-war output level in 1944. It will be borne in mind that this was achieved in a mine which had not been completely restored after its barbarous destruction by the enemy during the years of occupation.

The economy was given a tremendous boost by a movement aimed at improving the organisation and technology of production at factories. This movement was started at the close of 1944 by Y. P. Agarkov, leader of a Komsomol-youth team at the Kirov Tank Works. By merging two teams working on different jobs in one and the same factory into a composite team he achieved a conveyer effect in the welding and assembly of tank turrets, released a large number of workers and sharply increased labour productivity. In Agarkov's team labour productivity rose 130 per cent. This initiative was caught up by factories in many branches of industry.

While directing the people's efforts towards achieving victory over the enemy as quickly as possible, the Communist Party attached increasing importance to preparing the ground for post-war economic rehabilitation and a rapid switch to peaceful construction. Soviet economic development in 1944 and 1945 must be examined in the light of these two economic tasks.

Their implementation was directly dependent upon the growth of the heavy industry, chiefly of its key branches—iron and steel, fuel, power, machine engineering and chemical industries. The Communist Party, therefore, continued paying special attention to the heavy industry in 1944-45.

During these years the iron and steel industry registered substantial achievements. In 1944 pig iron output totalled 7,300,000 tons or 1,700,000 tons more than in 1943; rolled stock output topped the 1943 figure by 1,600,000 tons to reach 7,300,000 tons; the output of steel totalled 10,900,000 tons, exceeding the 1943 level by 2,400,000 tons. The iron and steel industry continued to grow swiftly. During the first six months, compared with the same period of the previous year, output showed the following increases: pig iron 27.6 per cent, rolled stock 21.4 per cent, and steel 15.8 per cent. There was a notable increase in the output of grade steel. The Soviet Union began to produce more aluminium, copper, zinc, nickel and other non-ferrous metals.

Considerable headway was made in solving one of the most acute war-time economic problems, that of fuel and power. The coal output had to be increased at all costs in order to meet the growing requirements of the iron-and-steel industry, the power stations, the railways and the war industry. Output in 1944 totalled 121,500,000 tons as against 93,100,000 tons in 1943. During the first six months of 1945 coal output rose by 25.1 per cent as compared with the first half-year of 1944. Along with the eastern coal basins, a big role began to be played by the Donets Basin, which was being quickly restored. The situation in the oil industry somewhat improved. The front was demanding more and more fuel and lubricants for tanks, aircraft and lorries. Suffice it to say, that while in 1942 the consumption of fuel in an offensive operation averaged 4,000-6,000 tons, towards the end of the war this average rose to 40,000 tons. Although there was a marked increase in consumption, the armies in the field received adequate fuel supplies.

Much was done to boost the output of electric power. There was an acute need for it in the east where industry had been evacuated from regions occupied by the enemy and where new factories had been built. By 1944 power output rose to 39,200 million kwh as compared with 32,300 million kwh in 1943, and during the first six months of 1945 it increased 12.4 per cent over the level of the same period in 1944.

In 1944 the output of the engineering and metal-working industries rose by 11 per cent over 1943 and amounted to 158 per cent of the pre-war, 1940 level.

These achievements provided a solid basis for the further growth of the war industry.

During the last years of the war the colossal scale of the military operations and the rapid advance of the Red Army made new and greater demands of the war industry. These demands were satisfied in full. In 1944 and the first six months of 1945 the Red Army received all the machines, weapons and ammunition it required. The output of tanks and self-propelled guns rose from 24,000 in 1943 to 29,000 in 1944, and of aircraft from 34,900 to 40,300. The output of field guns somewhat dropped (from 130,300 to 122,500) due to the halt in the production of obsolete models. The production of small arms reached a level where the Red Army was able to build up a reserve of hundreds of thousands of carbines, submachine-guns and machine-guns. Output of ammunition likewise increased.

During the first six months of 1945 the production of motor equipment reached an unprecedented level. The Red Army received 50 per cent more heavy IS-2 tanks and 200 per cent more ISU-122 self-propelled guns than in the first six months of 1944. Correspondingly, the output of 152-mm howitzers increased nearly 100 per cent, and of 100-mm guns 400 per cent. In the first half of 1945 the Red Army received as many Yak-3 fighter planes as during the whole of 1944, and 20 per cent more TU-2 bombers and 540 per cent more IL-10 attack aircraft.

In terms of per infantry division, the Red Army had an average of 180-200 field guns and mortars, 14-17 tanks and 13-20 aircraft in 1942-43; and 200-245 field guns and mortars, 14-35 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 22-46 aircraft in 1944. The Red Army's striking power steadily increased also as a result of the improved quality of its armaments. In close co-operation with designers, the war plants improved old models and developed new types of tanks, aircraft and artillery.

The tank industry successfully coped with its tasks. In 1944 it began the mass production of the heavy IS-2 tank fitted with a 122-mm gun. This tank was superior to the German and all other foreign tanks of its class. Also unrivalled was the improved T-34 medium tank, which was faster and had stronger armour than the old model. The calibre of its gun was increased from 76 to 85 mm.

The aircraft industry made steady progress. The mass production of the fast Tu-2 bomber was started in 1944. This 13-ton machine developed a speed of nearly 550 kilometres, which was a tremendous achievement in those days. The modernisation of fighter planes resulted in the Yak-3, which had more fire power and was more manoeuvrable than the German fighters. That same year the Soviet Air Force began to receive the La-7 fighter. The nazis experienced on themselves the combat qualities of the new Il-10 attack aircraft with its high speed and manoeuvrability, increased payload and great fire power.

Outstanding successes were scored by ordnance and small arms factories. With the help of designers M. M. Goryunov, V. G. Grabin, V. A. Degtyarev, F. F. Petrov, A. I. Savin and G. S. Shpagin they organised the mass production of modernised and new types of cannon and small arms.

These achievements of the Soviet war industry in 1944-45 were one of the major factors hastening the victorious completion of the war. Besides ensuring a systematic increase of the output of war machines, weapons and ammunition, the growth of the heavy industry created

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the conditions for the rapid restoration and further development of the entire economy.

As a result of the huge investments channelled into the building of new projects and the restoration of destroyed factories in 1944-45, these years witnessed the commissioning of 20 blast furnaces (with a total output capacity of nearly 4,500,000 tons of pig iron), 84 open-hearth furnaces, 17 electrical furnaces, 50 giant rolling mills, 59 coke batteries and many other projects. At the same time, new, improved plant was installed, arduous work was mechanised and greater use was made of new kinds of raw materials and of substitutes of materials in short supply.

Soviet industrial successes in 1944-45, achieved through the dedicated labour of the workers in collaboration with technicians, engineers and scientists gave added evidence of the superiority of the socialist economy of the Soviet Union over the capitalist economy of Germany.

An inestimable contribution to victory was made by Soviet transport workers. The railways had much fewer locomotives and carriages than before the war and there was a shortage of repair works: situated mostly in the western regions, they were destroyed by the nazis when they retreated. Moreover, there was an acute shortage of fuel because the best coking coal went to the factories, while the railways received low-calory, damp coal with a high content of ash. Another stumbling block was that freight moved mainly in one direction, from east to west, to the front. In the opposite direction the trains ran empty. With the Red Army advancing, the lines of communication linking up the rear to the front grew steadily longer. All this increased the shortage of rolling stock.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties the railways ran efficiently. The volume of freight, chiefly coal, coke, ore, metal and oil, grew steadily. In 1944 it increased 20 per cent as compared with 1943. In May 1945 the daily freightage was 33 per cent higher than in December 1944. Troop trains ran without a hitch. The enemy's forecasts that the Soviet offensive would break down because of the "weakness" of the transport system were blasted.

In 1944-45 some improvement was noted in agriculture, which had suffered heavily as a result of the war. More assistance was extended to the collective and state farms and the machine-and-tractor stations, with special attention paid to enlarging the material and technical basis of agriculture. Engine repair works were built. There was a sizeable increase in the supply of tractors, lorries, fuel and spare parts, as well as of mineral fertilisers and herbicides. But, on the whole, the technical supplies were inadequate.

In 1944 the courses set up at the machine-and-tractor stations and the farm mechanisation schools trained 282,000 tractor-drivers and 53,000 combine-drivers and mechanics, and by the spring of 1945 another 260,000 tractor-drivers and 55,000 combine-drivers. Tens of thousands of collective-farm chairmen and team leaders completed refresher courses. A large percentage of them were women. In 1944, 12 per cent of the collective-farm chairmen, 41 per cent of the field team leaders, 50 per cent of the livestock farm managers, nearly 50 per cent of the tractor- and combine-drivers at the machine-and-tractor stations and 25 per cent of the lorry drivers were women.

The steps taken to strengthen the collective and state farms and machine-and-tractor stations organisationally and economically and the dedicated labour of the farm workers yielded results. In 1944 the gross

output of staple products was much higher than in 1943. For instance, grain production increased 67 per cent (totalling over 49 million tons), the output of sugar-beet rose more than 200 per cent (totalling 4,100,000 tons), the cotton output increased 56 per cent (totalling 1,100,000 tons) and potato production increased 57 per cent (totalling nearly 55 million tons). Livestock-breeding also showed an improvement.

This substantial growth of farm output was promoted by two factors —the good weather in 1944 and the enlargement of the crop area as a result of the liberation of occupied regions. But in 1945 a drought hit many areas, with the result that the output of grain and other farm produce dropped as compared with the previous year, although there was an increase of the area under winter wheat in 1944 and under spring wheat in 1945. As a whole, towards the end of the war agricultural production was much lower than before the war.

Despite the war-time hardships agriculture supplied the front and rear with the necessary foodstuffs and raw materials. This was further vivid manifestation of the ardent patriotism of the peasants, the firmness of the alliance between the working class and the peasants, and the advantages of socialist agriculture.

When we review the growth of Soviet war-time economy we cannot ignore the attempts of some Western historians to belittle the significance of its achievements. In bourgeois historiography one frequently finds the assertion that the armaments, materials and food supplied by the Allies played the decisive role in the defeat of the enemy. Unquestionably, under Lend-Lease the Soviet Union received vital machines, equipment and materials. For instance, 401,400 motor vehicles were received from the USA and Britain. Also important were the deliveries of locomotives, fuel, means of communications, non-ferrous metals and chemicals. However, on the whole, these deliveries did not and could not decisively influence the course of the war. The Lend-Lease supplies of aircraft totalled 13 per cent of the Soviet output, of tanks 7 per cent, and of anti-aircraft guns 2 per cent. To give a lucid idea of the role played by this assistance, suffice it to say that in the period from July 1, 1941, to July 1, 1945, the Soviet Union produced 108,028 aircraft, 95,099 tanks and self-propelled guns, 188,100 field guns and 347,900 mortars. Significantly, deliveries of major armaments dwindled already in 1944. The Soviet war economy reached a level of output where unaided it could, in spite of the huge scale of the military operations, provide the front with all the necessary types of armaments.

The achievements of the Soviet war economy were truly breath-taking. This becomes self-evident if it will be recalled that in 1943 and particularly in 1944 and 1945, parallel with the further growth of the war economy, the Soviet people embarked on the colossal work of rehabilitation.

2. ECONOMIC REHABILITATION

In their retreat the nazi invaders laid waste to the areas which were occupied by them. With ruthless brutality they destroyed everything that could be destroyed. Towns and villages were reduced to smoking ashes. Millions of civilians were killed, tortured in concentration camps or driven into nazi slavery. A huge number of factories, dwellings, schools and hospitals were levelled to the ground. This was the notorious

"scorched earth" tactics, the last word in the "military science" of the nazi vandals.

Rehabilitation was launched on the heels of the retreating enemy. A decision on economic restoration in liberated territory was passed by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government as early as 1943. Massive rehabilitation got under way in 1944 when the last of the invaders were driven out of Soviet territory. Factories were raised from ruins, transport and cultural and medical establishments were restored and new millions of hectares of land were sown. This greatly contributed to the growth of the Soviet Union's economic and defence might.

A major condition for successful economic rehabilitation was the restoration of Party and local Government bodies and mass organisations. Here difficulties were encountered from the very outset, because many Party and local Government functionaries were in the Army or on underground work behind the enemy's lines. Many had been tortured to death in Gestapo prisons or had fallen on the battlefield. New cadres had to be trained.

In 1943 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union set the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union republics the task of selecting and training cadres for the Party and state apparatus in liberated territories. Trained cadres restored the network of Party, trade union and Komsomol organisations and local Government organs in the various regions and districts as soon as they were liberated by the Red Army. Participants in Party underground work and the partisan movement, steeled in the battles against the enemy, were promoted to leading posts. Functionaries evacuated to the eastern regions when the war broke out were reassigned to posts in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and other republics.

Economic rehabilitation in the liberated areas was directed by A. A. Andreyev, N. A. Voznesensky, A. A. Zhdanov, N. G. Ignatov, M. I. Kalinin, Y. E. Kalnberzin, A. N. Kosygin, A. A. Kuznetsov, O. V. Kuusinen, I. G. Käbin, A. I. Mikoyan, M. G. Pervukhin, P. K. Ponomarenko, Z. T. Serdyuk, A. Y. Snechkus, J. V. Stalin, M. A. Suslov, N. S. Khrushchev, N. M. Shvernik, A. S. Shcherbakov and other prominent Party and Government leaders. The work of restoring the economy became an all-Party, a nation-wide cause even while the war was still raging, and it proceeded with great speed. In the liberated regions approximately one-third of the pre-war industrial capacity was restored at the end of the war. In 1945 farm output in these regions reached 51 per cent of the 1940 level.

During the concluding stages of the war one of the basic economic projects was to restore the Donets Basin, whose coal was needed to alleviate the acute fuel shortage which the country had experienced throughout the war. The restoration of other branches of the economy of the southern regions largely depended on how quickly the Donets Basin would begin production. It was a tremendous task to rehabilitate the Donets Coal Basin. The factories and power stations lay in ruins and the mines had been flooded. Many of the spur tracks had been switched by the nazis to fit the German gauge, while the rolling stock had been taken away or blown up. The modern miners' settlements had been reduced to heaps of stone and ashes.

When the Donets Basin was liberated only some small mines were found to be workable and the coal had to be brought to the surface manually. Small power stations were soon built and plant was repaired

or assembled from parts of twisted machines and this made it possible gradually to go over to mechanical haulage. Manpower and building materials were in short supply. Yet, in spite of these incredible difficulties, output rose sevenfold in the period from May 1943 to May 1944.

Restoration of the Donets Basin was accelerated by decisions passed on October 26, 1943, on priority measures to resume coal production, and in July 1944 by the State Defence Committee on further steps to restore the coal industry in the Donets Basin with the object of ensuring coal supplies for the iron and steel industry, the railways, the power stations and the war industry of the south.

The working people enthusiastically responded to these decisions. Many women learned mining trades, and tens of thousands of young people went to work in the mines. Workers of other coal basins as well as of many industrial centres in the Russian Federation worked overtime and used these extra earnings to buy materials, equipment and tools for the Donets Basin. It may be said without exaggeration that the basin was restored through a nation-wide effort. In 1944 the Donbas produced 21,100,000 tons of coal, and in 1945 output rose to 38,400,000 tons. In the course of two years 129 main mines of the People's Commissariat for the Coal Industry and 889 medium and small mines went into operation in the Donets Basin.

The Krivoi Rog Iron Ore Basin and the major metallurgical enterprises of the south were restored parallel with the rehabilitation of the coal industry. The Taganrog Iron and Steel Works and the Mariupol Pipe-Rolling Mill were among the first enterprises to be restored in 1944. Their output was badly needed by the oil industry. Thirteen blast-furnaces, 49 open-hearth furnaces and 29 rolling mills were commissioned in liberated territory in 1944 and in the course of the first half of 1945.

The building of power projects went steadily forward. Work was started to restore the engineering industry in the south. The engineering plant at Novo-Kramatorsk, the Kharkov group of machine-tool plants and other heavy industry projects were gradually launched.

The building materials, light and food industries likewise began production. A noteworthy feature of these projects was that they received mainly new plant. In fact, for their equipment and technology these factories were largely new enterprises.

Agriculture, too, had to be restored. In this sphere many difficulties had to be overcome. At many collective and state farms the number of able-bodied workers had halved. There was a shortage of haulage power. The fields were overgrown with weeds. Yet thanks to the selfless efforts of the collective farmers and the assistance rendered by the entire country the difficulties were gradually surmounted. In the period from January 1943 to August 1945 the collective and state farms in the liberated territory received 27,600 tractors, 2,100 grain harvesters, 126,000 horses, 744,000 head of cattle, 1,307,000 sheep and goats, and 88,000 pigs.

During the occupation the nazis had confiscated much of the livestock, farm machinery and land allocated by the Soviet Government to the peasants in the western regions of the Ukraine and Byelorussia as well as in Moldavia and the Baltic republics. After the invaders were driven out the Government restored the peasants' right to land and supplied most of them with draught animals and farm tools. This enabled the peasants to get down to work, and their first achievement was that in 1945 the crop area in the liberated regions reached 72 per cent of the

pre-war figure, while the area under grain amounted to 79 per cent of that figure.

Living conditions were improved for the population which had suffered the horrors of occupation. The Government allocated large sums of money for the restoration and building of dwellings, schools, hospitals, children's homes and kindergartens. Dwelling houses with a total living space of nearly 20 million square metres were built in liberated territory in 1944-45. In rural localities the state helped to build and repair hundreds of thousands of houses. All this was accomplished while the war was still raging.

The resources for the conduct of the war and for rehabilitation were found thanks to the socialist economy and to the moral and political unity and patriotism of the Soviet people led by the Communist Party.

3. LIFE OF SOVIET PEOPLE

During the last period of the war, as in 1941-43, Soviet people denied themselves many things so that the enemy could be defeated and they could return to peaceful socialist construction. Material and living conditions remained difficult.

The housing problem was particularly acute. The war had made millions of people homeless. The housing situation was extremely grave in the liberated regions. In many places people lived in dugouts, trench shelters or hastily converted premises. Great difficulties were also experienced by factory and office workers who had been evacuated to the eastern regions. The lack of housing was felt everywhere.

Food and other vital necessities were strictly rationed. True, already in 1944 the quantity of goods sold to the population increased noticeably. An increase was noted in marketable stocks of grain, fresh and canned meat, butter, sugar and eggs, as well as of fabrics, garments, knitwear and shoes. But the demand likewise increased. In the liberated regions the people were transferred to state supplies of bread and other food, as well as of manufactured goods. Food was also on sale in the collective-farm markets, but there was not much of it and prices were prohibitive.

Rough estimates show that during the war the standard of living dropped 35-40 per cent. However, the people's vital requirements were satisfied uninterruptedly. The Communist Party and the Soviet Government took every possible step to improve the standard of living. There was no interruption in the state supplies of food and manufactured goods. Rations were not reduced at any time. It will be appreciated that the scale of the state supplies was gigantic. State supplies of bread alone covered nearly 62 million people in 1942 and almost 74 million by the beginning of 1945. These included workers and employees at factories, building projects, state offices and organisations, and members of their families, as well as rural intellectuals—teachers, doctors and employees of district enterprises and organisations. Naturally, bread was also supplied to children's homes, homes for invalids and hospitals.

Much was done to improve public catering, which during the war years played a very important role. At most factories, the workers and employees obtained 75-90 per cent of their rations from canteens. Some 900,000 undernourished children were served by special canteens.

The ancillary husbandries run by factories were an important source of supply. In 1944 there were 30,000 of these husbandries with a total

of nearly 2,000,000 hectares of land and a large number of livestock. The individual and collective kitchen-gardens were also of great assistance, and the Communist Party and the Soviet Government attached tremendous importance to the promotion of kitchen-gardening, as seen by the decision on measures for the further promotion and improvement of individual and collective kitchen-gardening by factory and office workers adopted by the Council of People's Commissars in February 1944. This decision called for a further enlargement of the area under kitchen-gardens. The importance of this work was underlined at the 12th Plenary Meeting of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions in March 1944. Factory and office workers, the families of men in the Army, and war invalids were helped to acquire potato and vegetable seeds and the necessary implements. As a result, the number of kitchen-gardeners rose substantially, from 11,900,000 in 1943 to 16,500,000 in 1944.

Half again as many houses were built in 1944 as in 1943, but the housing shortage remained extremely acute.

The Party showed special concern for families with many children and for mother-and-child protection. In 1944 allowances for mothers of many children were increased, the network of kindergartens and nursery schools was enlarged, the food supply for nursing mothers was improved, and the fees at kindergartens and nursery schools were halved. On July 8, 1944, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a decree instituting an allowance to be paid to mothers of three or more children; formerly this allowance was granted only at the birth of the seventh child.

The number of pupils at elementary, seven-year and secondary schools rose considerably during the last years of the war. Everything possible was done to improve the diet of children and supply them with clothes and footwear. Despite all the war-time difficulties, the state safeguarded and educated the rising generation, the generation that is today building communism.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government rendered extensive material assistance to families of men at the front and to war invalids. This is eloquently illustrated by the following figures. In 1944 nearly 13,000 million rubles were paid out in the shape of monthly allowances and pensions. That same year more than 1,400,000 able-bodied members of the families of men at the front received training and permanent work in the Russian Federation alone. Towards the beginning of 1945 the number of war invalids returned to active life rose to 907,000 as against 562,000 in the beginning of the previous year. But figures cannot convey the warmth of the attitude of Party and local Government bodies and of all the people towards the families of Red Armymen and towards war invalids. This was perhaps most strikingly expressed in the activities of Komsomol-youth and school teams. The young people surrounded these families with loving care and performed all sorts of services for them, sawing wood, house-cleaning, shopping, looking after small children and the sick, and cultivating kitchen-gardens. This nation-wide assistance to the families of Red Armymen and war invalids found a warm response in the hearts of Soviet troops, enhancing their fighting spirit and increasing the offensive might of the Red Army.

The concern shown by the Party and the Government for the people was vividly mirrored in the allocations for social and cultural requirements. In 1945, for instance, 50 per cent more money was spent on these purposes than in 1940.

Thus, although the resources available for satisfying the people's

material and cultural requirements were, on the whole, limited, the standard of living nonetheless rose towards the end of the war as compared with 1943. But the most important thing for every person was, naturally, that final victory was in sight, that the great gains of the October Revolution had been upheld and that the country would resume the building of socialism.

4. THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGICAL WORK

For the final defeat of the enemy in 1944-45 it was necessary further to mobilise the spiritual and material strength of the Soviet people and their Army. People had to be told of all the difficulties of the struggle lying ahead of them, and warned against carelessness and complacency in the concluding stage of the war. Political work was particularly important among the population in the formerly occupied territories as well as among people repatriated from Germany and other countries. New tasks arose in political work among troops when the Red Army reached the Soviet Union's western frontiers.

The international situation, too, made it necessary to intensify the Party's ideological work during the third stage of the war. The liberation of many peoples began in 1944, and they received the possibility of deciding the question of their social and political system in a new way. These peoples knew capitalism but they did not know the truth about the world's first socialist state. The bourgeoisie of the whole world had slandered the Soviet Union and sought to discredit its achievements. They persevered in their tales about the economic weakness of the USSR and about the low morale and political level of the Soviet people. This slander was believed by many people. But when the might of the Soviet Union became evident in her singlehanded struggle against nazi Germany and her satellites, millions of people changed their notions about the socialist state. They wanted to know more about the Soviet Union and about the life, ideology and culture of its people. This was particularly true of the countries where the Red Army was locked in combat with the enemy. They had to be helped to learn the truth about socialism, about its advantages over capitalism. That was the duty of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In the changed situation it was imperative to raise the ideological-theoretical level of Party members, because most of them had joined the Party during the war and had not had sufficient theoretical training and experience of work among the masses. Some 1,125,000 members and over 1,336,000 candidate members were enrolled in 1944 alone.

In 1944-45 the Party Central Committee scrutinised the state of the ideological work in a number of regions and republics and took steps to raise the level of this work. The Marxist-Leninist education of Communists was considerably improved. District Party schools and political schools were set up at rural primary Party organisations. In 1944-45 these schools were attended by nearly half a million people. A very large number of Communists and non-Party intellectuals studied at the evening Universities of Marxism-Leninism.

The Party Central Committee upheld the purity of Marxist-Leninist theory. It brought to light shortcomings and errors in works on philosophy, history, literature and art. The Party censured the erroneous views of individual historians who had departed from the Leninist assessment of

the past, made concessions to bourgeois nationalistic ideology and thereby undermined friendship among the peoples of the USSR.

In a resolution on shortcomings in the teaching of the principles of Marxism-Leninism at Saratov University (July 1945), the Central Committee drew attention to the need to raise the theoretical level of Party propaganda. It was important comprehensively to show the basic distinction between bourgeois and proletarian philosophy and convincingly explain the advantages of the Soviet system.

In ideological work the Central Committee attached importance to the dissemination of natural-scientific knowledge among the people. In a decision passed in September 1944 on the propagation of scientific knowledge it was pointed out that "in the present conditions special importance attaches" to this sphere of propaganda. It was recommended that teachers, doctors, engineers, agronomists and other intellectuals should be enlisted into the work of disseminating knowledge among the people.

In fulfilment of the Central Committee's decisions, republican, city and district Party committees as well as political departments and Party organisations in the Army and Navy made use of all channels of agitation and propaganda: the press, the radio, the cinema and so forth, telling the people the truth and answering questions uppermost in their minds.

Naturally, the Party devoted much of its energy to political education in the liberated areas. During the years of occupation the nazis had done their best to fill people's minds with poisonous propaganda. Most of the people remained loyal to the Soviet Government and the Communist Party, but some, particularly from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata of the western regions of the Ukraine and Byelorussia as well as the Baltic republics, were infected to some extent by the enemy. The spurious nature of nazi propaganda had to be fully exposed. Meetings and conferences were the most widespread and effective method of work in the villages of the liberated regions. These meetings and conferences examined the question of returning to the peasants the land confiscated from them by the enemy, showed that the bourgeois nationalists were the most sinister enemies of the people, and discussed developments at the front and the international situation.

Beginning with the second half of 1944 many Soviet people who had been deported by the enemy from their native towns and villages as well as part of the former prisoners of war received the possibility of returning home. A special agency was set up to facilitate their return and employment. Nearly 5,500,000 Soviet citizens returned home in 1944-45, and of these more than a million joined the Red Army.

The hour of retribution against the nazi invaders was drawing nearer when the Red Army reached the Soviet frontiers. But not even a hint of complacency could be allowed. Army political instructors explained to the troops that if the nazi beast was not given the coup de grâce victory might slip out of their hands. The nazi hordes had to be completely destroyed and Hitler Germany had to be forced to surrender unconditionally.

New tasks arose when hostilities were carried to Poland, Southeastern Europe, Norway and Czechoslovakia. Explanatory work had now to be conducted on a large scale among the local population. The policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government was explained through the press and radio and in talks and reports, and the lies and slander of nazi propaganda, which kept trumpeting about "Bolshevik atrocities", were exposed.

This work was founded on the Soviet Government's statement of April 2, 1944, the decisions passed by the State Defence Committee on April 10 and October 27, 1944, the directive issued by GHQ on April 20, 1945, and other major documents defining the tasks and behaviour of Soviet troops in foreign countries. These documents made it plain that the Soviet people and their Army were out to crush nazism completely. At the same time, they clearly distinguished between the working masses and the ruling cliques in countries fighting on nazi Germany's side. While demanding stern punishment for the war criminals, the Soviet Government gave the peoples unquestioned freedom to decide their own destiny.

On the territory of neighbouring countries Soviet troops encountered practices that were foreign to them. This was capitalist reality. Soviet troops, reared by the Communist Party, correctly assessed this bourgeois reality, saw its vices and found fresh confirmation of the advantages of socialism over capitalism.

In 1944-45, as in previous years, the Soviet press was a militant propagandist and agitator among the masses. With ardent Bolshevik slogans it inspired Soviet people in the performance of heroic feats on the battlefield and in work. The Leninist *Pravda*, central organ of the Communist Party, was in the forefront of this activity, employing leading Soviet journalists and exerting tremendous moral and political influence on the people. *Pravda* was the voice of the Party and it expressed the aspirations and thoughts of the people.

Izvestia, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the journal *Bolshevik* and other central and local press organs discharged their duty honourably. In a special decision on the local press (July 1945) the Central Committee made it binding upon the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union republics to improve republican, territorial and regional newspapers and see to it that at all times they were really organisers and educators of the masses.

The Army press was also a powerful vehicle for the ideological, political and military education of enlisted men and officers. The troops received 19,300,000 copies of central newspapers and 1,000,000 copies of magazines monthly. The Armed Forces published 4 central, 19 front and navy, and 103 army and flotilla newspapers with a total circulation of nearly 3,500,000 copies. Every division and every naval formation had its own newspaper, which it published three times a week. The daily newspapers published at the firing lines had a circulation of 1,624,000 copies.

Much was done to further the Party's ideological work during the war by M. I. Kalinin, Y. M. Yaroslavsky and others, who spoke to the men at the firing lines and to workers, collective farmers and intellectuals, propagating the Party's ideals and calling upon the people to redouble their efforts in the struggle against the nazi invaders. The Orders of the Day, speeches and reports of J. V. Stalin, People's Commissar for Defence and Supreme Commander-in-Chief, played an immense role in paving the road to victory.

Writers, composers, artists and cinema and theatrical workers actively helped the Party to promote ideological and educational work among the working people and the Red Army. There were about 900 writers at the firing lines. They shared all the hardships of the troops and knew their thoughts and aspirations. Of their number more than 400 were killed in the war, among them Y. M. Altauzen, A. P. Gaidar, Musa Jalil (M. M. Zalilov), Y. D. Zozulya, Y. S. Krymov, I. N. Menshikov,

Y. P. Petrov and V. P. Stavsky. Foremost people, heroes of the front and rear, were depicted in vivid artistic images in different languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Their feats were held as examples of courage, valour and self-sacrifice for Red Armymen and officers, and they inspired workers, collective farmers and intellectuals. Readers eagerly awaited books from the pens of O. F. Bergholz, V. V. Vishnevsky, B. L. Gorbatov, G. G. Gulyam, V. M. Kozhevnikov, A. A. Kuleshov, L. M. Leonov, L. S. Sobolev, N. S. Tikhonov, A. M. Upit, A. A. Fadeyev, M. A. Sholokhov and many other Soviet writers. Nearly 500 writers were decorated with Orders and medals, and 10 were created Hero of the Soviet Union.

The propagation of the humanist and patriotic traditions of the progressive literature and art of the past played an immense role in the struggle against nazism, against its brutal ideology. Anniversaries of the finest representatives of Russian culture such as I. Y. Repin, N. V. Gogol, A. S. Griboyedov, I. A. Krylov, N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov and A. P. Chekhov helped to expose nazism. These great predecessors of Soviet culture were, to quote L. M. Leonov, not indifferent fellow-travellers but hard-hitting comrades-in-arms and participants in battles and campaigns.

When the Red Army entered foreign countries it became more pressing than ever before to expose nazism and its ideology and imbue the troops with a spirit of internationalism, with a humanist attitude towards the local population. These subjects were dealt with by many writers and journalists.

I. Ehrenburg's war-time writings were highly appreciated by the Soviet people. He sharply stigmatised and exposed nazism, laying bare the barbarity of the invaders and inculcating burning hatred for the enemy. In this he rendered a great service. However, when the war was coming to an end and Soviet troops had entered Germany, some of his theses were politically incorrect and could only give food to enemy propaganda. For example, in an article headed "Enough", he wrote: "Germany is no more: there is a colossal gang that flees in all directions when the question of responsibility is brought up." On April 14, 1945, *Pravda* carried an article criticising this erroneous thesis. It wrote: "Different Germans fight and comport themselves differently.... In fulfilling its great liberative mission, the Red Army is fighting to destroy the nazi army, the nazi state, the nazi government, but it has never and will never set itself the objective of exterminating the German people." These words had an enormous impact, especially as they were written on the eve of the Berlin operation.

The cinema was a powerful means of ideological education. L. O. Arnstam, V. I. Pudovkin, I. A. Pyryev, A. M. Rohom and other leading Soviet film producers created stirring films about the war. Among these films were *In the Name of the Motherland*, *Zoya*, *Invasion* and *Man No. 217*, which told of the Soviet people's courageous struggle against the invaders. They were permeated with fierce hatred of the enemy and ardent patriotism.

War documentaries were another powerful medium of education. They showed Soviet troops in action, the heroism and skill of officers and men, the might of Soviet weapons, the support given the Red Army by the rear, and battles for the liberation of Soviet territory and of Poland, Czechoslovakia and the countries of Southeastern Europe.

The theatre played a big role in mobilising the people spiritually. Playwrights, actors and producers strove to show the character of Soviet people as fully and as vividly as possible and reveal the sources of their

herculean strength. Plays like N. F. Pogodin's *Living Sources* and K. M. Simonov's *It Will Be Like That*, staged throughout the country, reflected the people's heroism and inspired them to the performance of further feats.

Many actors and entire theatrical companies constantly toured Army and Navy units. On the 26th anniversary of the Red Army more than 100 concert and theatrical teams performed in Army units and on naval vessels. Frequently, concerts were given close to the firing lines. K. Baiseitova, V. V. Barsova, Y. N. Gogoleva, I. S. Kozlovsky, S. Y. Lemeshev, M. I. Litvinenko-Volgemut, M. D. Mikhailov, I. M. Moskvin, I. S. Patorzhinsky, A. K. Tarasova, M. M. Tarkhanov and many other prominent artistes performed regularly for the troops.

The most diverse fine arts served as a means of ideological education. Paintings, sculptures, newspaper cartoons, posters and drawings mirrored events of the bitter war years. Many artists were with the Army, right on the battlefield, together with the advancing troops. Their vivid works were appreciated by the men. Unforgettable images of heroes were created by Y. V. Vuchetich, M. G. Manizer, N. V. Tomsky and other sculptors. Nation-wide popularity was enjoyed by L. F. Golovanov's posters, which stressed military duty and the liberative mission of the Red Army. A passionate call for the final defeat of the nazi hordes was contained in the works of N. N. Zhukov, A. V. Kokorin, P. A. Krivonogov of the Grekov Studios and other artists. Leading cartoonists Y. A. Ganf, B. Y. Yefimov and the Kukryniksy team and graphic artists B. I. Prorokov and D. A. Shmarinov ridiculed the nazi ruling clique with witty sarcasm and quickly responded to reports from the firing lines and to developments at home and abroad.

Soviet music did much to raise the spirit of the Soviet people and their soldiers. The music of A. V. Alexandrov, D. B. Kabalevsky, K. A. Karayev, N. Y. Myaskovsky, S. S. Prokofyev, A. I. Khachaturyan and D. D. Shostakovich glorified the feats of Soviet people.

Through their dedicated work writers, cinematographists, artists and composers of all the nationalities of the Soviet Union helped the Communist Party to educate the people in a spirit of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism and mobilise their efforts to achieve a speedy victory over the enemy.

* * *

Soviet economy continued its upsurge in 1944-45, with the war industry fully satisfying the requirements of the Armed Forces. Resting on the advantages of the socialist system, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government skilfully manoeuvred with the country's material resources, directing them towards the satisfaction of the most vital war-time requirements and preventing them from being scattered. This largely explains the striking fact that although the Soviet Union's steel production was approximately one-third that of Germany and the countries occupied by her, it outpaced the enemy in the output of tanks, aircraft and artillery as early as 1942, mainly by boosting production of grade steel. In Germany industrial output began to decline sharply in the second half of 1944. In March 1945, compared with June 1944, war production fell by 67 per cent. The gap between Soviet and German war production steadily grew wider.

One of the sources of the growth of the Soviet war economy in those years was the economic rehabilitation of the liberated regions. History

knows of no other case when an embattled country restored the dislocated economy of front-line regions so quickly and on such a large scale.

In 1944-45 the Communist Party of the Soviet Union directed its efforts towards the military, moral and political defeat of German nazism. To achieve this it had further to mobilise the spiritual forces of the people. Its mass political and ideological work at and behind the firing lines was subordinated to this purpose. Much was done to abolish the consequences of the nazi occupation. Political organs and Party and Komsomol organisations were confronted with new tasks when hostilities moved to foreign countries. It was necessary that every soldier should come forward as a dignified liberator of nations and that the working people of the liberated countries should understand the aims and nature of the Red Army's operations in Europe. Towards the end of the war instead of growing weaker, as its enemies hoped, the Soviet Union grew more powerful than ever before. Its military, economic, political and spiritual strength rose to a new level. Behind the firing lines Soviet workers, collective farmers, engineers, technicians, scientists, writers and artists continued to work with dedication, performing yet another feat of labour.

Chapter Eighteen

DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY IN THE WINTER OF 1945

1. POSITION AND PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS

The year 1945 brought with it bright hopes for the Soviet and all other peoples. The previous year had witnessed stirring victories by the Soviet Armed Forces, and dedicated labour by the people behind the firing lines. All this fortified the confidence that the nazi aggressor would soon be smashed and peace would reign in the world.

The grandiose victories of the Soviet people over nazi Germany in 1944 decisively influenced the international situation. The countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, liberated by the Red Army in the second half of 1944, were firmly moving towards far-reaching revolutionary people's democratic reforms and in 1945 they achieved their first successes. This evoked fear and animosity among reactionaries throughout the world and they started a slander campaign against the USSR in an effort to discredit Soviet policy vis-à-vis the liberated countries.

However, developments in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and other countries belied the fabrications of the imperialist politicians that revolutionary regimes were being set up with the help of bayonets. This provided further confirmation of Lenin's words, spoken in 1918. "Of course," he said, "there are people who believe that revolution can break out in a foreign country to order, by agreement. These people are either mad or they are provocateurs. We have experienced two revolutions during the past twelve years. We know that revolutions cannot be made to order, or by agreement; they break out when tens of millions of people come to the conclusion that it is impossible to live in the old way any longer." Marxism, Lenin said, "has always been opposed to 'pushing revolutions'" and considered that they "develop with the growing acuteness of the class antagonisms that engender revolutions". The Soviet Union, naturally, could not remain indifferent to the people's democratic changes and rendered the peoples concerned every possible assistance.

By 1945 the Soviet Union's prestige had soared immeasurably. It was successfully co-operating with the other countries in the anti-Hitler coalition. By this time it had diplomatic relations with 41 countries (prior to the war diplomatic relations had been established with only 25 countries). The strengthening of the anti-nazi coalition remained in the focus of Soviet foreign policy. Despite the contradictions between the USA, Britain and the USSR, the alliance between them in the struggle against the common enemy proved to be unbreakable. This was due primarily to the correct policy pursued by the Soviet Government, which did all in its power to neutralise enemy attempts to split the coalition.

In face of imminent disaster a sharp crisis broke out in the principal country of the nazi bloc in the beginning of 1945. During the campaign of the summer and autumn of 1944 the Red Army wiped out or took prisoner 96 German divisions and 24 brigades. In addition, it routed 219 divisions and 22 brigades, which lost from 50 to 75 per cent of their strength. In this campaign Germany lost 1,600,000 effectives, 6,700 tanks, 2,800 field guns and mortars, and over 12,000 aircraft. The enemy experienced an acute shortage of manpower. Reinforcements did not arrive regularly or in the required numbers. Towards the end of 1944 war production began to decline sharply, and this situation continued during the first three months of 1945. For instance, tank production compared with the monthly average for 1944 fell by more than 100 per cent.

Germany lay in the grip of the reign of terror, which was intensified after the unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944. Numerous underground anti-fascist groups were destroyed. Ernst Thälmann, leader of the German working class and Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany, who had been in a nazi prison for 11 years, was put to death. Hitler's satraps kept the German people in obedience through bloody reprisals and bare-faced chauvinistic demagogy.

Germany found herself in growing isolation. The fascist bloc had disintegrated. Rumania, Bulgaria, Italy and Finland had not only severed their relations with the Reich but had begun hostilities against her. At the close of 1944 nazi Germany had diplomatic relations only with nine countries; at the time of her invasion of the USSR she had maintained relations with 41 countries.

At the beginning of 1945 the strategic situation in Europe favoured the armies of the USSR, USA, Britain and France. Germany found herself in a pincer between two fronts: in the East and in the West.

Despite the over-all deterioration of her position, Germany still had 7,476,000 men under arms, with 5,343,000 men on active service. As before, most of the German forces—3,100,000 men, 28,500 field guns and mortars, 3,950 tanks and assault guns, and 1,960 aircraft—were concentrated on the Soviet-German front. However, this was less than what the Germans had on this front at the beginning of 1944. The drop in strength was due to the enormous losses inflicted on the enemy and to Rumania's, Bulgaria's and Finland's withdrawal from the war as Germany's allies. However, in the rear the Germans still had a huge number of various formations, the so-called reserve army of over 2,000,000 men, 2,700 field guns, 1,090 tanks and 930 combat planes. Much of this army was transferred to the East.

Although the enemy's numerical strength fell, the density of his defences was still high. The reason for this was that as a result of the successful Red Army offensive in the summer and autumn of 1944 the Soviet-German front diminished from 4,450 to 2,250 kilometres, now running through Kurland, Klaipeda Region, East Prussia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (Map 17).

In January 1945 the Soviet Armed Forces had 11,556,000 effectives, i.e., almost as many as at the beginning of 1944. The armies in the field had nearly 6,000,000 men, 91,400 field guns and mortars, 2,993 rocket launchers, close to 11,000 tanks and self-propelled guns and 14,500 aircraft.* It now had a larger quantity of all armaments than at the beginning of 1944, in particular, over 100 per cent more tanks and 70 per

* This figure does not embrace the Leningrad Front or the 37th Separate Army, which was deployed in Southeast Bulgaria.

cent more aircraft. Consequently, by the end of 1944 the German forces on the Eastern front diminished, while the Soviet forces gained in strength. After three and a half years of sanguinary fighting the Red Army had reached the German frontier powerful and well-armed. This, too, was the result of the great advantages of the socialist system, of its enormous potentialities. Polish, Czechoslovak, Rumanian and Bulgarian troops (29 divisions and five brigades) operated shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army. At the beginning of 1945 they totalled 326,500 men and had 5,200 field guns and 200 tanks. A French unit, the Normandie-Niemen Air Regiment, was part of the 3rd Byelorussian Front.

Directly at the firing lines the Soviet Armed Forces outnumbered the enemy in men nearly 2:1; in field guns and mortars, in tanks and self-propelled guns more than 3:1 and in combat planes more than 7:1. While the main forces of the Red Army were deployed in the direction of Warsaw and Berlin, the Germans kept almost half of their tanks in the south, expecting that that was where the Red Army would strike its main blow in the winter of 1945. This showed that the German Command had wrongly assessed the situation and the design of the Soviet Command, and misjudged the direction in which Soviet troops would strike. The Red Army was deployed in such a way as to enable it to deal powerful blows not only in the main, Warsaw-Berlin direction, but also in other sectors of the Soviet-German front.

In the West the US, British and French armies were holding defensive positions along a line running from the mouth of the Maas River in the Netherlands, the German frontier to Switzerland. Altogether the Allies had 87 full-strength divisions, 6,500 tanks, and more than 10,000 combat planes. They were opposed by 74 undermanned German divisions and three brigades, over 1,600 tanks and assault guns and about 1,750 combat planes. The Allies thus outnumbered the enemy in men 2:1, in tanks 4:1 and in combat planes 6:1. In Italy the Allies had reached a line running from Ravenna to Pisa, where they had 21 divisions and nine brigades. Opposing them were 31 divisions and one brigade. In the Balkans 10 German divisions and four brigades were operating against the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia. In spite of such a preponderance of strength in the West, the US and British armies drew on themselves only one-third of the German divisions. In other words, even after the Second Front was opened, the contribution of the Western Allies remained much smaller than that of the Soviet Union.

Let us briefly review the plans of the belligerents in 1945.

The Soviet Supreme Command planned to strike paralysing blows along the entire front, smash the enemy groups in East Prussia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria and gain the line extending along the mouth of the Vistula, Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), Poznan, Breslau (Wroclaw), Moravska Ostrava and Vienna. The main effort was concentrated in the direction of Warsaw-Berlin on a 300-km frontage (Ostroleka, Cracow). The campaign was to be ended with the occupation of Berlin and the liberation of Prague.

Seven fronts—three Byelorussian and four Ukrainian—were to be committed for this huge operation. Troops of the 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts had to continue blocking the enemy Kurland group, which was flattened against the sea, and in co-operation with the Navy prevent it from transferring troops to any other sector. Part of the 1st Baltic Front was to be used for an offensive in East Prussia.

While continuing to attack enemy sea communications and protect its own lanes, the Baltic Fleet prepared for action in support of the offensive

of the land forces. The Northern Fleet was protecting convoys against German U-boats.

The task of the Air Force was to retain air supremacy and strike concentrated blows at the enemy, thereby helping the land and naval forces to carry out their missions.

In 1945 the US-British Command, according to the decisions adopted at the second Quebec conference, intended to start an offensive from Germany's western frontier and advance rapidly to the east with the objective of destroying the German Armed Forces and penetrating into the heart of Germany. In a message to Stalin in September 1944, Roosevelt and Churchill wrote: "The best opportunity to defeat the enemy in the West lies in striking at the Ruhr and the Saar."

The developments in the Ardennes and the Vosges* changed the schedule of the planned offensive. At the close of January the Allies finally recuperated from the blows received by them from the Germans and decided to strike their main blow in the northern sector of the Western front. Writing of Eisenhower's intentions in this period, the British historian J. Ehrman noted: "The Supreme Commander was indeed anxious to launch the northern offensive as soon as possible, while a Russian offensive against Eastern Germany was still under way."

Thus, in January 1945, as in the closing week of August 1944, the Allied Command decided to accelerate the offensive deep into Germany, this decision being governed, as before, by political considerations. The Allies were worried by the vast scale of the Red Army offensive, by the Red Army's swift advance towards Berlin. Their decision concerning strategic operations was dependent on the situation on the Soviet-German front.

As regards the German Command, it continued to hope for a split in the anti-nazi coalition. Expecting a major Soviet offensive, it made preparations to prevent Soviet troops from gaining Germany's vital centres. For this purpose seven lines of defence were built to guard the approaches of Berlin, these lines stretching 500 kilometres in depth across Polish territory between the Vistula and the Oder. The fortifications on the former German-Polish frontier, particularly along the Oder and on Germany's southern frontier, were stiffened. Relying on these defences, the enemy hoped to decimate the advancing Soviet troops and prevent them from reaching Berlin. But the Germans fatally underestimated (for the umpteenth time) the might of the Soviet Union and her Armed Forces.

Parallel with these operations the German Command planned active operations against Soviet troops in Hungary and a further counter-offensive against the American and British troops in the West.

2. LIBERATION OF POLAND

In the general plan of the Red Army's campaign in 1945, the first stage—the January offensive along the sector from the Baltic to the southern spurs of the Carpathians—was worked out in the greatest detail. The spearhead of this offensive was directed towards Warsaw and Berlin, the object being to destroy the enemy in Poland and complete the liberation of the Polish people from nazi tyranny. Moreover, it had to create the conditions for an offensive on Berlin.

* These developments are reviewed in Chapter Sixteen.

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The German Command strove to hold Poland at all costs. In that country, along the sector from Serock to Jaslo the enemy had 30 divisions, two brigades and the Warsaw garrison consisting of four or five fortress infantry battalions. In addition, a force of nearly 50 separate battalions garrisoned other towns. This force was later used in battle. Of the seven defensive lines between the Vistula and the Oder, the first, Vistula line, was the strongest.

The liberation of Poland was assigned to the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts with the support of the left wing of the 2nd Byelorussian Front in the north and the right wing of the 4th Ukrainian Front in the south.

This liberation of Polish territory west of the Vistula has become known as the Vistula-Oder operation. It called for simultaneous powerful attacks in several sectors in order to smash the German defences, rapidly bring large numbers of troops into the breaches and send tank and motorised formations in pursuit of the enemy.

The Vistula was the starting line of the offensive of the two fronts. The 1st Byelorussian Front (commander—Marshal G. K. Zhukov; member of the Military Council—General K. F. Telegin) struck mainly from the Magnoszew bridgehead in the general direction of Poznan. At the same time, an attack was launched from the Pulawy bridgehead in the general direction of Radom and Lodz. The Front's right wing had to advance against the enemy Warsaw group.

The 1st Ukrainian Front (commander—Marshal I. S. Konev; member of the Military Council—General K. V. Krainyukov) struck a single powerful blow from the Sandomierz bridgehead in the general direction of Breslau (Wroclaw).

The two fronts had 2,204,000 effectives (exclusive of logistical and supply units), 34,500 field guns and mortars, nearly 6,500 tanks and self-propelled guns and about 4,800 aircraft. These two fronts thus had more than half of the tanks and approximately one-third of the artillery and aircraft of the Soviet forces on active service. Their numerical and weapon superiority over the enemy was therefore higher than the average on the Soviet-German front.

The operation was preceded by careful preparations during which troop reinforcements and weapon replenishments were brought up.

The preparations for the offensive proceeded under favourable conditions. The population of the liberated part of Poland were grateful to the Red Army and gave it their utmost assistance. They provided billets for the troops, supplied horses and so on.

The start of the operation, as we have already pointed out, was brought forward at the request of the Allies in order to rescue them from the difficulties into which they had been plunged by the German offensive in the Ardennes and the Vosges.

The assault groups of the 1st Ukrainian and 1st Byelorussian fronts went into action on January 12 and 14 respectively. Thousands of field guns, mortars and rocket launchers shelled the enemy with devastating effect. Although the bad weather greatly hindered the operations of General S. I. Rudenko's 16th Air Army and General S. A. Krasovsky's 2nd Air Army, the main line of the Vistula defences was breached on the very first day. The tank units sent into battle exploited the successes of the infantry, advancing westward.

In the course of four days troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front covered nearly 100 kilometres and occupied the large town of Kielce. The 4th Tank Army commanded by General D. D. Lelyushenko, General

V. N. Gordov's 3rd Guards Army and General N. P. Pukhov's 13th Army distinguished themselves in this action. They forced the Pilica River and attacked the enemy's rear echelons holding a defensive line in the vicinity of Ostrowiec. The Germans hastily retreated with Soviet tanks hot on their heels and cutting them down. On January 17 units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army under General P. S. Rybalko, the 5th Guards Army under General A. S. Zhadov and the 52nd Army commanded by General K. A. Koroteyev broke through the enemy lines on the Warta River and fought their way into the strategic industrial town of Czestochowa.

Troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front likewise advanced successfully. In the course of two days they drove a wedge 25-40 kilometres deep into the enemy's defences and inflicted heavy casualties on him. On January 16 General V. Y. Kolpakchi's 69th Army and the 11th Tank Corps captured the town of Radom by assault and advanced swiftly towards Lodz. While this operation was under way the 47th Army under General F. I. Perkhorovich and the 61st Army commanded by General P. A. Belov by-passed Warsaw on the north and south. General S. I. Bogdanov's 2nd Guards Tank Army struck at the enemy's Warsaw group from the rear. Threatened by encirclement the enemy began to abandon his positions. The 1st Army of the Wojsko Polskie commanded by General S. G. Poplawski joined the offensive in the night of January 16-17. It was given the honour of entering the Polish capital first. It forced the Vistula north and south of Warsaw, crushed enemy resistance and broke into the Polish capital in the morning of January 17. On the same morning it was followed into Warsaw by Soviet units. The nazis had looted and destroyed the city, one of the most beautiful in Europe, and massacred most of the population.

The tempo of the offensive steadily increased. Soviet troops pushed towards the nazi den as fast as possible. The distance to Germany's frontier, to the Oder and to Berlin grew shorter. Party and political work was conducted under the slogans "Forward, to Germany", "On to Berlin" and "Liberate our brothers and sisters driven into nazi slavery".

The swift advance of the Soviet troops in the direction of Poznan and Breslau was considerably facilitated by the offensives of the 2nd and 3rd Byelorussian fronts in East Prussia, and of the 4th Ukrainian Front in southern Poland.

On January 18 the armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front entered the Upper Silesian industrial region, and on the next day the 3rd Guards Tank, 5th Guards and 52nd armies approached Breslau, while troops of the Front's left wing (General P. A. Kurochkin's 60th Army and the 59th Army under General I. T. Korovnikov) liberated Cracow, Poland's ancient capital.

In the period from January 23 to February 11 troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached the Oder along a wide sector. Near Ohlau and northwest of Oppeln they crossed the Oder and secured and enlarged a bridgehead on its western bank. This river was reached northwest of Breslau by the 3rd Guards and 13th and 4th Tank armies, at Breslau by the 52nd Army and General V. A. Gluzdovsky's 6th Army, and southeast of this town by the 5th Guards and 3rd Guards Tank armies. The enemy put up a stubborn resistance, making an all-out effort to halt the Soviet advance at the Oder. But there was nothing he could do. Adding to the glory of the men who had forced the Dnieper, Soviet troops displayed miracles of valour, courage and heroism in the battles for bridgeheads on the Oder. Thousands of troops were decorated with Orders and medals, and many were made Heroes of the Soviet Union.

On January 18 troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front completed the annihilation of the enemy encircled west of Warsaw and on the next day captured the important industrial town of Lodz.

A gap formed between the 1st and 2nd Byelorussian fronts when troops on the right wing of the latter Front advanced northwest towards Elbing. The nazis used this breach for a counter-attack from the north against the flank of the 1st Byelorussian Front. For this purpose they massed considerable forces in Eastern Pomerania. In order to strengthen the right wing, the commander of the 1st Byelorussian Front sent second-echelon armies and part of the assault group into battle.

Meanwhile, the Front's main forces pushed inexorably westward. They soon surrounded the enemy Poznan and then the Schneidemühl groups. On January 29 troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front set foot on German territory. This gave every Soviet soldier and every Soviet citizen a sense of deep satisfaction: the nazis had sown a wind and now they would reap a storm. By February 3 Soviet troops were in full possession of the eastern bank of the Oder. They forced the river and secured a bridgehead near Küstrin (Kostrzyn). Six armies, including two tank armies, were now on the Oder along a wide front.

One of the biggest offensives of the Second World War was thus completed early in February. It embraced a sector 500 kilometres long and 500-600 kilometres deep and lasted for 23 days. Soviet troops advanced an average of 25 kilometres a day, while tank and motorised units covered as much as 30-35 kilometres a day.

Irreplaceable losses were inflicted on the enemy: 35 divisions were destroyed and 25 routed. Troops of the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts captured more than 1,300 tanks and assault guns, nearly 14,000 field guns and mortars and over 1,300 aircraft. This compelled the Germans to transfer to this sector more than 20 divisions and a considerable quantity of equipment from other sectors of the Soviet-German front, from the Western and Italian fronts and also from their reserve.

The Western Allies highly appreciated the Soviet offensive. "We are thrilled by your glorious victories," Churchill wrote to Stalin on January 27, 1945. "Accept our warmest gratitude and congratulations on these historic feats." Even the nazi General F. Mellenthin speaks in his book *Tank Battles 1939-45* of the crushing force of the Soviet assault: "What happened between the Vistula and Oder during the initial months of 1945 defies description. Europe had not witnessed anything of the kind since the fall of the Roman Empire."

Early in February vital changes took place on other sectors as well. Units of the 2nd Byelorussian Front reached the Baltic coast in the region of Marienburg (Malbork) and Elbing and cut off the enemy East Prussia group. This substantially facilitated the Red Army's advance in Poland. In the course of January, the 4th Ukrainian Front, commanded by General I. Y. Petrov, continued its advance in the Carpathian foothills, covered 100-200 kilometres in southern Poland and Czechoslovakia and reached the line running through Bielsko-Biala, Zakopane and Poprad (70 kilometres west of Presov).

The Red Army's January offensive brought liberation to most of western Poland, and hostilities were taken to German territory. In Germany Soviet troops hung posters with the laconic and expressive inscription: "Here she is, nazi Germany!". Nazi Germany had plunged the world into the abyss of the most sanguinary and destructive war in history. She had given birth to hordes of despicable and foul murderers, rapists and brigands. She was guilty of the death of millions of people,

of the devastation of many rich territories. Remembering this, Soviet troops hit the enemy harder and increased the rate of their offensive. They were now at the approaches of Berlin, only 60-70 kilometres away from the nazi lair.

The enemy feverishly fortified his positions along the Oder and the so-called Pomeranian wall, hoping to stop the Soviet advance into Germany.

In Eastern Pomerania the nazis had two armies from Army Group Vistula, which had been formed on January 26. In the north these armies threatened units of the 1st Byelorussian Front, which had advanced towards the Oder, and they prepared to launch a powerful counter-attack. The nazis counted on pinning down the Soviet troops in this area, strengthening their position in Pomerania and keeping their hold on the road to East Prussia. For their counter-attack they massed 16 infantry, 4 panzer and 3 motorised divisions, 17 brigades, combat groups and separate units.

In this situation, GHQ released the 2nd Byelorussian Front from further participation in the fighting in East Prussia and turned it against the enemy group in Eastern Pomerania. It was given the task of seizing the entire Baltic coast from the mouth of the Vistula to the mouth of the Oder and capturing the ports of Danzig (Gdansk) and Gdynia. The offensive was started on February 10, but it made very slow progress. With the exception of the 19th Army, the 2nd Byelorussian Front's 45 divisions and three fortified areas were undermanned (they had not more than 4,000-5,000 men each). Besides, the troops had just been engaged in other fighting and they were exhausted and short of artillery and tanks. Facing them was the strong Pomeranian wall consisting of several lines of excellently equipped fortifications, which the Germans had built well in advance. To speed up the offensive GHQ committed the 1st Byelorussian Front, including its tank armies, and the Wojsko Polskie 1st Army, as well as units of the Baltic Fleet.

Two paralysing blows were dealt by the Soviet troops: one on February 24 by the 2nd Byelorussian Front from the vicinity of Linde in the direction of Koslin, and the other on March 1 by the 1st Byelorussian Front from southeast of Stargard in the direction of Kolberg. The advancing armies split the East Pomeranian group and gained the Baltic coast. The Wojsko Polskie 1st Army participated in this action, fighting its way into Kolberg and hoisting the Polish flag over that town. In recognition of the services of the Wojsko Polskie 1st Army in the defeat of the enemy in Pomerania, GHQ decorated many of its units and formations with the title "Pomeranian".

After gaining the coast, troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front swung to the east in the direction of Danzig, while the 1st Byelorussian Front pressed towards the west, to the lower reaches of the Oder. Eastern Pomerania was completely cleared of the enemy towards the close of March. Troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front entered the ports of Gdynia and Danzig. Upon completing the East Pomeranian operation, the armies of the 1st and 2nd Byelorussian fronts were given new assignments.

While the enemy was being liquidated in Pomerania the Red Army launched an offensive in Silesia. This offensive, known as the Lower Silesian operation, was started on February 8 from a bridgehead north of Breslau by the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front (3rd Guards, 13th, 52nd Combined and 4th and 3rd Guards tank armies). These forces struck out from south of Glogau (Glogow) in the direction of Cottbus and Penzig. The enemy defences were smashed on the very first day

and by February 24 the Soviet armies advanced 100-120 kilometres, reaching the Neisse River in a sector 100 kilometres long from its mouth to Penzig. At the same time, Soviet troops executed a bold manoeuvre in which they surrounded the garrisons in the fortresses of Breslau (nearly 40,000 men) and Glogau (some 18,000 men). The German defences on the Oder in this area were breached.

Somewhat later, on March 15, the Front's left wing (5th Guards, 21st, 59th and 60th armies as well as the 4th Tank Army and three tank and motorised corps that had been transferred to this sector) began the Upper Silesian operation. They soon crushed the enemy Oppeln group and gained the Sudeten foothills on the Czechoslovakian frontier. In this operation more than five enemy divisions were surrounded southwest of Oppeln and destroyed towards nightfall of March 20

Towards the end of March the 1st and 2nd Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts thus reached the Baltic Sea and the rivers Oder and Neisse. The bridgeheads established on the Oder north of Frankfurt early in February were enlarged at the close of March. In the course of February and March 1945 the 4th Ukrainian Front continued its offensive in the Carpathians and at the approaches of Moravska Ostrava. Advancing 35 kilometres on its right wing and 75 kilometres on its left wing this Front came to a halt along a line running 15-20 kilometres northeast of Moravska Ostrava, Istebna and Vrutky, where the enemy put up a fierce resistance in an effort to hold the industrially important region of Moravska Ostrava.

During this offensive the officers and political instructors conducted extensive explanatory work among the population of the liberated regions. It was vital that the population of Germany should be made to appreciate the liberative mission of the Red Army. Nazi propaganda had used every channel to make the German people believe that Soviet troops were out to exterminate them. In their effort to link up the destiny of the German people and Army with their own fate, the nazis counted on mobilising additional forces in order to continue the criminal war. They hoped to put off the inevitable end and win time for diplomatic subterfuges with the aim of splitting the anti-fascist coalition and thereby postponing the hour of just retribution.

However, the population of Germany soon saw that the Red Army was bent not on annihilating the German people but on destroying the nazi army and Government, the hated "new order" in Europe.

One of the major results of the Soviet offensive in the direction of Warsaw and Berlin was the complete liberation of Poland. Starting with the Byelorussian and Lvov-Sandomierz operations in the summer of 1944, the Red Army had fought for more than eight months to deliver the Polish people from nazi tyranny. Tormented and tortured by the nazis, the Polish people could at last breathe freely. They had been subjected to incredible suffering during the occupation. The nazis had trampled their national dignity and stifled Polish culture. The Gestapo had instituted a reign of terror. Poland was dotted with concentration camps where thousands of Polish anti-fascists, Soviet war prisoners and citizens of many other European countries perished. The notorious huge Oswiecim concentration camp, situated near Cracow, held from 180,000 to 250,000 prisoners. Until 1945 every day witnessed the arrival of from three to five trainloads of prisoners, and 10,000-12,000 innocent people were daily killed in the camp's gas chambers. During the war the nazis put to death more than four million people in this camp alone.

The Polish people hated the nazi invaders, and there was nothing the

nazis could do to break their will to resist. But their own strength had not been sufficient to drive out the invaders. Polish patriots eagerly looked forward to the approach of the Red Army and they recorded their profound gratitude to it for their liberation from the bloody nazi tyranny. "The Polish people," leaders of the Polish Workers' Party and Government wrote, "will never forget that they obtained their freedom and the possibility to restore their state independence as a result of the brilliant victories of Soviet arms and as a result of the blood shed by many valiant Soviet soldiers."

After liberation, the Provisional Government of Poland was confronted with the difficult task of restoring the dislocated economy and bringing life back to normal. The nazis had left behind a terrible heritage: thousands of ruined factories and buildings, razed villages. The nation's economic resources had been exhausted. Nearly 40 per cent of the national wealth had been destroyed by the invaders. But these difficulties did not daunt the Polish people. They enthusiastically set about rehabilitating the economy. Factories and mines sprang to life and bridges and power transmission lines were built and transport was restored.

Special attention was paid to the western lands, which had been severed from Poland by the Germans many years before. Liberated by the Red Army and the Wojsko Polskie in 1945 they were justly returned to the mother country on the basis of decisions taken by the Allied powers. In response to a call from the Polish Workers' Party, workers and peasants from the central regions began to resettle in the west. The Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party sent 25,000 Party members to that region prior to June 1, 1945. Despite the enormous difficulties and the savage resistance of the reactionaries, the development of these regions proceeded successfully. Towards the summer of 1945 there were more than 260,000 new settlers in these regions.

Soviet aid was an important factor contributing towards Poland's economic restoration. As soon as the fighting for Warsaw died down Red Army units and the Wojsko Polskie set about returning life to normal in the Polish capital. They removed nearly two million mines, built a bridge across the Vistula in eight days and helped to restore the railways and communications. The Soviet Government sent its finest engineers, technicians and architects to help raise Warsaw from ruins and shouldered half the expenses. Sixty thousand tons of flour were sent for the capital's population. In February-April 1945 Poland received from the Soviet Union 45,000 tons of coal, 280,000 tons of petrol, nearly 3,000 tons of kerosene, 6,000 tons of salt, 8,000 tons of meat, and 1,000 tons of fat. The peasants were given 150,000 head of cattle and sheep. In addition to helping the Polish people restore their dislocated economy, the Soviet Union gave the young Polish state unremitting diplomatic and political support.

The socio-democratic reforms in Poland were violently opposed by the ruling circles of Britain and the USA, who did their utmost to halt the revolution and restore the pre-war reactionary regime. But all their intrigues were nipped in the bud by the Polish working people and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government could not allow Poland, which in the course of three decades had been used twice as a springboard for an attack on the USSR and for whose liberation hundreds of thousands of Soviet and Polish people had sacrificed their lives, again to become a weapon in the hands of the big imperialist powers.

On April 21, 1945, the USSR and the Polish People's Republic signed a treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and post-war co-operation, in

which they expressed their determination to fight the war until victory was won and help each other in every possible way. They pledged that after the war they would take all steps to prevent a repetition of aggression and would not join any coalition directed against one of the parties to the treaty. Provision was made for broad economic and cultural co-operation and for mutual assistance in economic rehabilitation.

This treaty strengthened the alliance and friendship between the USSR and Poland. The plans of international reaction to resurrect the old, anti-Soviet "cordon sanitaire" policy collapsed for good.

3. VICTORY IN EAST PRUSSIA

The Red Army conducted a successful operation in East Prussia parallel with its offensive in Poland.

In its plans of aggression against the East, German militarism had attached immense importance to East Prussia and the northern regions that had been wrested from Poland. A strategic springboard for an attack on Russia and Poland had been built in this area in the course of centuries. Retired senior and junior officers of the German Army settled in East Prussia, where on land purchased on favourable terms they built their homes according to a plan approved by the military command. This enabled the army subsequently to create strong and continuous lines of defence, each of which was a formidable barrier. The East Prussia springboard was used by the nazis against Poland in 1939 and against the Soviet Union in 1941.

In the course of the Second World War the German Command had improved the multi-echeloned fortifications of the East Prussia springboard, and in 1944 it had concentrated a large force there in an effort to keep the springboard in its hands. The fortified areas with their large number of permanent weapon emplacements and fortress-type structures covered on the east by anti-tank obstacles in the shape of reinforced-concrete dragon's teeth were combined with the numerous stone farm buildings adapted for defence. All these fortifications were skilfully utilised by Army Group Centre, which on January 13 consisted of 41 divisions and many special formations, including volkssturm units (these units had a total of nearly 200,000 men).* In this area the enemy had 8,200 field guns and mortars, 700 tanks and assault guns, and 515 aircraft.

The plan for the East Prussia operation drawn up by GHQ called for cutting Army Group Centre off from the other German forces, driving it to the sea and destroying it piecemeal. This task was assigned to the 3rd and 2nd Byelorussian fronts with the support of the Baltic Fleet.

The 3rd Byelorussian Front (commander—General I. D. Chernyakhovsky; member of the Military Council—General V. Y. Makarov) had to crush the enemy Tilsit-Insterburg group, directing its main thrust in the direction of Velau and striking ancillary blows in the direction of Tilsit (in co-operation with the 43rd Army of the 1st Baltic Front) and Darkehmen. These actions were to be followed up by an offensive on Königsberg.

The 2nd Byelorussian Front (commander—Marshal K. K. Rokossovsky; member of the Military Council—General N. Y. Subbotin) had the task of smashing the Mlawa group, advancing towards Marienburg and

* The mobilisation of all men between the ages of 16 and 60 was started in Germany in the autumn of 1944. They were formed into volkssturm units.

Elbing, reaching the Baltic Sea and thereby cutting the East Prussia group off from the rest of the German Army.

The Baltic Fleet (commander—Admiral V. F. Tributs; member of the Military Council—Admiral N. K. Smirnov) was ordered to give the troops advancing along the coast air and artillery support. Moreover, it had to land task forces, continue destroying enemy warships and transports in the Baltic and prevent the enemy from evacuating troops, weapons and loot.

The Soviet forces committed to this operation consisted of more than 1,600,000 effectives, including the logistical units. They had nearly 21,500 field guns and mortars of 76-mm calibre and higher, 3,800 tanks and self-propelled guns, and over 3,000 aircraft. This enabled the Soviet Command to form powerful assault groups capable of piercing the enemy's well-prepared defences. The assault group of the 3rd Byelorussian Front, for instance, consisted of General I. I. Lyudnikov's 39th Army, General Krylov's 5th Army, General A. A. Luchinsky's 28th Army, General K. N. Galitsky's 11th Guards Army, and two tank corps. The attack on Tilsit was made by the 43rd Army under General A. P. Beloborodov* and troops of the 39th Army, and on Darkehmen by the 2nd Guards Army under General P. G. Chanchibadze. The 31st Army commanded by General P. G. Shafranov was ordered to dig in and to be ready to mount an offensive. The land forces were supported by the 1st Air Army under General T. T. Khryukin and the 3rd Air Army under General N. F. Papivin.

The assault group of the 2nd Byelorussian Front consisted of General A. V. Gorbatov's 3rd Army, General N. I. Gusev's 48th Army, General I. I. Fedyuninsky's 2nd Strike Army and General V. T. Volsky's 5th Guards Tank Army. The second blow was struck by the 65th Army commanded by General P. I. Batov and the 70th Army under General V. S. Popov. Advancing in the direction of Grudziadz and Torun at the juncture of the two fronts, these armies carried out the important operational task of ensuring reliable co-operation between the two fronts during the January offensive and thereby gave solid cover to the troops operating in the Warsaw-Berlin direction. General I. T. Grishin's 49th Army advancing on Ortelsburg provided the assault group with cover in the north. The 50th Army under General I. V. Boldin took up defensive positions. The land forces were supported by the 4th Air Army under General K. A. Vershinin.

The offensive was started on January 13 by the 3rd Byelorussian Front and was joined on the next day by the 2nd Byelorussian Front. They crushed the enemy's defences and in six days advanced 30-60 kilometres, destroying three and badly mauling several other enemy divisions.

In face of this assault the Germans began to withdraw. They were pursued by Soviet troops, who pushed ahead as fast as possible in order to dismember the enemy group. On January 26 General V. T. Volsky's tanks reached the Baltic coast north of Elbing, and soon afterwards the coast in the vicinity of Elbing and Marienburg was gained by troops commanded by Generals N. I. Gusev and I. I. Fedyuninsky. They cut off the escape route of the East Prussia group. Almost simultaneously, units of the 65th and 70th armies, which were advancing on the Front's left wing, reached the lower Vistula and secured a bridgehead on its western bank, while troops of the neighbouring 1st Byelorussian Front captured the strong fortress of Bydgoszcz on the Vistula.

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* On January 19, the 43rd Army was transferred from the 1st Baltic to the 3rd Byelorussian Front.

The enemy's attempts to counter-attack with the aim of pushing back the Soviet units that had reached the sea and relieve the East Prussia group were foiled. Soviet troops consolidated their positions on the Baltic coast.

After destroying the enemy Tilsit group, troops of the 3rd Byelorussian Front pressed forward towards Königsberg. On January 30 they by-passed the city in the north and south and seized a considerable portion of the Samland Peninsula. The Front's left-wing armies captured the entire region of the Masurian lakes. At the same time, the 1st Baltic Front, operating on the right wing and ensuring the operation of the 3rd Byelorussian Front from the north, drove the enemy out of the major port and city of Klaipeda, thus completing the liberation of Lithuania.

By gaining the Baltic coast the two Byelorussian fronts split the East Prussia group into three parts. Four enemy divisions continued putting up a resistance in the Samland Peninsula. Five divisions and fortress units were surrounded in Königsberg. Nearly 20 divisions, with their backs to the sea, were fighting southwest of that city. On February 9, the 2nd and 3rd Byelorussian fronts were still short of their objective. The East Prussia group was split but not destroyed.

The fighting in East Prussia continued in February and March, the operation being taken over by the 3rd Byelorussian Front (the 2nd Byelorussian Front was now operating in Eastern Pomerania).

On February 9 GHQ ordered the 3rd Byelorussian Front to complete the enemy's destruction southwest of Königsberg not later than February 20-25. Aircraft of the Baltic Fleet carried out mass raids on the ports of Liepaja, Pillau (Baltiisk) and Danzig. The sea approaches to these ports were mined and enemy warships and transports bringing supplies and reinforcements to the Kurland and East Prussia groups were attacked and sunk. The 3rd Byelorussian Front concentrated mainly on annihilating the largest enemy force, the Heilsberg group.

The destruction of the Heilsberg group was started on February 10. There was extremely heavy, protracted fighting. The enemy put up a desperate resistance, making good use of his defence installations. By February 20 Soviet troops had advanced some 60 kilometres in the centre and only 10-15 kilometres on the flanks. The task which they had been set was not carried out.

The road to victory was not an easy one. Twice Hero of the Soviet Union I. D. Chernyakhovsky was mortally wounded when he was driving from one unit to another. In the obituary published by the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Soviet Government it was stated: "...Commander of the 3rd Byelorussian Front General of the Army Chernyakhovsky Ivan Danilovich, true son of the Bolshevik Party and one of the finest leaders of the Red Army, died on February 18 from a serious wound received on the battlefield in East Prussia. In the person of Comrade Chernyakhovsky the State has lost one of its most talented young military leaders, brought to the forefront by the Patriotic War."

Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky, who had been co-ordinating the fronts in the Baltic area and in East Prussia, was appointed to the command of the 3rd Byelorussian Front on February 20.* In order to place the troops

* Three days previously A. M. Vasilevsky had been appointed member of General Headquarters of the Supreme Command. On February 17, 1945, the State Defence Committee endorsed the composition of GHQ: Supreme Commander-in-Chief and People's Commissar for Defence J. V. Stalin, Deputies of the People's Commissar

in East Prussia under a single command, GHQ dissolved the 1st Baltic Front on February 24, using its armies to form the Samland group with General I. K. Bagramyan in command. This group became part of the 3rd Byelorussian Front.

On March 13, after thorough preparations, Soviet troops resumed their assault against the enemy Heilsberg group. They fought their way to the Baltic coast between Königsberg and the Frisching River, splitting the enemy group flattened against the sea into several parts and beginning its complete destruction. Soviet aircraft continuously bombed the enemy, levelling his strongpoints to the ground. More than 93,000 enemy troops were killed and over 46,000 prisoners were taken in only the period between March 13 and 29.

While the Heilsberg group was being destroyed, the 43rd, 50th, 11th Guards and 39th armies prepared to storm Königsberg. They had a total of over 137,000 men, 5,000 field guns and mortars, and 538 tanks and self-propelled guns. Although they did not outnumber the enemy in infantry, they had 1.3:1 superiority in artillery and 5:1 superiority in tanks; their air strength consisted of nearly 2,500 aircraft, while the enemy had only 170 combat planes.

The offensive was launched on April 6 after a powerful artillery barrage and a series of heavy air-raids. The enemy put up a fierce resistance, counter-attacking time and again. But with artillery and air cover, Soviet infantry and tanks pushed forward, dislodging the nazis from their numerous strongpoints. The ring round the enemy garrison was steadily tightened. In this battle aircraft played a particularly large role, flying more than 6,000 missions on April 8 alone. Front-line and long-range bombers as well as naval air units commanded by Air Marshals A. A. Novikov and A. Y. Golovanov and Generals T. T. Khryukin, N. F. Papivin and M. I. Samokhin inflicted crippling blows on the German troops, reducing forts and reinforced-concrete weapons emplacements to heaps of rubble.

Battering down the enemy's dogged resistance, Soviet troops entered Königsberg and on April 9 forced the garrison to surrender. The enemy lost nearly 134,000 officers and men, of whom 42,000 were killed and about 92,000 taken prisoner.

The Königsberg victory enabled the Soviet troops to destroy the remnants of the East Prussia group trapped in the Samland Peninsula. The attack was started on April 13 and Fischhausen, a powerful centre of resistance, was overrun on April 17 after bloody fighting. The remainder of the German force entrenched itself in the coastal fortress of Pillau. This fortress, the last nazi strongpoint in East Prussia, fell in the evening of April 25 after six days of heavy fighting.

The enemy's defeat in East Prussia had a tremendous military and political impact. In that area 25 German divisions were destroyed and another 12 routed. Nazi Germany's military strength was further weakened by the fall of the East Prussia bastion, the breeding ground of the reactionary Junkers. This delivered the Soviet Union and People's Poland from the threat of German military attack from that area.

After nazi Germany's capitulation, the leaders of the Big Three Allied powers met in conference in Potsdam and adopted a decision transferring

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for Defence G. K. Zhukov, A. M. Vasilevsky and N. A. Bulganin, Chief of the General Staff A. I. Antonov, and Commander-in-Chief of the Navy and People's Commissar for the Navy N. G. Kuznetsov.

Königsberg and the adjoining regions to the Soviet Union and the rest of East Prussia to the Polish People's Republic.

The Red Army defeated the enemy in East Prussia in long and heavy fighting, in which Soviet troops suffered considerable losses. In only the period from January 13 to February 10—the offensive continued for three and a half months—the 3rd Byelorussian Front lost more than one-fifth of its effectives and the losses of the 2nd Byelorussian Front totalled 15.4 per cent of its officers and men. The enemy's formidable system of defences was crushed and his forces were annihilated as a result of the mass heroism of Soviet troops, of their patriotism and ardent devotion to the Communist Party.

4. AT THE SOUTHERN APPROACHES OF NAZI GERMANY

Parallel with the victorious offensive in Poland and East Prussia, the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts continued active operations in the western regions of Hungary. In mid-February, after Budapest was captured GHQ turned these fronts against the main forces of the enemy Army Group South with the capture of Bratislava, Brna, Vienna and Nagy-Kanizsa as the objective. Troops of both fronts were given the task of liberating Southern Czechoslovakia and capturing the Vienna industrial region with its aircraft, tank, aircraft-engine and munitions plants. The start of this offensive was set for March 15.

In that area the enemy, as it later transpired, had been preparing for vigorous action. Attaching tremendous importance to Western Hungary and to Austria, the German Command planned to inflict a counter-blow on the 2nd Ukrainian Front north of the Danube from the vicinity of Komarno in an easterly direction, and to follow this up with an assault by its main forces against the 3rd Ukrainian Front at Lake Balaton. The enemy hoped to prevent Soviet troops from approaching Germany's southern frontiers by smashing them in Hungary and driving them beyond the Danube.

In memoirs entitled *Reminiscences of a Soldier*, Heinz Guderian, the former Chief of the German General Staff, speaks of the objectives of the offensive in Hungary. He writes: "After the destruction of most of our fuel and lubricants plants, the High Command had at its disposal only the oilfields at Zistersdorf in Austria and in the region of Lake Balaton in Hungary. To some extent this explains why Hitler decided to transfer most of the forces that could be taken from the Western front to Hungary in order to maintain a hold on these last oil regions and on the Hungarian oil refineries, which were important equally for production and for the panzer troops and air force."

However, Hitler also had political objectives. Britain, which was making every effort to retain her influence in the Balkans, particularly Greece, had landed troops in the latter country. The German invaders were replaced by the British, who started a criminal war against the freedom-loving Greek people. The nazi clique believed that by holding up the Soviet offensive in Hungary and Yugoslavia, the German Army would give British troops the opportunity to entrench themselves in the Balkan Peninsula and "come to grips with the Russians". However, this attempt to split the anti-fascist coalition likewise failed.

On February 17 the nazis launched a sudden counter-attack against General M. S. Shumilov's 7th Guards Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Utilising their numerical superiority they pressed forward. Soviet units

suffered heavy casualties and withdrew to the left bank of the Hron River. The Soviet Command saw through the enemy's intentions: his assault on the 7th Guards Army north of the Danube was a prelude to more decisive action. The main forces were concentrated west of Budapest in preparation for a counter-offensive against the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front was ordered not to stop its preparations for an offensive in Austria and temporarily take up defensive positions. The Bulgarian 1st and the Yugoslav 3rd armies operated alongside the Soviet forces. In early March the 3rd Ukrainian Front consisted of 37 infantry and three cavalry divisions, and six Bulgarian divisions, as well as one motorised and two tank corps. These units had a total of over 400,000 men, nearly 7,000 field guns and mortars, 400 tanks and self-propelled guns, and about 1,000 aircraft. After the failure of the offensive in the Ardennes and the Vosges the enemy transferred from the Western front his 6th SS Panzer Army; this gave him a 2:1 superiority in tanks. On March 5 the Germans concentrated for their counter-offensive 31 divisions (including 11 panzer divisions), five combat groups* and one motorised brigade, totalling over 430,000 officers and men, more than 5,600 field guns and mortars, about 900 tanks and 850 aircraft.

Tempered in the crucible of battle, the Soviet troops made ready to crush the enemy before he could reach the Danube. The defensive lines built by them conformed to the requirements of the Soviet military science of those days: they were deeply echeloned and heavily fortified against tanks and artillery.

The enemy offensive commenced in the night of March 5-6 with a three-pronged attack in converging directions. The main assault was mounted by the 6th Army and the 6th SS Panzer Army in a southeasterly direction between lakes Velencei and Balaton. The 2nd Panzer Army struck eastward in the direction of Kaposvar. The third force, Army E, attacked from the right bank of the Drava River towards the northeast with the object of forming a junction with the 6th SS Panzer Army. The nazis planned to carve up the Soviet defences, surround and destroy the Soviet forces holding the region west of the Danube, gain control of the entire western bank and establish bridgeheads on the eastern bank.

The main blow, in which the enemy used nearly half of his tanks and artillery, fell on General N. A. Gagen's 26th Army and units of the 1st Guards Fortified Area, which was part of the 4th Guards Army. The heavy shelling and bombing and attacks by hundreds of tanks and assault guns failed to shake the Soviet positions. The enemy suffered enormous casualties from the well-organised artillery fire and the continuous Soviet air strikes. In the course of a single day General V. A. Sudets's 17th Air Army flew 358 missions, of which 227 were mass attacks against the enemy panzer divisions.

The Germans sent their second-echelon panzer divisions into battle, steadily building up pressure. In the narrow sector between lakes Velencei and Balaton they used nearly 250 tanks, most of which attacked along a sector only 12-15 kilometres wide. In face of this furious onslaught by a numerically superior force Soviet units were compelled temporarily to withdraw. An artillery group of 160 field guns and mortars was formed to support the 26th Army. Concentrating its fire on a three-kilometre sector it wrought havoc among the German tanks, bringing

* These were temporary groups consisting of units drawn from various formations.

them to a halt. Heavy self-propelled gun regiments and tank and motorised formations showed the nazi Tigers and Panthers no mercy.

A furious battle raged in the air as well, where the courage and airmanship of Soviet flyers told heavily against the enemy.

For eight days the enemy kept up his attempts to break the resistance of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. On March 14 he made his last desperate attempt to breach the Soviet lines, throwing into battle his last reserve, the 6th Panzer Division. The steel avalanche (nearly 300 tanks and assault guns) attacked uninterruptedly for two more days. But the Soviet lines stood firm. An enemy assault group operating east of Lake Balaton surmounted the first and, in places, the second line of defences, and in ten days advanced 20-30 kilometres in a narrow sector. The German Command fell short of its objective. Nothing came of its plans south of Lake Balaton either. In the period from March 6 to 20 the enemy drove a wedge of only 6-8 kilometres at great cost to himself. His attempts to break through to the northeast across the Drava River were not successful. Units of the Bulgarian 1st and the Yugoslav 3rd armies fought shoulder to shoulder with Soviet units in repulsing the attacks of the German Army E, inflicting serious losses on it and thereby greatly weakening the enemy forces operating in Yugoslavia.

The repelling of the German counter-offensive in the vicinity of Lake Balaton was the last major defensive action fought by the Red Army in the Second World War. There, as in the Kursk Salient, the attacks of a powerful panzer group petered out against the staunchness and courage of the Soviet troops, who created an impregnable defence. In co-operation with Bulgarian and Yugoslav troops, the Red Army honourably discharged its task. In the course of their counter-offensive the Germans lost more than 40,000 officers and men, nearly 500 tanks and assault guns, and over 300 field guns and mortars.

On March 9, while the fighting near Lake Balaton was still raging, GHQ issued fresh directives to the commanders of the two fronts, ordering them to take the offensive as soon as the enemy was brought to a complete standstill. The direction of the main thrust was changed to conform to the new situation: under the February directive it was to be aimed north of the Danube, but now it was found more expedient to strike to the south of that river. General Headquarters set the two fronts the following tasks.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front, which was to strike the main blow, had to advance to the southwest, destroy the enemy north of Lake Balaton and then drive towards Papa and Sopron. In this offensive it was to make use of General V. V. Glagolev's fully complemented 9th Guards Army, which had not participated in the defensive battles.

General A. V. Petrushevsky's 46th Army, which was part of the 2nd Ukrainian Front's left wing, was to move south of the Danube and, jointly with troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, advance towards the town of Győr. Upon reaching the Hron River the 2nd Ukrainian Front's right-wing armies had to form a rigid line of defences along the entire front north of the Danube.

The land forces were to be supported by the air army. The Danube Flotilla was ordered to land task forces and shell the enemy defences along the Danube.

The offensive was started on March 16 by the 3rd Ukrainian Front. Stiff resistance was encountered and on that day Soviet troops advanced only three-seven kilometres. On March 17 the action was joined by the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. The 3rd Ukrainian Front increased

its pressure. On March 19 the Front commander ordered the 6th Guards Tank Army under General A. G. Kravchenko into action.

On March 23 troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front recaptured the town of Szekesfehervar, which had been abandoned in January 1945. Advancing towards the southwest they crossed the mountains and entered the vicinity west of the town of Veszprem. General Headquarters ordered the 3rd Ukrainian Front commander to change the direction of the advance from the west to Papa, Sopron in the northwest. By March 25 this Front advanced 40-80 kilometres, reaching Papa, Devecser and Pecel. Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front pushed forward in a northerly direction towards Tovaros and on March 19 they approached the Danube, flattening the four-division-strong Esztergom-Tovaros group against that river. Jointly with the Danube Flotilla they crushed enemy resistance and captured the strongly fortified town of Esztergom. In the period from March 16 to 25 troops of the two committed fronts liquidated the enemy wedge near Lake Balaton, breached his defences and crossed the Vertes and Bakony mountains.

This enabled the 2nd Ukrainian Front to bring into the offensive its main forces operating in Slovakia north of the Danube. By March 25 the Soviet 40th and the Rumanian 4th armies, which were advancing on the Front's right wing, wiped out the last enemy bridgehead on the left bank of the Hron River. From there they pressed forward, liberating the industrial town and railway junction of Banska Bystrica, which only recently had been the centre of the Slovak national uprising. In the morning of March 25 the offensive was joined by General I. M. Managarov's 53rd Army, General M. S. Shumilov's 7th Guards Army, the Rumanian 1st Army and the 1st Guards Mechanised Cavalry Group under General I. A. Pliyev, with Bratislava as their main objective. This attack was supported by Slovak and Soviet partisans, who wrought havoc with the enemy's communication lines and harassed his forces.

Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, was liberated on April 4. The rapid advance of the Soviet troops and the determined actions of the partisans prevented the nazis from carrying away the bullion of the Slovak National Bank. This bullion became the property of the liberated people. As in all other towns in Czechoslovakia, the population of Bratislava gave an enthusiastic welcome to their liberators and wholeheartedly thanked the Soviet Union for its assistance to the Slovak people.

The Red Army kept up its advance throughout April. The right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front rolled into the Vienna Plain, gaining the approaches of the Austrian capital, while the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front reached the Czechoslovak-Austrian frontier on April 4. Soviet troops covered as much as 25-30 kilometres in a single day.

The mauled German armies withdrew towards Vienna, their retreat at times turning into a stampede. Hungarian units disintegrated as they drew nearer to the Austrian frontier. Many troops went to the forests and mountains where they joined the partisans. Others surrendered en masse. In the course of only three days troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front took 45,000 Hungarian officers and men prisoner.

The German occupation of Hungary ended on April 4. A new, democratic order was established throughout the country. Meetings were held in the towns and villages where the working people spoke of their gratitude to the Red Army. "On this historic day," declared a resolution adopted by the workers of the former Mannfred-Weiss plant, "we solemnly vow to be worthy of the men of the Red Army, mobilise all our strength and knowledge in order to meet the orders of the Red

Army ahead of time and thereby make our contribution to the last battles."

In the period of Hungary's liberation, the Provisional Government, which was formed in December 1944, embarked on economic rehabilitation.

The principal condition for consolidating the democratic system was the further ideological, political and organisational strengthening of the Hungarian Communist Party, which was in the vanguard of the drive for revolutionary reforms. It won increasing influence among the people, made every effort to activate them politically and enlisted them into the building of the new life. Here an important role was played by the local national committees, which ensured co-operation among the parties in the Hungarian National Front. At the enterprises the trade unions set up local committees, which were soon vested with authority to implement workers' control over production and over the management. Production and land distribution committees were formed in the countryside. On March 15, 1945, the Government decreed the abolition of the big landed estates and granted land to the peasants.

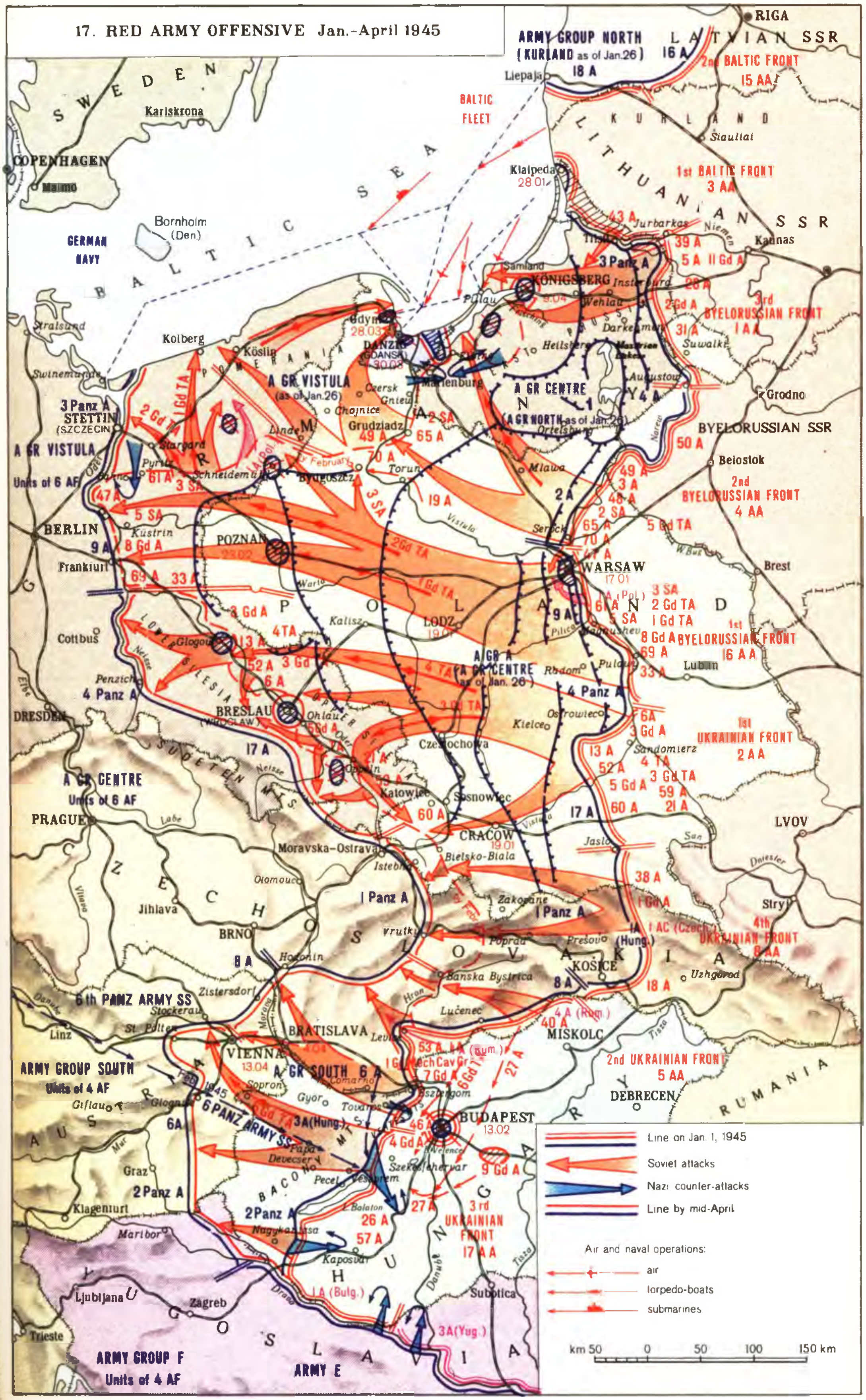
Survivals of fascism had to be uprooted and traitors had to be sternly punished in order to strengthen the popular rule. To this end were organised Councils of People's Judges formed of representatives of the parties in the Hungarian National Front and of the trade unions. These councils made a large contribution towards the defeat of the internal reaction.

A sharp political struggle flared up in the process of forming the new Hungarian Army. Under the armistice agreement the Provisional Government pledged to raise at least eight divisions, which would help to complete Hungary's liberation and participate in the final defeat of nazi Germany. This pledge was sabotaged by Prime Minister Miklos and War Minister Vörös, with the result that it was unfulfilled. Only the Communist Party energetically campaigned for enlistment in the new army. On its insistence the War Ministry finally set about raising an army, but only two divisions were formed. However, of these only one was sent to the front and when it got there the war was over.

The Red Army helped to rejuvenate the country and to foster the creative initiative of the Hungarian people. The Red Army helped the Hungarian people to build roads and bridges and restore the factories. It supplied them with means of transportation and fuel for tractors, and in many areas it gave the peasants even draught animals. The Soviet people were themselves experiencing a food shortage. Nonetheless they gave all the help they could to the Hungarian people, sending them 15,000 tons of grain, 3,000 tons of meat and 2,000 tons of sugar in March 1945.

The Red Army's victories further activated Hungary's democratic forces and enhanced the influence of the working class. These victories made the working class confident that it would cope with the task of building a new Hungarian state. The Hungarian people highly assessed the services of the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces. The Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic begins with the words: "The Armed Forces of the great Soviet Union liberated our country from nazi German tyranny, smashed the anti-popular state power of the landowners and the big bourgeoisie and opened for the Hungarian working people the road to democratic development."

After expelling the nazi invaders from Hungary, Soviet troops embarked on the liberation of Austria and her capital Vienna. The fighting at the approaches of Vienna was extremely heavy. In order to crush the enemy's



17. RED ARMY OFFENSIVE Jan.-April 1945

desperate resistance, Vienna was bypassed on the south by the 3rd Ukrainian Front and on the north by the 2nd Ukrainian Front. On April 6 advance elements of both fronts broke into the outskirts of the Austrian capital and engaged the enemy in street fighting.

Aiming to intimidate the Austrian people the nazis spread the rumour that the Red Army was hunting all members of the Austrian National-Socialist Party. They wanted to evacuate the population to Germany by force and turn Vienna into a centre of resistance like Budapest. But this was offset by an appeal published on April 6 by the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. This appeal, which greatly impressed the population of Vienna, said in part: "People of Vienna.... The hour of the liberation of Vienna, capital of Austria, has come, but the retreating German troops are out to turn the city into a battlefield just as they did in Budapest. This threatens Vienna and its inhabitants with the same destruction and horrors that were inflicted by the Germans on Budapest and its inhabitants." Further, the appeal emphasised that the Red Army wanted to save Vienna and her historical monuments of culture and art from destruction. The people, it said, had to remain in the city and do everything in their power to prevent the nazis from mining it. The appeal ended with the words: "People of Vienna, help the Red Army liberate your city and make your contribution to the liberation of Austria from nazi tyranny." The response was immediate, and many Viennese took part in the fighting against the invaders.

On April 9, 1945, when the fighting for Vienna was at its height, the Soviet Government made a statement vis-à-vis Austria. "The Soviet Government," it said, "does not pursue the aim of acquiring any part of Austrian territory or changing the social system in Austria. It abides by the Allied point of view on the independence of Austria as defined in the Moscow Declaration. It will implement this Declaration. It will help to abolish the regime planted by the nazi invaders and restore democratic order and institutions in Austria. The Supreme Command of the Red Army has ordered Soviet troops to assist the Austrian population in achieving this aim."

This statement, which played a very big role in hastening the end of the fighting in Austria, was received with sincere satisfaction by the people.

Vienna was cleared of the enemy on April 13. The Vienna Medal, instituted by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, was awarded to more than 268,000 troops.

While the battle for Vienna was still raging, the main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (including the Rumanian 1st and 4th armies) advanced in Czechoslovakia, where by mid-April they reached the Eastern Alps. There their offensive was stopped. The Bulgarian 1st Army, which was operating along the Drava River, liberated Yugoslav territory between the Drava and the Mur.

Thus, April 15 saw Soviet troops on the line running along Morava, Stockerau, St. Pölten, the area west of Glögnitz and east of Maribor and the left bank of the Drava. They were ordered to dig in along that line. In the course of 30 days troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts had fought their way to a depth of 150-250 kilometres, smashing 32 enemy divisions, taking more than 130,000 prisoners and capturing or destroying over 1,300 tanks and assault guns and 2,250 field guns.

After the Vienna operation, troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front resumed their westward advance and early in May gained Linz and Klagenfurt, where they made contact with Allied troops.

This marked the collapse of the doggedly defended nazi "southern

fortress", and of the enemy's attempt to organise prolonged resistance in Hungary and Austria. The Red Army drove the enemy out of Hungary and a considerable portion of Czechoslovakia and opened the road to Prague, capital of Czechoslovakia. Most of Austria was liberated. The Red Army held the southern approaches to nazi Germany. The international position of all the Southeast European countries was strengthened.

The liberation of Vienna and most of Austria by Soviet troops was of great political significance. The Red Army was jubilantly welcomed by the Austrian people, who knew that it would help them to restore a free and independent state. The Austrian Provisional Government was formed on April 27, 1945, and on the same day it proclaimed the country's independence. Austria's state sovereignty, abolished by the nazi invaders in 1938, was thus restored.

In Western Europe, while the Red Army was advancing along the entire front from the Baltic to Yugoslavia, the US and British forces operated in accordance with their strategic plans. On February 8, 1945, they launched an offensive which by March 25 carried them across the Rhine. Encountering little resistance, they advanced eastward and by April 1 surrounded a German group in the Ruhr industrial region. Two weeks later, this group of nearly 325,000 troops surrendered without making a serious effort to fight.

Developing their drive eastward and encountering no resistance, the American and British troops reached the Elbe in the first half of April. Almost simultaneously with this offensive in Western Germany, the Allies started decisive battles in North Italy, taking the offensive on April 9 and advancing 15-20 kilometres by the middle of the month.

The Americans and British thus achieved considerable success in Western Europe. The enemy was in no position to offer serious resistance because his main forces were on the Soviet-German front where they were suffering one defeat after another.

During the first three months of 1945 the Red Army fought and won 120 major battles, and each victory was honoured with a gun salute in Moscow. Hundreds of units were named after the towns liberated by them. Many thousands of troops were decorated with Orders and medals. More than 3,500 soldiers of all ranks were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and of this number 37 received that title twice.

5. THE CRIMEA CONFERENCE

Significant developments took place in international relations in the period of the Red Army's victorious winter campaign. A three-power conference was held at Yalta, the Crimea, on February 4-11, 1945. It was attended by J. V. Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Foreign Ministers V. M. Molotov, Edward Stettinius and Anthony Eden, and representatives of the General Staffs.

At the time the conference opened Soviet troops had reached the Oder and were 60-70 kilometres away from Berlin. The enemy East Prussia group had been cut off from the rest of the German forces, and in Hungary the destruction of the enemy surrounded in Budapest was being completed. As regards the Allied armies, they were about 500 kilometres away from Berlin and had not yet resumed their offensive. The Red Army's overwhelming victories could not but affect the proceedings at the conference. On this score the British magazine *Economist* wrote that "the actual subject-matter of the conference is being decided not in the

Chancelleries of the nations, but on the battlefields of Pomerania and Brandenburg".

The conference started its work with a review of the military situation and agreed on the schedule, scale and co-ordination of fresh powerful Allied offensives in the centre of Germany.

In the same way as the victories of the Red Army, particularly its campaign of January 1945, influenced the military decisions of the conference, these decisions influenced the subsequent course of the war. As a result of close co-ordination the Allied troops soon mounted an offensive in the West and the Red Army prepared for the decisive blow at Berlin while continuing its advance.

The task before the Three Big Powers of the anti-fascist coalition was to complete the defeat of the common enemy and establish foundations for lasting peace. It was necessary to reach agreement on control over Germany after her capitulation, on the policy towards the liberated countries of Europe and on the speediest establishment of an international peace-keeping organisation.

Much of the conference's attention was given to the German problem. The leaders of the three powers endorsed the agreements on occupation zones in Germany, the administration of Greater Berlin and the control mechanism in Germany as drawn up by the European Consultative Commission. Germany was to be divided into zones of occupation: the eastern zone was to be occupied by Soviet troops, the northwestern by British troops and the southwestern by United States troops.* The line where Soviet troops would form contact with the US-British forces was to be the boundary between the Soviet and the Western occupation zones. Greater Berlin was to be occupied by the Armed Forces of the three powers. In the agreement it was stated that supreme power in Germany would be exercised by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the USSR, the USA and Britain, each in his occupation zone. On questions concerning Germany as a whole, the Commanders-in-Chief were to act jointly as members of the Supreme Control Organ. When the German problem was examined, the US and British delegations submitted, as they had done at the Teheran Conference, a plan for the dismemberment of Germany. They held that this was necessary in order to ensure international security, but in fact they were worried not so much about the security of nations as about the interests of the big imperialist monopolies. They regarded Germany's partition and the seizure of her major industrial centres as the most radical means of combating their German rival. This plan was emphatically opposed by the Soviet Union, which submitted a programme for the solution of the German problem based not only on the interests of the people of the Soviet Union and other European peoples, who had been the victims of German militarist aggression time and again, but also on the national aspirations of the German people themselves. Its basic provisions were: the destruction of Germany's war industry potential; the complete uprooting of fascism and nazism; the punishment of the war criminals; the reimbursement by Germany of the losses inflicted on the peoples of Europe; and, lastly, the creation of a democratic, independent and peace-loving Germany.

The Soviet Union had never identified the German people with the nazi clique. On Soviet initiative the conference adopted an extremely

* At Yalta agreement was reached that a French zone would be apportioned from the British and United States zones. Greater Berlin was incorporated in the Soviet zone, and owing solely to the fact that it was to be the headquarters of the Allied Control Council it was subject to four-power occupation.

important decision, which stated: "It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again disturb the peace of the world.... It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany." This mirrored the basic demands and hopes of the freedom-loving nations, who wanted a lasting post-war peace.

The question of reparations was likewise examined. The Soviet Government wanted Germany at least partially to reimburse the losses inflicted on the Soviet Union. However, it took into account Germany's economic position and the interests of the German people and therefore suggested setting the total sum of reparations at 20,000 million dollars, of which only half—an insignificant portion of the losses suffered by the Soviet Union in the war—was to go to the USSR. After having initially raised objections, the USA and Britain saw the justice of the Soviet proposals and in the end agreement was reached on the general principles for resolving the reparations problem and on the method of collecting the reparations. It was decided to set up an inter-Allied reparations commission in Moscow.

The conference adopted the very important Declaration of Liberated Europe, which envisaged joint action by the USSR, the USA and Britain in resolving the political and economic problems of liberated Europe in conformity to democratic principles. The Allied powers solemnly declared that their purpose was to establish in Europe an order that would enable the peoples "to destroy the last vestiges of nazism and fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice".

Why did the Western powers sign an agreement that fully accorded with the anti-fascist, liberation nature of the war? Chiefly because they had to reckon with the Soviet Union, whose international prestige had risen immeasurably. Moreover, in the course of the long and sanguinary war the people began to play a bigger role in political life. The democratic forces had grown stronger and had fought with determination to restore the national independence and sovereignty of their countries. This could not be ignored, and the US and British governments declared that they favoured granting all nations the right to decide their own destiny. However, wherever possible they attempted to restore reactionary regimes. They succeeded in Greece, and tried to do the same in Poland.

At the time the Crimea Conference was convened the Polish problem was one of the most important issues in inter-Allied relations. Small wonder, therefore, that it occupied a considerable place in the talks between the Heads of State in the Crimea. The conference had to decide the question of Poland's frontiers, as well as the composition of the future Government. The demarcation of Poland's eastern frontiers did not cause any essential differences because earlier the USA and Britain had, on the whole, agreed with the Soviet proposal that this frontier should run along the so-called Curzon line.* Moreover, no objection to the Polish-German frontier running along the Oder and the Neisse was raised by the US and British governments at the Teheran Conference or in the subsequent correspondence. At the Crimea Conference, however, they sought to tie this question up with the problem of the composition of the Polish Government. Provided the émigré Government was installed in power they had no objections to the Oder-Neisse frontier, but if this Government was rejected by the Polish people they considered that the

* The Curzon line was recommended in 1919 by the Supreme Council of the Entente as Poland's eastern frontier. It passed somewhat east of the Soviet western frontier, established in September 1939 after the Red Army had liberated Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia.

frontier had to be moved much farther east. That explained why they first wanted agreement on the composition of the Polish Government.

Completely ignoring the socio-economic and political changes that had taken place in Poland, the US and British governments refused to recognise the Polish Provisional Government. They insisted that the new Government should be formed on the basis of the émigré Government. The Soviet Union was categorically opposed to this. It was finally decided that the Provisional Government would be reorganised to include democratic leaders both in Poland and abroad. The émigré Government was not even mentioned in the decision. The Curzon line with individual deviations of 5.8 kilometres in Poland's favour was established as Poland's eastern frontier. As regards her western frontier, the decision limited itself to the statement that "Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the North and West".

The decisions adopted by the conference on the Polish problem were a triumph of Soviet diplomacy and of all democratic forces. They frustrated the calculations of Polish and international reaction to tear Poland away from the democratic camp.

The question of Yugoslavia was also considered at the conference. As early as November 1944, Josip Broz Tito, Chairman of the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia, and J. Subacic, Prime Minister of the émigré Government in London, had reached agreement on the formation of a new Yugoslav Government. However, the émigré Government did all in its power to delay the fulfilment of this agreement. The USA and Britain agreed with the Soviet view that the new Yugoslav Government had to be formed at the earliest possible date.

Also of great importance was the three-power decision on setting up an international peace-keeping organisation, whose principles had been worked out in 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks, USA.* The date and place of the United Nations Conference were named—April 25, 1945, San Francisco. Agreement was reached on the voting procedure in the Security Council and on the principle of unanimity among the Great Powers in issues concerning peace and security.

The Crimea Conference drew up the Declaration headed "Unity for Peace as for War", in which the three powers solemnly pledged to preserve and enhance under peace-time conditions the unity of action that had made the victory of the United Nations possible. They told all mankind that "this is a sacred obligation which our Governments owe to our peoples and to all the peoples of the world".

The question of the Soviet Union entering the war in the Far East was also examined. True to her Allied duty and seeking to hasten the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union undertook to join the war against Japan two or three months after Germany surrendered.

Such were the major decisions of the Crimea Conference, which had a far-reaching impact. It demonstrated that the leading powers of the anti-fascist coalition—the USSR, the USA and Britain—had a very wide field for fruitful co-operation. What differences there were did not prevent them from reaching agreement on vital questions of the conduct of the war and of the establishment of peace.

The Crimea decisions were evidence that the anti-fascist coalition had grown stronger; they facilitated the success of that coalition's armed forces at the concluding stage of the war.

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* See Chapter 20.

Chapter Nineteen

DOWNFALL OF NAZI GERMANY

1. DEFEAT OF THE BERLIN GROUP

The spring of 1945 saw not only Soviet troops but also Allied forces operating in Germany proper. The Red Army was 60 kilometres away from Berlin, while advance units of the American and British armies had by mid-April reached the Elbe in the Hamburg-Wittenberg-Magdeburg sector. Farther, the front extended to Nuremberg and Stuttgart. A distance of 100-120 kilometres remained between the Allies and Berlin (Map 18). The final defeat of nazi Germany was eagerly awaited by the nations.

The Red Army laid careful preparations for the final blow. Soviet troops knew that the road to victory lay through Berlin.

The nazis mobilised all their remaining resources, hoping to hold the capital and avoid unconditional surrender. The German Command continued to use its main land and air strength against the Red Army. On April 15 the Germans had 214 divisions (including 34 panzer and 15 motorised divisions) and 14 brigades on the Soviet-German front. No serious opposition was offered the American and British forces which had reached the Elbe. Operating against them were a total of 60 German divisions, of which only five were panzer divisions. The enemy infantry divisions were understrength. The five panzer divisions had only about 200 battleworthy tanks between them.

In its preparations to repulse the Soviet offensive, the German Command built a system of powerful defences in the east. The Germans made skilful use of the stone buildings in the towns and villages, as well as of the rivers, canals and lakes. The first line of defences stretched along the Oder and the Neisse. The Oder is nearly 10 metres deep and about 250 metres wide. In its lower reaches it forks out into two broad and independent branches, with a lowland 3-5 kilometres wide between them. In early April this lowland was inundated by spring floods. The Neisse is 40-45 metres wide and 2-5 metres deep.

The nazi defences round Berlin were organised in depth and densely manned. Strong centres of resistance were created in Stettin (Szczecin), Garz, Schwedt, Frankfurt-on-Oder, Guben, Forst, Cottbus and Spremberg. Special attention was given to the defences against the Küstrin bridgehead.

Berlin was turned into a powerful fortified area. There the defences were directed by a special headquarters. Around the capital the Germans built three rings of defences—outer, inner and city proper, while the city itself was divided into nine defence sectors: eight along the perimeter and one in the centre. The engineering works in this central sector were prepared very carefully. Many of the blocks of houses

were battalion centres of resistance. In the city there were more than 400 reinforced-concrete installations, the biggest of these being six-storey bunkers with nearly a thousand troops in each.

New units were hastily formed for the defence of Berlin. In January-March 1945 even boys of 16 and 17 were conscripted. The volkssturm detachments consisted of boys and old men. Tank-destroyer detachments consisting of members of the Hitler youth organisation were formed.

The troops assigned to defend the approaches of Berlin and the city itself were united into four armies, of which the 3rd Panzer and the 9th armies belonged to Army Group Vistula, and the 4th Panzer and the 17th armies to Army Group Centre. These armies consisted of 48 infantry, 4 panzer and 10 motorised divisions, 37 separate infantry regiments, 98 separate infantry battalions and a large number of separate artillery units and formations. They had 1,000,000 men, 10,400 field guns and mortars, 1,500 tanks and assault guns and 3,300 combat aircraft. The troops were armed with more than 3,000,000 panzerfausts. The Berlin garrison had more than 200,000 men, and the Army High Command had a reserve of eight divisions.

The German Air Force, which consisted predominately of fighter planes, prepared for a desperate battle. Around the capital there was a large network of airfields and radar posts keeping Soviet aircraft under constant observation and sending interceptors against them.

Nazi propaganda did its utmost to put the population and troops in fear of the "horrors of Bolshevism". Punitive measures were taken to compel the Germans to fight to the end.

While making every effort to halt the advance of the Red Army, Germany's rulers attempted to come to terms with the US and British ruling circles and thereby avoid unconditional surrender. They still hoped for a split in the anti-fascist coalition. The nazi strategists wanted to avert Berlin's capture by the Red Army and were prepared to surrender the city to American or British troops.

The Western Allies, too, counted on capturing Berlin. Documents and facts bear out that although the principal powers in the anti-fascist coalition had agreed on operations in Germany, under which plan Berlin was to be in the zone of operation of Soviet troops, certain circles among the Allies, chiefly the rulers of Britain, were eager to enter Berlin before the Red Army. Contrary to the Yalta agreement, Churchill insisted on a British advance east of the Elbe. On April 1, shortly before Vienna was seized by Soviet troops, he wrote to Roosevelt: "The Russian armies will no doubt overrun all Austria and enter Vienna. If they also take Berlin will not their impression be that they have been the overwhelming contributor to our common victory. . . . I therefore consider that from a political standpoint we should march as far east into Germany as possible, and that should Berlin be in our grasp we should certainly take it." In a letter to Fieldmarshal Montgomery as early as September 15, 1944, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Allied Supreme Commander-in-Chief in Western Europe, wrote: "Berlin is plainly the main objective. In my mind there is no doubt that we must concentrate all our energy and strength for a swift leap towards Berlin."

Thus, Churchill a little over a month before, and Eisenhower eight months before the Red Army took Berlin were firmly determined to be the first in the German capital. But circumstances ordained otherwise.

The Anglo-US offensive, started on March 23 from the Rhine, initially proceeded successfully. In the centre of the offensive front Allied forward units seized bridgeheads on the Elbe in the vicinity of Wittenberg and

Magdeburg. The troops advancing on the flanks, in the north and south, lagged behind. The units which had captured bridgeheads encountered resistance. With the main forces and logistics echelons far behind them, they were unable to follow up their success or withstand the German counter-attacks. The bridgehead at Magdeburg was abandoned. On April 14, re-emphasising, in a report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that it would be "extremely desirable to strike in the direction of Berlin", Eisenhower pointed out: "In view of the urgent need for offensive operations in the north and south, the offensive on Berlin must be relegated to second place and further developments must be awaited." The strategic situation thus compelled the Anglo-US Command to give up its intention of launching a direct assault on Berlin and taking that city before it could be reached by Soviet troops. Harry Hopkins, one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's closest advisers, said: "... We would have taken Berlin had we been able to do so."

The Red Army, on the other hand, had everything it needed to strike the final blow at nazi Germany. The task before it was to crush the enemy Berlin group and capture Berlin as quickly as possible. General Headquarters and the Front commanders planned the Berlin operation gradually as the troops drew closer to the German capital.

Recalling the details of the preparations for the Berlin operation, Marshal G. K. Zhukov spoke of the high level of strategic and operational art which had by that time been achieved by GHQ and the General Staff. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief Stalin directed the preparations for this concluding stage of the operation firmly and ably.

On instructions from GHQ the military councils of the 1st and 2nd Byelorussian and the 1st Ukrainian fronts drafted their suggestions. A conference of the commanders of these fronts was held at GHQ on April 1-3. The operational plan charted jointly by them gave every consideration to the situation and to the need for ending the war as soon as possible. The entire Berlin group was to be encircled, split and destroyed piecemeal. The plan called for powerful frontal assaults of the enemy defences. After the capture of Berlin the Soviet troops were to reach the Elbe and link up with the Anglo-US forces. The three above-mentioned fronts, part of the Baltic Fleet and the Dnieper Flotilla were committed to this operation.

The 1st Byelorussian Front (commander—Marshal G. K. Zhukov; member of the Military Council—General K. F. Telegin) was given the task of annihilating the enemy holding the eastern approaches of Berlin, seizing the city and reaching the Elbe not later than 12-15 days after the start of the operation. The Front's forces were divided into three groups.

The group striking the main blow at Berlin in the centre from the Küstrin bridgehead consisted of four combined and two tank armies: General F. I. Perkhorovich's 47th Army, General V. I. Kuznetsov's 3rd Strike Army, General N. E. Berzarin's 5th Strike Army, General V. I. Chuikov's 8th Guards Army, General M. Y. Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Army and General S. I. Bogdanov's 2nd Guards Tank Army. The conditions for bringing the tank armies into battle were to be created by the combined armies. Berlin was to be captured on the sixth day. On the eighth day the 3rd Strike Army and the 9th Tank Corps were to reach the area west of Berlin, and on the eleventh day the 47th Army was to gain the Elbe. Moreover, the assault group included General A. V. Gorbatov's 3rd Army, which formed the Front's second echelon. The northwestern part of Berlin was to be taken by the 2nd Guards Tank Army and the southwestern and southern parts of the city by the 1st Guards Tank Army.

Two ancillary assaults were launched from north and south of Küstrin. The first—by the 61st Army under General P. A. Belov and the Wojsko Polskie 1st Army under General S. G. Poplawski—in the general direction of Eberswalde and Sandau, and the second—by the 69th Army under General V. Y. Kolpakchi and the 33rd Army under General V. D. Tsvetayev—in the general direction of Fürstenwalde and Brandenburg. The 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps operated jointly with the 33rd Army. The Dnieper Flotilla supported the land forces and protected ferries across the Oder.

The assignment of the 1st Ukrainian Front (commander—Marshal I. S. Konev; member of the Military Council—General K. V. Krainyukov) was to destroy the enemy group in the vicinity of Cottbus and south of Berlin; not later than on the 10th-12th day of the operation seize the Beelitz-Wittenberg line and move along the Elbe up to Dresden. GHQ's directive of April 3, 1945 to the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front stated: "...and further, after the capture of Berlin, have in mind an offensive on Leipzig. The main blow by the five combined and two tank armies is to be struck ... in the general direction of Spremberg and Belzig" (30 kilometres south of Brandenburg). The plan was, thus, that the 1st Ukrainian Front should strike its main blow some 50 kilometres south of Berlin. As an additional variant, GHQ provided for the possibility of turning the 1st Ukrainian Front's tank armies towards Berlin after they had passed the town of Lübben.* That was why the directive of April 8 issued by the 1st Ukrainian Front commander, in agreement with the General Staff and endorsed by GHQ, stated unequivocally: "...have in mind using part of the Front's right wing to help troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front capture the city of Berlin".

The commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front planned to strike the main blow as follows: General V. N. Gordov's 3rd Guards Army with the 25th Tank Corps, General N. P. Pukhov's 13th Army, General A. S. Zhadov's 5th Guards Army with the 4th Guards Tank Corps, General P. S. Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army and General D. D. Lelyushenko's 4th Guards Tank Army. The combined armies were ordered to force the Neisse River, break through the enemy defences and ensure the commitment of the tank armies from the Spree. On the fifth day of the operation the tank armies were to be 30-35 kilometres southwest of Berlin.

The ancillary blow was to be delivered in the general direction of Bautsen and Dresden by the Wojsko Polskie 2nd Army commanded by General K. K. Swercewski and the 52nd Army commanded by General K. A. Koroteyev. This group was to include the 1st Tank and the 7th Guards Motorised Corps.

General A. A. Luchinsky's 28th Army, which was unable to concentrate all its forces in time for the beginning of the operation, was to be sent into battle in the direction of the main blow in the course of the hostilities.

The task before the 2nd Byelorussian Front (commander—Marshal K. K. Rokossovsky; member of the Military Council—General N. Y. Sub-

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* The General Staff map showing the plan of the Berlin operation initially had the right- and left-hand demarcation lines between the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts as reaching the Elbe. General S. M. Shtemenko, who was Chief of Operations at the General Staff, recalls that when the plan was finalised "the Supreme Commander-in-Chief silently crossed out the demarcation line separating the 1st Ukrainian Front from Berlin, bringing it up to the town of Lübben (some 60 kilometres southeast of the German capital). 'Who gets in first, let him take Berlin,' he said to us later".

botin) was to force the Oder, destroy the enemy Stettin group and reach Anklam, Demmin, Malchin and Wittenberg not later than on the 12th-15th day of the operation. This would ensure the action of the 1st Byelorussian Front from the north. The main blow was to be struck from north of Schwedt in the general direction of Strelitz by cutting the enemy 3rd Panzer Army off from the rest of Army Group Vistula. The assault group consisted of three combined armies: the 65th under General P. I. Batov, the 70th under General V. S. Popov and the 49th under General I. T. Grishin, as well as the 1st, 3rd and 8th Guards tank corps, the 8th Motorised Corps and the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps.

The Baltic Fleet facilitated the advance of the 2nd Byelorussian Front along the coast and its aircraft and submarines attacked enemy sea communications between Liepaja and Rostock.

Continuous air support was provided by the 4th, 16th and 2nd air armies commanded respectively by Generals K. A. Vershinin, S. I. Rudenko and S. A. Krasovsky. In addition, Marshal A. Y. Golovanov's 18th Air Army was transferred to the 1st Byelorussian Front, which, moreover, had the support of aircraft of the Baltic Fleet.

The 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were ordered to start the offensive on April 16. The 2nd Byelorussian Front was to go into action four days later, after regrouping its forces from the region of Gdynia and Danzig to the lower reaches of the Oder.

The offensive on Berlin was to be accompanied by operations on the south wing of the Soviet-German front, by the 4th, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. Through their independent assignment of completing the liberation of Czechoslovakia they had to prevent the German Command from transferring forces to Berlin. The Red Army's offensive in April thus embraced the entire Soviet-German front and had to bring about Germany's final collapse.

When the Berlin operation was started the three committed fronts had a total of 2,500,000 men (including logistical units), more than 42,000 field guns and mortars, 6,250 tanks and self-propelled guns and 7,500 combat aircraft. Their superiority over the enemy was 2.5:1 in men, 4.2:1 in artillery, 4.1:1 in tanks and self-propelled guns, and 2.3:1 in aircraft. The principal infantry, artillery, tank and aircraft strength was concentrated in the direction of the main thrusts, and this gave still further superiority over the enemy.

During the preparations for the concluding operation of the war in Europe the number of men joining the Communist Party sharply increased. More than 2,000 officers and men of the 1st Byelorussian Front alone applied for Party membership on the eve of the offensive. This made it possible to strengthen the Party organisations in the companies, batteries and battalions. Moreover, the company Party organisations were strengthened through the transfer of Communists from other formations and logistical units. As a result, on the eve of the offensive there were from eight to 20 Party members and candidate members in every company, battalion and battery. A reserve of political instructors and company Party organisers was formed to make it possible to replace casualties.

On the eve of the offensive the Front military councils exhorted the officers and men to carry out their historic mission of defeating the enemy and victoriously ending the war. The troops were informed of the immediate objectives two hours before the attack.

Before dawn on April 16 the air over the Küstrin bridgehead was filled with the roar of thousands of field guns. In the darkness at 5 a.m. Moscow time (3 a.m. Berlin time) the artillery of the 1st Byelorussian Front

opened a deadly fire at the enemy. Bombers attacked enemy strongpoints and centres of resistance. Soon infantry with direct tank support joined in the attack with powerful searchlights sweeping the battlefield. Artillery kept up a continuous barrage, destroying the enemy defences in depth. Attack planes and bombers appeared over the battlefield at the break of dawn. Fighter planes covered the land troops and ensured the assault of the bombers. Initially, the enemy, suppressed by artillery bombardment, did not put up an organised resistance at the first line of defences. But later, recovering from the shock, the nazis fought desperately.

Mass heroism and resourcefulness were displayed by Soviet troops. Supported by artillery, men of the 88th Guards Division, 8th Guards Army, broke into enemy trenches, forcing the Germans to withdraw to new positions. Before the Germans could dig in the Guardsmen outflanked them, forcing them to withdraw again, this time to the small town of Werder. Pursuing the Germans the Guardsmen wiped them out in hand-to-hand fighting and captured the town.

Towards the evening of the first day of fighting the 23rd Guards Division, 3rd Strike Army, broke through the main line of resistance and approached a railway whose embankment had been turned into a strong position. In order to sustain the rapid rate of advance it was decided to capture this position in the night. After a short artillery bombardment the Soviet troops charged. The enemy resisted fiercely. The commander of the 1st Company, 63rd Guards Regiment, was killed. Company Party organiser Senior Sergeant L. S. Kravets took over and she led the attack. The enemy was dislodged and his position was captured. In the morning of April 17 the regiment resumed its offensive. L. S. Kravets was decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Many other soldiers distinguished themselves in these battles.

The enemy managed to check the Soviet advance at the Seelow Heights, which were part of the second belt of defences. With steep sides, these heights are difficult of access not only for tanks but also for infantry. They were pitted with trenches and foxholes and had anti-tank ditches nearly 3 metres deep and 3.5 metres wide. The approaches were under cross-fire by artillery and machine-guns. Some structures were turned into strongpoints. The roads were blocked with tree-trunks and metal beams, and the approaches to them were mined. Withdrawing to the second belt, the Germans were reinforced with fresh divisions from the reserve and also with tanks and artillery. Anti-aircraft guns, which the Germans used against tanks, had been set up on either side of the road running westward from the town of Seelow.

Heavy fighting ensued. Troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front's assault group had to make their way through many defence belts. The advance rate dropped sharply. The 1st Byelorussian Front commander's attempt to speed it up by sending tank and motorised corps into battle on the very first day did not yield the desired result. The tank corps were unable to move ahead of the infantry and found themselves stuck in exhausting battles. The enemy defences on the Seelow Heights were breached in the main sectors by the 8th Guards Army supported by the 1st Guards Tank Army only towards nightfall of April 17 after they had been pounded by artillery and aircraft.

The infantry and tank units were rendered invaluable assistance by aircraft. In the air battles over Berlin the famous Soviet ace, Thrice Hero of the Soviet Union, I. N. Kozhedub increased his score of downed enemy planes to 62.

Troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front slowly but inexorably drew closer

to Berlin. On April 21 they cut the ring motor road and entered the city's suburbs. The right wing of the assault group (47th Army and part of the 2nd Guards Tank Army) made successful progress, by-passing Berlin from the northwest.

A different situation developed in the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front. The artillery bombardment was started at 6.15 a.m. Bombers attacked the enemy's centres of resistance, communications centres and command posts with devastating effect. At the same time, a smokescreen was thrown across the entire zone, and infantry covered by artillery began forcing the Neisse. Fighter planes covered the troops from the air. The men crossed the river in boats, on rafts, over assault bridges or simply waded through the water.

While the advance infantry units were forcing the river, engineering and pontoon-bridge building units set up bridges across the Neisse, operating with such speed and efficiency that some of the bridges were completed by 9 a.m. This enabled second-echelon infantry and artillery to begin crossing the river. The pressure mounted. The enemy repeatedly counter-attacked but was beaten back each time. Towards the end of the first day the main line of enemy defences was surmounted and Soviet troops drove a wedge into the second line. Several bridges with a load capacity of nearly 60 tons now spanned the Neisse, opening the road for heavy artillery and advance tank units on the very first day of the offensive.

On April 17 Soviet troops overwhelmed the second defence line and approached the third which ran along the western bank of the Spree. The land troops were actively supported by the 2nd Air Army, bombers of the 6th Guards Air Corps preventing the enemy from taking up defence positions in the Cottbus-Spremberg sector. Soviet attack planes struck at German troops and artillery at the river crossings and cut off their escape route to the western bank of the Spree. The enemy's tactical defences were thus smashed by troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, and armoured troops now had the possibility of rapidly advancing deep into the enemy defences.

The slow advance of the 1st Byelorussian Front and the threat that the deadline for the encirclement of the enemy Berlin group would not be met made GHQ order an intensification of the assault. Marshal I. S. Konev ordered the 3rd Guards Tank Army to force the Spree in the early hours of April 18, 1945, and advance rapidly in the general direction of Vetschau, Golssen, Baruth, Teltow and the southern outskirts of Berlin. The task of the army was in the night of April 20-21, 1945, to break into the city of Berlin from the south. The same order set the 4th Guards Tank Army the task of capturing the Beelitz-Treuenbrietzen-Luckenwalde area towards nightfall of April 20, and Potsdam and southwestern Berlin in the night of April 20-21. Stressing that the success of the tank assault depended on bold and swift action, the commander demanded a vigorous advance. The troops were ordered to by-pass towns and large villages so as to avoid protracted frontal fighting.

The Spree was forced on April 18 and the tank armies pushed forward towards Berlin. On April 20 they approached the Zossen defence zone covering the German capital from the south, and the next day saw them in full possession of the defence zone. It was found necessary to reinforce the 3rd Guards Tank Army with infantry and also to accelerate the encirclement of the enemy Frankfurt-Guben group to prevent it from retreating to Berlin. Accordingly, the 28th Army, which was in the second echelon of the 1st Ukrainian Front, was sent into battle on April 21 with

the task of rapidly advancing towards Berlin jointly with the 3rd Guards Tank Army. Two of its divisions were used to strengthen from the west the inner ring round the enemy in the sector southeast of the city. This front was formed mainly by the 3rd Guards Combined Army, but it needed assistance.

The nazis made desperate attempts to stop the advance of the 1st Ukrainian Front, putting up a stiff resistance at the approaches of Berlin. At the same time, they launched a powerful counter-attack from the vicinity of Görlitz in the south against the Soviet 52nd Army and the Wojsko Polskie 2nd Army. But this resistance was soon broken and towards the close of April 21 fighting broke out on the southern sector of the outer defence belt.

On April 18 troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front moved 4-8 kilometres and on the next day they advanced another 9-12 kilometres, breaking through the third line of the Oder defences. In the course of the first four days of the fighting the enemy drew from his reserve seven divisions, two tank destroyer brigades and over 30 separate battalions. This predetermined the ferocity of the fighting.

On April 18 and 19 part of the 2nd Byelorussian Front fought engagements, as a result of which the Soviet troops forced the East Oder and cleared the enemy out of the lowland between the East and West Oder. On April 20 the Front's main forces crossed the deep West Oder, crushed the defences on the western bank of the river and fought their way westward.

Advancing in a 300-kilometre sector, troops of the three fronts thus breached the enemy defences along the Oder and the Neisse towards nightfall of the sixth day of the offensive. Units of the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts entered the suburbs of Berlin in the evening of April 21. Things began to move still faster. On the same day, the 1st Byelorussian Front's 3rd and 5th strike armies broke through the inner defences of Berlin, while the 79th Infantry Corps entered the city's northeastern outskirts. On April 22 the outer defence ring was torn to shreds by the 1st Ukrainian Front's 3rd Guards Tank Army reinforced by infantry from the 28th Army and supported by artillery and aircraft. Soviet troops gained the streets of Berlin and towards the end of the day reached the Teltow Canal. It now became possible fully to isolate the Berlin garrison. The gap between the troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front and the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front which had reached Berlin's outskirts from the south steadily narrowed. The commanders of the two fronts were ordered by GHQ to complete the encirclement of the main forces of the 9th and the 4th Panzer armies southeast of Berlin not later than April 24 so that they could retreat neither to the city nor to the west. In fulfilment of these orders the 1st Ukrainian Front increased pressure on the enemy 9th Army from the south and southwest, while the 1st Byelorussian Front sent into battle the 3rd Army—its second echelon—from the left flank of the 8th Guards Army. Advancing from a direction opposite to that of the 1st Ukrainian Front, this army, jointly with the 69th Army of its own Front and the armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front, had to participate in completing the encirclement of the enemy Frankfurt-Guben group.

Meanwhile, other units of the 1st Byelorussian Front successfully bypassed Berlin on the north and northwest. On April 22 the 47th Army jointly with the 9th Tank Corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army reached Hennigsdorf, a northwestern suburb of Berlin. The 4th Guards Tank Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced to meet them from the south.

On April 24 the 8th Guards, 3rd and 69th armies of the 1st Byelorussian Front made contact with the 3rd Guards Tank and 28th armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front southeast of Berlin. On the next day the right-wing units of the 1st Byelorussian Front's assault group—the 47th and the 2nd Guards Tank armies—linked up with the 1st Ukrainian Front's 4th Guards Tank Army at Ketzin, west of Berlin. The enemy troops were thus not only surrounded but also split into two groups: the Berlin and the Frankfurt-Guben groups.

The armies which had surrounded the enemy were reliably protected on both their right and left flanks. On their right were forces of the 1st Byelorussian Front—the 61st Army, the Wojsko Polskie 1st Army, and the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps, which were advancing relentlessly towards the Elbe southeast of Wittenberg. On the left flank were the 1st Ukrainian Front's 13th and 5th Guards armies, which were also advancing towards the same river in the sector between Wittenberg and Torgau.

On April 25 advance units of the 58th and 97th Guards divisions from General A. S. Zhadov's 5th Guards Army reached the Elbe near Torgau. There units of the 58th Guards Division commanded by General V. V. Rusakov made contact with patrols from the 69th Infantry Division of the American 1st Army. This was a historic moment. The entire front of the German troops had thus been chopped up: the armies in Northern and Southern Germany were isolated from each other. This glorious victory was marked by a salute fired in Moscow in honour of troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

The enemy found himself in a hopeless position but he continued to resist savagely. Fresh volkssturm battalions were formed in Berlin. Criminals were released from the gaols on April 22 and drafted into the army. The Berlin garrison was reinforced with nearly 80,000 troops from retreating units and 32,000 police. The strength of the garrison now exceeded 300,000 men. The newly-formed 12th Army, which the nazis had intended to throw against the United States troops along the Elbe, was now turned to the east and used against the 1st Ukrainian Front. This army was ordered to advance in the direction of Jüterbog and link up with units of the 9th Army, which were trying to break out of encirclement to the west, and then by joint effort start an offensive with the purpose of recapturing Berlin.

However, the position of the Berlin garrison was becoming catastrophic. The loss of the city's outskirts deprived the enemy of most of his supplies, particularly food. Rigid rationing was enforced. On April 21 all the factories stopped working—they had used up all their coal supplies, while electricity and gas had been cut off. Panic descended on the city. Many of the nazi leaders, including Göring and Himmler, Hitler's closest associates, fled from Berlin. Nobody now had any doubts about the outcome of the struggle. The people of Berlin realised how cruelly they had been deceived by the nazis. The progressive forces were much too weak to change the situation in the country.

Formidable obstacles still stood in the way of the Soviet troops. The enemy had turned every house into a fortress. Berlin was enveloped in flames. The numerous fires hindered the advancing troops. Under these conditions fighting by small units acquired decisive importance. More manoeuvrable, they infiltrated the enemy defences and struck at his rear and flanks.

In Berlin the fighting was conducted mainly by assault groups and detachments. Soviet troops had vast experience of street fighting. An assault group consisted of an infantry company or platoon reinforced by

artillery, tanks and engineers, while an assault detachment consisted of a reinforced infantry battalion. The success of these groups and detachments depended on the initiative of every officer and man. In these groups and detachments examples of heroism were set by Communists, who in many cases decided the issue of an engagement.

On April 23 the Military Council of the 1st Byelorussian Front called upon all effectives to speed up the capture of Berlin. In analogous statements, the military councils of the 1st Ukrainian and 2nd Byelorussian fronts stressed that having entered Germany the Red Army was called on to assume the duties of administration and the responsibility for the lives and destiny of the German population. A special directive from GHQ ordered troops to treat Germans humanely. It stated that a German administration had to be set up in areas west of the Oder and the Neisse and that German mayors had to be installed in the towns.

The substance of the Red Army's liberative mission was explained to the troops. This helped to enhance the prestige enjoyed by the Soviet soldier brought up on Leninist ideas of humanism and proletarian internationalism.

Inexorably crushing the fierce resistance of the enemy, troops of the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts drew closer to the heart of Berlin, approaching the Reichschancellery, in the bunkers of which were Hitler and his associates, and the Reichstag. To speed up the advance it was decided to bomb the main objectives in the centre of Berlin. On April 25 more than 2,000 aircraft dropped hundreds of tons of bombs on these objectives. This had the desired effect. Towards the end of the day Soviet troops gained the perimeter of the city's central sector.

Troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front likewise advanced successfully, breaking down the enemy defences and surmounting countless obstacles. This advance ruled out the possibility of Army Group Vistula launching a counter-attack from the north.

Action by the three fronts thus created a situation in which it became possible quickly to destroy the enemy surrounded in and southeast of Berlin. This task was carried out within a week, from April 26 to May 2.

Surrounded and dismembered, the German troops fought with desperation. The nazis hoped to break out of the encirclement. The Frankfurt-Guben group attempted to fight its way to the west, and advance units of the German 12th Army tried to help it.

However, the ring was tightened with each passing day. By joint effort the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts split the Frankfurt-Guben group into several small groups and completed its liquidation on May 1. Southeast of Berlin they annihilated more than 60,000 enemy officers and men and took 120,000 prisoners.

The resistance put up by the nazis was particularly fierce in the central sector of Berlin. In the north they had excellent cover from the Spree, and in the south they had the Landwehr Canal, whose banks, nearly three metres high, were encased in granite. Most of the bridges were blown up. The surviving Moltke Bridge across the Spree was protected with anti-tank obstacles and crisscross machine-gun fire. Moreover, it was covered by artillery from the opposite bank. A prominent place in the system of defences was occupied by the massive buildings of the Reichstag and the Internal Affairs Ministry, which had been turned into powerful centres of resistance. There were strong fortifications also in the Tiergarten.

In heavy fighting Soviet troops breached the defences of the central sector at several points. The 3rd Strike Army advanced from the north, the 5th Strike, 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank armies from the east and

the southeast, the 3rd Guards Tank Army and the 28th Army's 128th Corps from the south, units of the 4th Guards Tank Army from the southwest and the 47th and 2nd Guards Tank armies from the west and northwest. The 3rd Strike Army's 79th Corps, which was operating on the right wing, captured the Moabit district and reached the Spree at the Moltke Bridge. This bridge provided the shortest route to the Reichstag. In the night of April 28-29 the bridge was taken by Captain S. A. Neustroyev's 1st Battalion of the 756th Regiment (150th Division) and Senior Lieutenant K. Y. Samsonov's 1st Battalion of the 380th Regiment (171st Division). Shortly afterwards the Spree was crossed by other units of these regiments and by the 171st Division's 525th Regiment as well as by supporting artillery, tanks and flame-throwers. The advancing units were soon only 300-500 metres away from the Reichstag, but were unable to capture the massive building in a head-on assault.

The battle for the Reichstag, which started early in the morning of April 30, raged for several hours. Soviet troops (from battalions commanded by V. I. Davidov and S. A. Neustroyev) led by A. P. Berest, K. V. Gusev and I. Y. Syanov broke into the building only in the second half of the day.

Every floor and every room was fiercely contested. Several Communists—G. K. Zagitov, A. F. Lisimenko, V. N. Makov and M.P. Minin—who had volunteered to lead the attack, made a path for themselves with submachine-guns and hand-grenades, got to the roof and hoisted the red flag. The battle banner presented to the 756th Regiment by the Military Council of the 3rd Strike Army was planted on the pediment of the Reichstag by two of the regiment's scouts—M. A. Yegorov and M. V. Kantaria—in the night of April 30-May 1. However the fighting continued for another day and night, the garrison laying down arms only in the morning of May 2.

While fighting was still going on in the city the Soviet Command took steps to bring life to normal in Berlin. General N. E. Berzarin, commander of the 5th Strike Army, was appointed commandant of Berlin. On April 28 he issued an order on the setting up of a kommandatura in the capital and on the formation of kommandaturas in the districts being liberated.

During the storming of the Reichstag, units of the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts drew steadily closer to the heart of the city. On May 1 the 39th Guards Division of the 8th Guards Army captured the Tiergarten. Ground was also gained by the troops operating north of Berlin. Towards the evening of April 30 they were 15-20 kilometres from the Elbe. After taking the towns of Schwedt and Stettin, troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front forged ahead in a westerly and northwesterly direction along the coast of the Baltic Sea.

Nothing could now save the nazis. Göring and Himmler fled from Berlin, and they were followed by other leaders of the nazi Reich. On April 30 Hitler committed suicide, leaving behind a will turning power over to Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz. Goebbels, too, took his own life and that of his whole family. Such was the inglorious end of the nazi ruling clique.

Early in the morning of May 1 General Hans Krebs, Chief of Staff of the German ground forces, went to the positions occupied by the 8th Guards Army for talks with the Soviet Command. General V. I. Chuikov, commander of the 8th Guards Army, was authorised to conduct the talks. Under his command the 8th Guards Army, initially the 62nd, had fought a heroic defensive action in 1942 on the banks of the Volga and smashed the enemy at Stalingrad. Subsequently, it had advanced all the way from the

Marshal R. Y. Malinovsky presents an officer with the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star of Hero of the Soviet Union, May 1945

Defenders of the barricades built in Prague during the uprising wave to Soviet troops, May 1945

Soviet tankists in Prague, May 1945

CEREMONIAL PARADE OF COMBINED FRONT-LINE REGIMENTS

IN RED SQUARE, MOSCOW, JUNE 24, 1945

Victory Parade in Moscow's Red Square, June 24, 1945

Victory fireworks display, Moscow, May 9, 1945

Volga to Berlin. And now in the heart of the German capital the valiant Guardsmen together with other troops were dealing the enemy the last, death blow. It is symbolic that the talks on the surrender of Berlin were started at the command post of this army.

At the talks it was found that the nazis were trying to avoid unconditional surrender. They had to be forced to surrender unconditionally. At 18.30 hours all the artillery that was used in the storming of the city's centre opened fire and the barrage was followed by a resumption of the offensive. Units of the 3rd Strike Army advancing from the north made contact south of the Reichstag with the 8th Guards Army units advancing from the south. At 00.40 hours on May 2 the Germans sent the Soviet Command a message by radio, asking for a ceasefire and declaring that they were sending truce envoys. The truce envoy and then General Weidling, Berlin commander, who followed him, stated that the Germans would surrender unconditionally. The resistance of the Berlin garrison ceased at 15.00 hours on May 2. Towards the end of the day the Red Army occupied the entire city. Troops of the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts made contact with American troops on the Elbe, while troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front advanced to the line running through Wismar, Schwerin, Dömitz and Wittenberg, where they linked up with British troops.

Berlin fell. Long lines of prisoners headed by erstwhile self-conceited officers were marched through the streets of the vanquished capital. Not one of them ventured to look their compatriots in the eyes. The crusade to the East ended not with a parade in Moscow, as the nazis boasted, but with defeat and surrender in Berlin.

Soviet troops were filled with pride for their great motherland and the valiant Red Army. The just cause for which they had come to Berlin had triumphed. Troops of the 1st and 2nd Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were thanked by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. A gun salute was fired in Moscow. The units that took part in the operation were given the name Berlin. When hostilities came to a close in Germany more than 600 privates, non-commissioned officers, officers and generals were decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Thirteen were created twice Hero of the Soviet Union. The Berlin Medal was awarded to nearly 1,082,000 troops.

After the capture of Berlin 3,500,000 civilians were left without food. To alleviate this situation the Soviet Government allocated some 100,000 tons of flour and grain and large quantities of other products from Army stores. The logistical arm organised food supplies for the population and for prisoners of war, introducing rationing. Special concern was shown for children.

The fighting in Berlin had been particularly heavy. In face of their irreversible doom, the nazi leadership had demanded that the troops fight to the last man, to the last cartridge. Misled by long years of nazi propaganda and drilled to obey orders blindly, the German officers and men fought and died senselessly in the ruins of Berlin. In the Berlin operation the Red Army smashed 70 infantry, 12 panzer and 11 motorised divisions and many other separate units and subunits, taking nearly 480,000 prisoners and capturing more than 1,500 tanks and assault guns, 4,500 aircraft and 8,600 field guns and mortars.

Soviet troops courageously surmounted immense difficulties in the burning, semi-destroyed city, storming enemy fortifications. In the period from April 16 to May 8, 1945, the 1st and 2nd Byelorussian and the 1st Ukrainian fronts lost nearly 300,000 men in killed and wounded. They lost

2,156 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1,220 field guns and mortars and 527 aircraft.

The feat performed by Soviet soldiers who fell in the fighting for Berlin will remind generations to come that this city must never again be a hotbed of aggression and vandalism, a springboard for further crusades of reactionaries against the freedom and independence of nations. An earnest of this is the new, democratic Germany which has shaken off the yoke of nazism and resolutely taken the road of socialism.

2. LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The victorious outcome of the Berlin operation created favourable conditions for the liquidation of the last major group of German troops (operating in Czechoslovakia) and speeded up the surrender of nazi Germany. The struggle for the liberation of Czechoslovakia was very protracted and arduous. It began as early as September 1944.

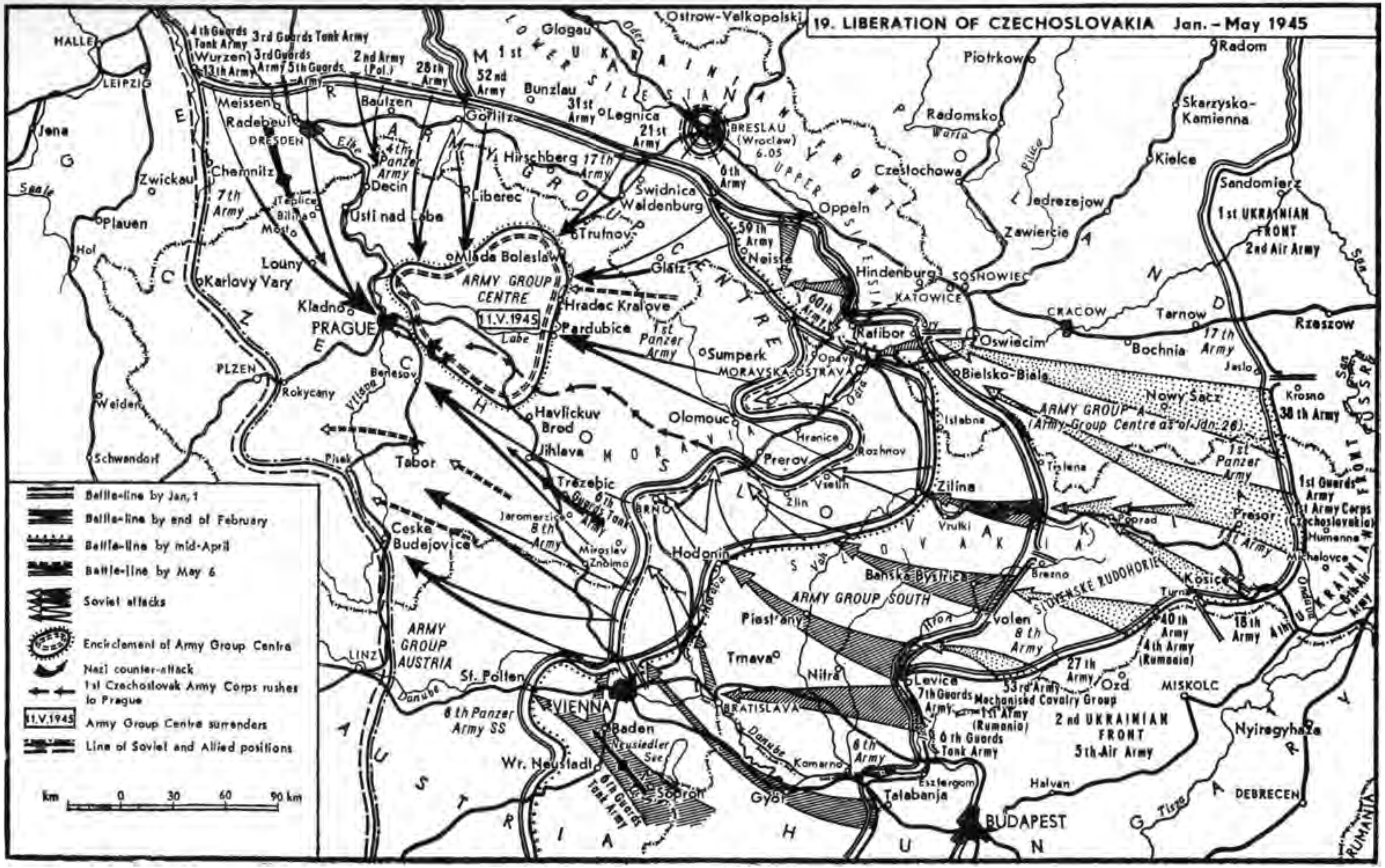
At the beginning of 1945 troops of the 4th Ukrainian (38th, 1st Guards, 18th and 8th Air armies) and the 2nd Ukrainian (40th, Rumanian 4th, 27th, 53rd, Rumanian 1st, 7th Guards, 6th Guards Tank and 5th Air armies and the 1st Guards Mechanised Cavalry Group) fronts were holding a line stretching from Jaslo to the Ondava, southeast of Kosice, Turna, northwest of Levice and Esztergom. However their progress was slow. The area in which they operated was mountainous and thickly wooded, and they were able to manoeuvre only in the valleys. The terrain enabled the enemy to organise powerful defensive systems.

When they lost part of Czechoslovakia, the nazis took feverish steps to prevent the Red Army from drawing closer to the frontiers of Germany. But they were powerless to halt the advancing Soviet troops. In January 1945 the enemy holding the eastern regions of Slovakia found himself at a disadvantage as a result of the successful drive of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts towards Cracow and of the offensive of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the Slovenske Rudohorie.

The main forces of the 4th Ukrainian Front took advantage of the situation to mount an offensive in a sector 200 kilometres wide, advancing 150-170 kilometres in Slovakia and reaching the towns of Trstena and Brezno. Almost half of Slovakia was thus liberated. This offensive also helped the 1st Ukrainian Front clear the Silesian industrial region and improved the situation on the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, which at the close of January had moved to Brezno and Levice (Map 19).

The subsequent offensives of the two fronts were linked up with the Lower and Upper Silesian operations of the 1st Ukrainian Front and with the operations of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in the direction of Vienna. Mid-April saw the troops fighting in Czechoslovakia at Istebna, Vrutky and Hodonin. Large Slovakian towns, including Bratislava, were liberated, and towards the close of April Soviet troops entered the important Czechoslovak industrial centres of Moravska Ostrava and Brno. The offensives of the 4th and 2nd Ukrainian fronts pinned down the main forces of Army Group Centre and gave the German Command no opportunity to transfer reinforcements to the region round Berlin. This made the task against the Berlin group easier.

After the fall of Berlin, the nazi Dönitz Government and the German High Command made an attempt to hold the "Czechoslovak fortress". They believed that continued resistance in that area would enable them to prolong the war, establish contact and strike a bargain with reactionary



19. LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA Jan. - May 1945

elements in the West and then turn the remnants of the German Army against the Soviet forces. In a speech at Flensburg on May 5, the newly-styled Führer, Dönitz, said: "...My prime aim is to save Germans from annihilation by the advancing Bolsheviks. Hostilities are continuing solely for this purpose." An order of the day by the German High Command, also dated May 5, read in part: "By downing arms in Northwestern Germany, Denmark and Holland, our point of departure was that the struggle against the Western powers had become meaningless. In the East, however, the struggle goes on."

The nazi efforts to hold Czechoslovakia fell in with the interests of reactionary circles in Britain and the USA. In a telegram to US President Harry S. Truman on April 30, Winston Churchill wrote: "There can be little doubt that the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of Western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in nearby countries." This was when Churchill gave Field-marshal Montgomery the notorious order "carefully to collect German weapons and store them where they may be easily re-issued to German soldiers, with whom we shall have to co-operate if the Soviet offensive continues."

The United States Command was likewise eager to seize Western Czechoslovakia and capture Prague. On May 4 Eisenhower proposed to General A. I. Antonov, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, that American troops should advance to the western banks of the Vltava and the Elbe, i.e., occupy Prague and the adjoining regions. This ran counter to the Crimea decision regarding the line where Soviet and American troops had to make contact on Czechoslovak territory. General Antonov replied that the Red Army required no assistance in driving the enemy from the western banks of these rivers, and that the corresponding group had already been formed for the purpose. It was only after this that, on orders from Eisenhower, the United States armies halted along the line running through the towns of Karlovy Vary, Plzen and Ceske Budejovice.

In Czechoslovakia the political situation was extremely favourable for a Red Army offensive. The liberation of the eastern regions of Slovakia had given considerable impetus to the national liberation movement. The conditions emerged for important democratic reforms. The Slovak National Committee passed a decree on a land reform and ordered the disbandment of the armed forces of the bourgeois Slovak state. National Committees, which were the new revolutionary organs of power, functioned in the localities. Political life picked up: trade unions and mass democratic organisations were set up.

Far-reaching changes took place in the country's balance of class forces in the spring of 1945. The bourgeois parties lost support among the people. Nothing came of their hopes that the Germans would be driven out by the Western Allies. At the same time the Communist Party won increasing influence. It became quite clear to the people that liberation would come only from the East. The Czechoslovak émigré Government resigned in March and that same month President Beneš went to Moscow where he attended a conference of representatives of the Foreign Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, London émigrés and the Slovak National Council. The conference adopted the important decision to form a National Front of Czechs and Slovaks under the chairmanship of Klement Gottwald. It consisted of the Communist, Social-Democratic, National Socialist, People's and Democratic parties. A National Front Government with Z. Fierlinger as Prime Minister was formed. The Com-

munists in this Government headed the ministries for internal affairs, agriculture and information. On the suggestion of the Communist Party the National Front adopted the programme of the people's democratic revolution.

The formation of the Czechoslovak Government and its programme were proclaimed on April 5 in the town of Kosice. Having set its sights on a people's democratic revolution, the Government regarded the completion of the country's liberation as its immediate aim and called upon the people to intensify the struggle against the invaders and give their utmost assistance to the Soviet troops. Provision was made for organising a new Czechoslovak Army on the model of the Red Army, with the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps as its nucleus. The Kosice programme proclaimed democratic principles for the building of the Czechoslovak Republic. The national committees were declared to be the foundation of the new state apparatus. In foreign policy the main orientation was to strengthen friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union.

The formation of the people's democratic Government, the publication of its programme and the fresh successes of the Red Army spurred on the Resistance in the occupied parts of Czechoslovakia. There was a great upsurge of the partisan movement during the spring. The Jan Zizka, Jan Gus, Jan Kozin and other brigades had several thousand men each. Wrecking increased at the factories, and many of them were brought to a standstill.

The people's revolutionary struggle, which demanded the speediest abolition of the nazi occupation, grew more active as the Red Army drew nearer. The situation was particularly tense in Prague. The conditions for a general uprising were on hand. A new Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was elected early in April (the old underground Central Committee had been arrested by the Gestapo). On April 29 the new Central Committee discussed the question of an uprising and assigned its members to lead it. On the next day this question was debated at a meeting of the Czech National Council, which was headed by Communists. This Council drew up a detailed plan for the uprising. The activity of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia gave the uprising a definite class character.

Clashes between the people of Prague and the invaders began to break out on May 1. German flags were replaced by Czechoslovak banners, and notices in the German language were torn from the notice-boards. These clashes became more frequent after Berlin fell.

An uprising broke out in Prague in the morning of May 5. Towards the evening of the same day the people seized the radio station, the post office, the central telephone exchange, the power station, the most important bridges across the Vltava, almost all the railway stations, and the Skoda, Avia and Walther factories. Fighting flared up in all parts of the capital. The Communist Party emerged from underground and took over the leadership of the uprising. Barricades were built in the streets. Nearly 1,600 barricades manned by some 30,000 men appeared in the night of May 5-6. The invaders were attacked in districts adjoining Prague, in the front-line districts of Moravia and the western regions of Bohemia. The workers of Kladno, one of the largest industrial centres in the country, rose in arms in the night of May 4-5, and on the next day they were joined by the workers in Plzen.

Prague remained the centre of the uprising. The nazis brought in reinforcements. General Scherner, commander of Army Group Centre, ordered the uprising in Prague to be crushed. German troops raced to the city

from three directions: the Reich Panzer Division from the north, the Viking Panzer Division from the east and a reinforced regiment of the Reich Division from the south.

The people of Prague urgently needed military assistance. This assistance was rendered by the Red Army. As early as May 1 GHQ ordered the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts speedily to prepare and launch an offensive on the territory of Czechoslovakia. A two-pronged assault was mounted in the direction of Prague, the 1st Ukrainian Front attacking from the north and the 2nd Ukrainian Front from the southeast. The aim of the Prague operation was to encircle and destroy the nazi forces in Czechoslovakia. In the Prague operation the 4th Ukrainian Front (whose command had been taken over by General A. I. Yeremenko on March 26) continued carrying out its earlier assignment of wiping out the enemy Olomouc group jointly with the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. After fulfilling this assignment, the 4th Ukrainian Front was able to concentrate on an offensive on Prague from the east. The operation involved more than 1,000,000 men, over 23,000 field guns and mortars, nearly 1,800 tanks and self-propelled guns, and over 4,000 aircraft.

The German army groups Centre and Austria were at the time operating on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front. In Czechoslovakia the enemy had more than 900,000 men, nearly 10,000 field guns and mortars, over 2,200 tanks and assault guns, and about 1,000 aircraft.

Soviet troops were redeployed and assault groups were formed. In the course of three days troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front deployed in the vicinity of Dresden and south of Berlin, covered a distance of 100-200 kilometres and towards the evening of May 5 occupied their starting line for the offensive northwest of Dresden. The 2nd Ukrainian Front deployed its main group south of Brno. The 4th Ukrainian Front regrouped for an attack on Olomouc.

During this regrouping the troops rested and replenished their supplies of ammunition, fuel and food. The new combat assignments and the situation in Czechoslovakia, particularly in Prague, were explained to the men. The attention of troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front was drawn to the fact that after operations in vanquished Germany they were entering the territory of a friendly country. A special directive from the Front's political department demanded that political instructors "explain to all officers and men that the Red Army is entering the territory of Czechoslovakia in order to liquidate the last pockets of nazi resistance and help to liberate our Ally, the Czechoslovak Republic, from the tyranny of nazism.... The lofty aims and tasks of the Red Army on Czechoslovak territory must be explained to the population of regions liberated from German occupation".

On May 6 it was established that opposite the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front the enemy had begun to withdraw. Soviet troops immediately went in pursuit. Smashing the enemy rearguards, advance units rapidly pushed forward clearing the road for the main forces. Towards the end of the first day the troops had advanced 23 kilometres in the direction of Dresden.

The enemy was so demoralised that he was no longer able to put up organised resistance along the entire sector of the front.* The nazis sought to escape from the Red Army to the West and surrender to the Americans.

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* The enemy group surrounded in Breslau was destroyed on May 6. The remnants of the garrison surrendered. Nearly 41,000 officers and men were taken prisoner.

The command of Army Group Centre made every effort to avoid capitulation. The onslaught had to be intensified to compel the enemy to lay down arms. Another factor making the speedy defeat of the enemy imperative was that on May 7 the position of the insurgents in Prague had become critical. There was the growing danger of the retreating nazis taking reprisals and destroying Prague.

Soviet troops kept up their attacks day and night. The left wing and centre of the 1st Ukrainian Front (Wojsko Polskie 2nd Army, and the 28th, 52nd, 31st, 21st, 59th and the 2nd Air armies) joined the offensive on May 7. On the right wing of the Front the 5th Guards Army advanced rapidly, breaking into Dresden on May 8 and taking the northern part of the town with the assistance of neighbouring armies and fully liberating the town the next day. The Wojsko Polskie 2nd Army captured the town of Bautzen, and the 52nd Army entered Görlitz. Liberated also were Teplice, Bilina, Most and other towns.

Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front supported by the 5th Air Army captured the towns of Znoimo, Miroslav and Jaromerzice and continued their advance towards Prague from the southeast. The 4th Ukrainian Front seized the town of Olomouc on May 8.

Hostilities did not cease inasmuch as the German troops in Czechoslovakia had not surrendered. In the morning of May 9, after occupying Olomouc, troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front supported by the 8th Air Army linked up with left-flank units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front and pressed rapidly towards Prague from the east. At dawn on May 9 tanks of the 3rd and 4th Guards tank armies broke into the Czechoslovak capital and engaged the enemy in street fighting. A mobile group of the 4th Ukrainian Front consisting of the motorised 302nd Division and the Czechoslovak 1st Tank Brigade entered Prague at about 10 a.m. Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front—the 6th Guards Tank Army and the motorised 24th Infantry Corps—entered the city at 1 p.m. Shortly afterwards, the capital was approached by the 7th Mechanised Corps from General I. A. Pliyev's Mechanised Cavalry Group. In addition to the 5th Air Army, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were supported by part of the 17th Air Army of the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

The enemy was overwhelmed by the sudden assault mounted by the Soviet troops. With the active support of insurgent combat detachments Soviet troops cleared the last of the enemy out of Prague on May 9.

On May 10 GHQ ordered an offensive towards the west with the objective of linking up with the Allies. On the same day troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front made contact with American troops along the line running from Chemnitz to Rokycany. On May 11 Soviet troops occupied the salient south of Rokycany. Left-flank units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front reached Pzek and Ceske Budejovice, where they likewise made contact with Allied troops. The remnants of the German divisions found themselves in a pocket east of Prague. Only some of the units of Army Group Austria escaped encirclement. On May 10 and 11 the enemy forces were taken prisoner.

The last pocket of nazi resistance was thus crushed and the Soviet Armed Forces fulfilled their internationalist duty, liberating the peoples of Czechoslovakia from the nazi yoke. The operations which began on Czechoslovak territory in September 1944 and ended in May 1945 had demanded a tremendous effort from Soviet troops, some 140,000 of whom had laid down their lives for the freedom and independence of the fraternal Czechoslovak people. The medal "For the Liberation of Prague" was instituted by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

In the battles for the liberation of Czechoslovakia the Red Army was actively assisted by intrepid Czechoslovak partisans. The population joyously welcomed their liberators. In Prague the streets were filled with jubilant people. National flags were displayed on towers, balconies and in windows. The people decorated Soviet war machines with garlands and ribbons and cheered the troops. Soviet and Czechoslovak flags waved on all the houses, and posters were hung out with the words: "Glory to Soviet Russia", "Glory to the Red Army", "Long Live Friendship Between the Soviet and Czechoslovak Peoples". At rallies the working people expressed the confidence that their life would now be free and happy.

Many monuments were erected in Czechoslovakia in token of the people's gratitude to Soviet troops who fell fighting for that country's liberation. A tank was mounted on a pedestal in one of Prague's squares, which was renamed Square of Soviet Tankmen. The names of Guards tankmen who distinguished themselves and met a hero's death are inscribed on the pedestal of this monument. Marshals I. S. Konev and R. Y. Malinovsky, Generals A. I. Yeremenko and I. Y. Petrov and many other officers and generals as well as commanders of partisan units were elected honorary citizens of various towns in Czechoslovakia.

The victory over the nazi invaders gave the peoples of Czechoslovakia the possibility to build their life on new, democratic principles. "The defeat of nazism," states the *History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, "was brought about principally by the Soviet Union, whose Army smashed nazi Germany, the bastion of world reaction, and liberated the Czechoslovak people from nazi tyranny. The world's first socialist state showed that it is the truest and most reliable ally of the peoples of Czechoslovakia."

3. THE SURRENDER

In 1945 the German Army lost more than 1,000,000 men in killed on the Soviet-German front alone. The Red Army destroyed 98 and took prisoner 56 enemy divisions. In addition, 93 divisions surrendered when hostilities ceased. Thus ended the organised resistance of the once powerful nazi army.

The party, government and military apparatus of nazi Germany was paralysed. After Hitler's death, the Dönitz Government made every effort to avoid unconditional surrender and move as many German troops as possible to the West. But the nazis found it impossible to escape surrender to the Red Army. The Command of the Western Allies could not openly make a deal with the nazis.

In North Italy the instrument of surrender was signed on April 29. The fact that the enemy capitulated in Italy earlier than elsewhere was due primarily to the active resistance of the Italian people. Headed by Communists, this movement embraced the whole of North Italy. There were nearly a quarter of a million men in only the partisan detachments and the People's Liberation Army.

In the Netherlands, Northwestern Germany, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark the nazis capitulated on May 4. They surrendered their arms to the British troops in these areas. The remnants of Army Group E in Croatia and Southern Austria, Army Group G in Bavaria and Western Austria, and the 19th Army in the Tyrol surrendered soon afterwards.

During these days the Dönitz Government initiated talks with Eisenhower. Dönitz's personal envoy, Colonel-General Jodl, who had been one

of Hitler's aides, went to the Headquarters of the Allied Supreme Command in Rheims, but was unable to secure agreement for a "partial surrender" only to the American and British forces. The Soviet Supreme Command proposed that the act of unconditional surrender should be signed in Berlin, capital of the nazi state. This proposal was accepted by the Allied Supreme Command.

Representatives of all the Allied armies arrived in Karlshorst, a suburb of Berlin, on May 8. The Soviet Supreme Command was represented by Marshal G. K. Zhukov, the British Supreme Command by Air Chief Marshal A. W. Tedder, the United States Armed Forces by General Carl Spaatz, commander of the US Strategic Air Force, and the French Armed Forces by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army. Representatives of the vanquished German Army—Fieldmarshal Keitel, Admiral Friedeburg and Air Colonel-General Stumpf, who had been authorised by Dönitz to sign the act of unconditional surrender—were brought to Karlshorst.

The act of unconditional surrender was signed in a former German military engineering school in the presence of numerous representatives of the press. The ceremony was opened by Marshal Zhukov, who greeted the representatives of the Allied Command. Then Keitel, Friedeburg and Stumpf were shown into the hall. Their powers were verified and they signed the act of surrender after it was presented to them.

In conformity with the act of unconditional surrender the surviving German units began to lay down their arms. The Kurland group, consisting of the 16th and 18th armies, surrendered in the night of May 8-9. Enemy units in the estuary of the Vistula (east of Danzig) and on the Baltic spit (southeast of Gdynia) surrendered in the morning of May 9. The reception of prisoners in these areas was completed on May 13. More than 189,000 officers and men and 42 generals were taken prisoner on the Kurland Peninsula, and nearly 75,000 officers and men and 12 generals in the Vistula estuary and northeast of Gdynia.

On May 9 units of the 2nd Byelorussian Front were landed on the Danish island of Bornholm by ships of the Baltic Fleet. On that island they took another 12,000 prisoners. Members of the newly elected Government of Denmark arrived on the island on May 19 to express their gratitude to the Soviet troops for liberating the island.

Army Group Narvik surrendered in Northern Norway. In this connection the Norwegian Government sent a message of gratitude to the Soviet Government. In reply the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Soviet Government wished the Norwegian people success in speedily rehabilitating their country and abolishing the consequences of the nazi occupation.

In the southwestern sector of the Soviet-German front the Red Army took 780,622 prisoners, including 35 generals, in the period May 9-13. The last small enemy groups who attempted to continue resistance in Czechoslovakia and Austria were mopped up by May 19.

From May 9 to 17 altogether 1,390,978 German officers and men and 101 generals surrendered to the Red Army in accordance with the act of unconditional surrender.

The nazi Armed Forces ceased to exist. On the insistence of the Soviet Union the Dönitz Government was dissolved on May 23, and its members as well as the officers of the former General Staff were arrested. Subsequently, the leaders of the Government and members of the German High Command were arraigned before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg and sentenced as war criminals.

All power in Germany passed into the hands of the occupying powers. The Declaration on the Defeat of Germany was signed on June 5, 1945. It declared that the governments of the USSR, the USA, Britain and France had assumed supreme power in Germany, including all power of the German Government, the High Command and every regional, municipal or local government or authority. It demanded the cessation of hostilities and the disarming of the Army and Navy. Germany undertook to transfer all prisoners of war to Allied representatives. The principal nazi leaders and persons suspected of war crimes were subject to arrest. The Allies had the right to take any measures, including the complete disarming and demilitarisation of Germany, which they considered necessary for future peace and security.

Under a special agreement between the Allies, the territory of Germany was divided into four occupation zones: a Soviet, an American, a British and a French zone. The administration of the country was placed in the hands of the Control Council, which consisted of the commanders-in-chief of the occupation troops. In this Council decisions had to be unanimous. A special reservation was made in regard to the administration of Greater Berlin, which was at the same time the centre of the Soviet zone and the headquarters of the Control Council. The city was divided into four sectors, each of which was administered by a commandant. An inter-Allied kommandatura was instituted to co-ordinate general questions. It consisted of the four commandants, each of whom in turn served as chief commandant. The inter-Allied kommandatura functioned under the general direction of the Control Council. The nazi party (German National-Socialist Workers' Party) was outlawed.

The surrender of nazi Germany was thus made legal. The Allies solemnly proclaimed that with the purpose of ensuring peace and security they would disarm and completely demilitarise Germany. The documents adopted jointly at the time conformed to this purpose. However, far from fulfilling the obligations they had undertaken, the Western powers subsequently violated them openly, passing over to a policy of militarising Western Germany. But in those memorable days of May and June 1945 the peoples of Europe could not foresee the future and rejoiced in the freedom which they had acquired.

There was particularly deep joy in the Soviet Union. The exhausting, sanguinary war, which had lasted nearly four years, had ended in victory. The ruthless enemy, who had been armed with the latest weapons and had trampled continental Europe, was defeated. The hearts of Soviet people were filled with legitimate pride in their great socialist motherland.

By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR May 9 was proclaimed Victory Day. The whole country took on a festive look on that day. Rallies and outdoor fêtes were held in Moscow, in the capitals of the Union republics, in the hero-cities and in every part of the unbounded Soviet Union. The people toasted the Red Army and the Communist Party.

In the evening of May 9 Moscow saluted the valiant Red Army and Navy with thirty salvoes from one thousand guns. The echo of this salute rolled across the whole world. In token of gratitude to the heroic Soviet people and their glorious Armed Forces, congratulations were sent from all over the world to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Government of the USSR. To perpetuate this outstanding event the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted a "Victory over Germany in

the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45" Medal. More than 13,660,000 Soviet soldiers were decorated with this medal.

On May 24, 1945, the Soviet Government gave a reception in the Kremlin in honour of the commanders of the Red Army. It was attended by members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, people's commissars, members of the Party Central Committee, representatives of the Red Army and Navy and leading figures in Soviet industry, agriculture, science, art and literature.

The historical Victory Parade was held in Moscow's Red Square a month later, on June 24. Token regiments of the fronts and fleets and units of the Moscow Garrison marched past the Mausoleum of V. I. Lenin, great founder of the Communist Party and the Soviet State. The soldiers, officers, generals and marshals, who had won glory on the battlefield, marched with their combat banners that had only recently been carried through the fire of battle. From the tribune on the Lenin Mausoleum, the heroes of the Great Patriotic War were greeted by leaders of the Party and the Government. The ceremonial march past ended with victorious soldiers throwing 200 banners of the defeated nazi Wehrmacht at the foot of the Mausoleum to the accompaniment of the rolling of drums. This symbolic act perpetuated the memory of the epochal victory of the Soviet socialist state and its Armed Forces over nazi Germany.

STRUGGLE OF THE USSR FOR A DEMOCRATIC PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

1. THE SOVIET UNION AND THE POST-WAR ORGANISATION OF THE WORLD

Throughout the war, even when the situation at the firing lines was critical, the Soviet Government had paid unremitting attention to problems concerning the post-war settlement. These problems acquired increasing prominence in Soviet diplomatic activities as the end of the war approached.

When the war ended the Soviet socialist state had a clear and just programme for settling major international issues. This programme, enunciated by the Chairman of the State Defence Committee Stalin at a meeting held in Moscow on November 6, 1943, to mark the 26th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, envisaged the liberation of the peoples from nazi oppression and the granting to them of the possibility and freedom of deciding the question of their state system by themselves; stern punishment to the nazi war criminals; the establishment of an order in Europe and Asia which would completely rule out the possibility of further aggression by Germany and Japan; the establishment of firm political, economic and cultural co-operation among nations founded on trust and mutual assistance.

There was a profound need for such a programme. Underlying it were the Leninist principles of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems. Every point of the Soviet programme was permeated with the spirit of Lenin's exhortation that the aim of policy was not to involve nations in war but to put an end to war.

The Soviet Government wanted co-operation with the United States of America and Great Britain to continue after the defeat of the fascist aggressors. Lasting and durable co-operation was the main element of the Soviet programme for the post-war arrangement.

During the war Western leaders had repeatedly expressed their agreement in principle with the Soviet proposals. Churchill wrote: "...When the war is won, as I am sure it will be, we expect that Soviet Russia, Great Britain and the USA will meet at the council table of victory as the three principal partners and as the agencies by which nazism will have been destroyed. Naturally, the first object will be to prevent Germany, and particularly Prussia, from breaking out upon us for a third time. The fact that Russia is a communist state and that Britain and the USA are not and do not intend to be is not any obstacle to our making a good plan for our mutual safety and rightful interests." Roosevelt spoke in a similar vein. In February 1945 he wrote that "our three nations can co-operate in peace just as well as they had done in war".

The two major problems of the post-war arrangement were the terms of Germany's surrender and her destiny after the war and the setting up of a new international security organisation.

The problem of Germany and her satellites was examined chiefly in the European Consultative Commission, which drew up the main terms for Germany's unconditional surrender and reached agreement on her division into zones of occupation and on the control mechanism after the abolition of the nazi state.

The discussions of these questions brought to light a definite trend in the policy of the Western powers. Their plans for Germany's post-war arrangement, particularly for her dismemberment and agrarianisation smacked of the spirit of imperialist rivalry. The old Biblical maxim of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" was totally unacceptable to the USSR as a guide for settling the question of how to treat vanquished Germany. The Soviet Union prevented the European Consultative Commission from accepting the American proposal for practically perpetuating the occupation of Germany by Allied troops. The demand of the US representative that all of Germany's resources should be placed at the disposal of the Allies was likewise rejected. The same fate overcame the US and British suggestion that some nazi organisations should be preserved in Germany after her surrender.

The USSR steadfastly adhered to the point of view that further German aggression could be averted not by a policy of vengeance and national humiliation but by the effective abolition of German militarism and genuine democratisation.

The Soviet Government considered it imperative to create a new international security organisation in order to avert any aggression wherever it may come from. The Soviet Union stressed that such an organisation could be effective if the Great Powers that had borne the burden of the war would continue to act in a spirit of unanimity and agreement.

A conference of representatives of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain was held at Dumbarton Oaks on August 21-September 28, 1944.* This conference drew up concrete proposals for the creation of a new international security organisation with the maintenance of world peace and security as its main aim. The principles governing the work of the United Nations were formulated as follows: sovereign equality of all of its members; fulfilment of obligations by each and every member; peaceful settlement of issues. It was agreed that the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice, the Secretariat, as well as the Social and Economic Council, which would function under the direction of the General Assembly, would be the key bodies of the UN.

The functions of these bodies were delineated. The General Assembly would consider general questions of international peace and make the corresponding recommendations. General Assembly decisions on questions such as the maintenance of peace and security, the admission of new members and elections to the main bodies required a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at the session, all other decisions would be passed by a simple majority vote. Decisions requiring concrete action for the maintenance of peace and security were to be the exclusive province of the Security Council, the chief body bearing responsibility for the maintenance of world peace. It was agreed that the Security Council would consist of 11 members: 5 permanent members (USSR, USA, Great Britain,

* From September 29 to October 7 the USA and Britain had talks at Dumbarton Oaks with China, which agreed with the proposals worked out at the conference.

China, France), and 6 non-permanent members. The latter were to be elected for a term of two years, and half their number was to be renewed annually.

The voting procedure in the Security Council proved to be the most difficult question. No decision on it was reached at Dumbarton Oaks, but it, too, was soon settled. The Crimea Conference* endorsed the principle of unanimity of the five Great Powers in the voting in the Security Council on questions concerning the preservation of peace and security. This decision strengthened the anti-fascist coalition.

A conference was convened in San Francisco on April 25, 1945, with the purpose of drawing up the UN Charter. The opening session of the conference was attended by delegates representing 46 countries.

On April 26, 1945, the conference received an application from the Government of the Ukrainian SSR expressing its desire to join the UN as a foundation member. On the same day a similar application was received from the Byelorussian SSR. At Yalta Roosevelt and Churchill had pledged that at San Francisco they would support the Soviet proposal regarding the UN membership of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Accordingly, on April 30, 1945, without discussion it was decided to invite representatives of these two Soviet Union Republics to San Francisco without delay.

The Soviet Government insisted that representatives of the Provisional Government of Poland should be invited to the conference. A sharp struggle flared up over this issue. In early March 1945 the US and British governments refused to include Poland among the participants in the United Nations conference on the grounds that the consultative commission on the question of the composition of the Polish Government would not complete its work by the time the conference was convened. The Soviet delegation, however, insisted that a place for Poland's signature should be left under the decisions of the conference in San Francisco. Poland thus became one of the foundation members of the new international security organisation.

The democratic forces became apprehensive when it was decided to invite to the conference Argentina, whose ruling circles had pursued a pro-German policy during the war and were hostile to the United Nations and the anti-fascist coalition. Progressive forces throughout the world justifiably regarded this decision, adopted on the insistence of the USA and Latin American countries, as a sign that the US leaders were reluctant to destroy all the hotbeds of fascism, no matter where they were located or behind what screen they were concealed.

The imperialists did their utmost to keep the world working class out of the work of setting up a new system of post-war peace. The ruling circles of the USA and other capitalist countries, for instance, rejected the resolution of the World Trade Union Conference regarding the participation of trade union representatives at the San Francisco Conference.

Soon after the United Nations conference opened, an invitation was sent to Denmark, and this brought the number of countries with representatives at San Francisco to 50.

The single item on the agenda, namely, the drawing up of the Charter, was comprehensively discussed. The proposals worked out at Dumbarton Oaks with the additions recommended by the Crimea Conference were adopted as the foundation for the Charter.

There was disagreement mainly on the question of the composition and

* For details of the Conference see Chapter Eighteen.

functions of the Security Council and on the voting procedure in that body. Some delegations wanted the Security Council to be controlled by the General Assembly, others insisted on increasing the number of its members. The principle of unanimity (the veto) was fiercely attacked by the opponents of effective international co-operation. The Soviet Union energetically upheld this principle, which gave it the possibility of actively crusading for peace in the Security Council and frustrating the attempts of imperialist circles to use the Council for their own ends: although the capitalist powers had the majority they were no longer in a position to force the Soviet Union to accept decisions advantageous to them alone. At the conference there was some disagreement between the USSR and the USA on the question of when the veto should be invoked. But this disagreement was ironed out and the principle of unanimity became the corner-stone of the new organisation.

The system of international trusteeship also came under fire. In proposing this system the colonial powers pursued the sole aim of finding the most suitable substitute for the discredited system of mandates.* The Soviet Union, for its part, considered that the main purpose of trusteeship was to grant the trust countries complete independence in the immediate future. The Soviet delegation pointed out that if all forms of colonial regimes were not abolished post-war international security would be neither effective nor lasting.

The decision adopted on this question by the conference provided for the creation of a system of international trusteeship whose main objective was to facilitate the political, economic and social advancement of the trust countries and thereby enable them to achieve national independence. There was a world-wide response to the Soviet condemnation, at San Francisco, of colonial oppression. The peoples of India, China and Africa, the *New York Post* wrote at the time, would remember that at San Francisco the USSR had championed the independence of the colonial peoples.

Throughout the period of its work, from April 25 to June 26, 1945, the conference was an arena of sharp debate on all major problems of post-war security. In the end it worked out and adopted the Charter, whose very first words mirrored the determination of the peoples "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...". By setting up the United Nations Organisation the San Francisco Conference fulfilled a task of immense political significance: it expressed the desire of all peoples for lasting peace, for co-operation among all countries regardless of their social system. The course and results of its work strikingly showed that the cardinal problems of the post-war arrangement could not have been settled without the Soviet Union, which had played the principal role in defeating the nazi aggressor.

2. SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE

After liberation from nazi enslavement the peoples of Eastern, South-eastern and Central Europe were confronted with the pressing problem

* The mandate system was instituted in 1919 by the Entente powers to govern the colonies seized by them. In effect it was a screen for the imperialist colonial system.

of how to organise their life. The need was felt for fundamental socio-democratic reforms. It was quite evident that these countries would either become really independent or they would once again become tools of the imperialist powers and find themselves formed into another "cordon sanitaire" round the Soviet Union.

The broad masses—workers, peasants and working intellectuals—were emphatically opposed to living in the old way. They rejected the appeals of the bourgeois-landowner parties to return to the old way of life and restore the pre-war regimes. They demanded genuinely democratic reorganisation and desired a social system that would put an end to world wars. This could be achieved only by taking the road of socialism. Development bore out Lenin's prophetic words that in the modern epoch no progress can be made without moving towards socialism. Far-reaching revolutionary changes were being accomplished in most of the countries of Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe at the closing stage of the war.

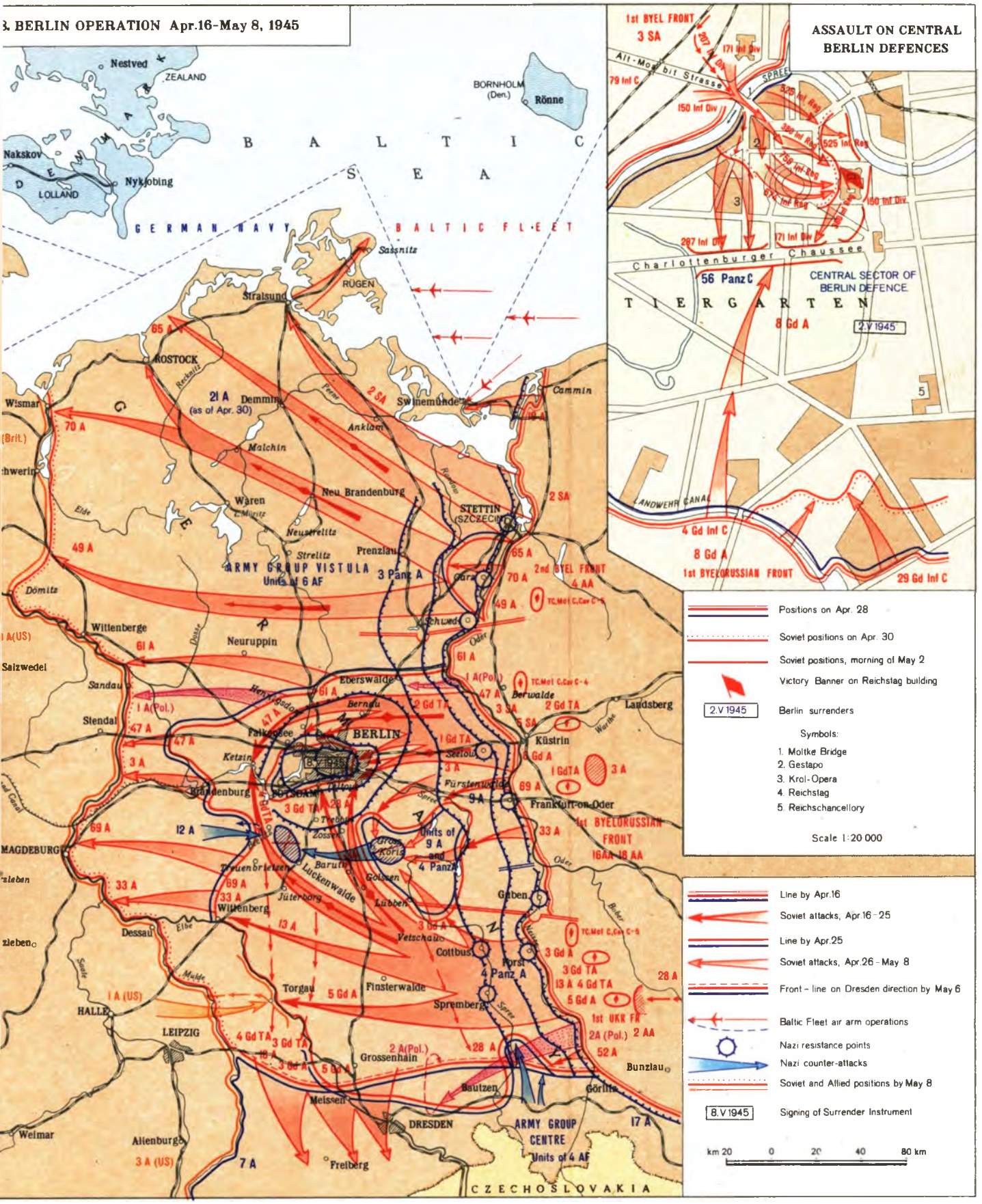
Naturally, this met with angry resistance from the internal reactionary forces and their foreign imperialist patrons. In this situation the USSR honourably discharged its internationalist duty. It defeated the many-million-strong nazi Wehrmacht and protected the countries liberated by the Red Army against the export of counter-revolution. The danger of such export was very real, as was borne out by the sanguinary developments in Greece. Fraternal co-operation and mutual assistance, which subsequently, with the formation of the world socialist system, became consolidated as international relations of a new type took shape already then between the Soviet Union and countries in Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe.

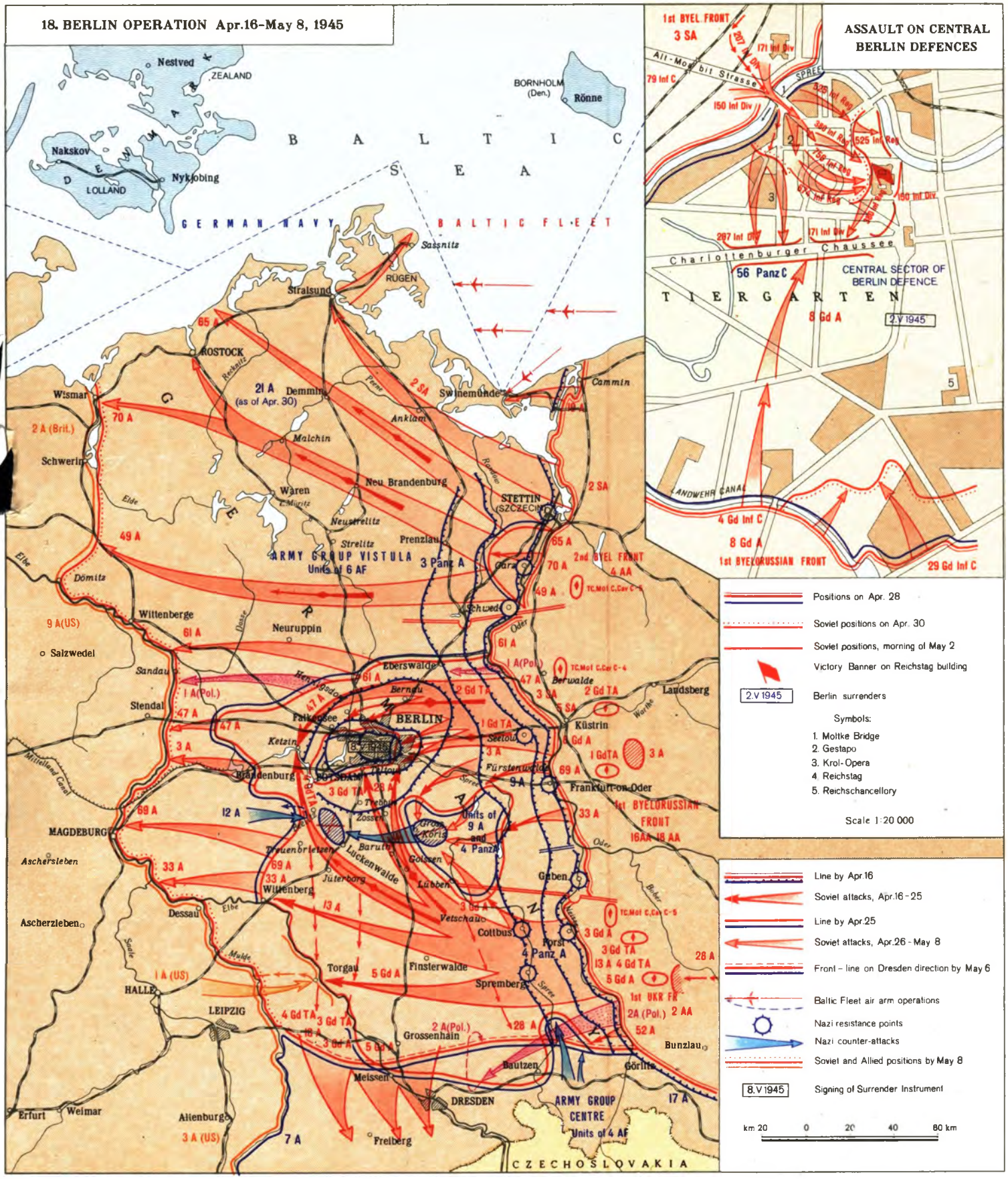
The friendly relations between the USSR and Poland, resting on the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance of April 21, 1945, grew stronger. The Soviet Government steadfastly adhered to the Crimea Conference decision on the reorganisation of the Provisional Government and rendered the Polish people the necessary assistance in their struggle against the attempts of international reaction to put the émigré clique in power in Poland.

As a result, the reorganisation carried out in late June 1945 was strictly in conformity with the decision of the Crimea Conference. The new Government of National Unity included several representatives of the London-based circles, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk among them. The balance of forces in Poland and in the world made it impossible to stop the profound revolutionary changes in Poland. The intrigues of the Polish émigré clique in London came to nothing and in early July Britain and the USA recognised the new Government of Poland.

On July 7, 1945, the Soviet Union and Poland signed a trade treaty and an agreement on reciprocal deliveries of goods. This treaty was instrumental in creating the foundations for fraternal economic co-operation between the two countries.

Headway was made in strengthening friendly relations between the USSR and Czechoslovakia. The year 1945 witnessed the beginning of the successful development of economic and cultural relations between the two countries. Soon after the termination of the war they signed an agreement on mutual deliveries of goods, initiating broad trade turnover. Evidence of Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship also was the successful settlement of the problem of Transcarpathian Ukraine. Under the treaty of June 29, 1945, Transcarpathian Ukraine was restored to Soviet Ukraine. This was an act of historical justice. The radical changes in Czechoslova-


3. BERLIN OPERATION Apr.16–May 8, 1945
ASSAULT ON CENTRAL BERLIN DEFENCES
1st BYEL FRONT
3 SA
207 Inf Div
171 Inf Div
79 Inf C
Alt-Moabit Strasse
SPREE
150 Inf Div
325 Inf Reg
380 Inf Reg
525 Inf Reg
756 Inf Reg
676 Inf Reg
297 Inf Div
Charlottenburger Chaussee
56 Panz C
CENTRAL SECTOR OF BERLIN DEFENCE
T I E R G A R T E N
8 Gd A
2.V 1945
LANDWEHR CANAL
4 Gd Inf C
8 Gd A
1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT
29 Gd Inf C
Nestved
ZEALAND
BORNHOLM (Den.)
Rönne
Nakskov
Nykjobing
LOLLAND
B A L T I C S E A
GERMAN NAVY
BALTIC FLEET
Saßnitz
RÜGEN
Stralsund
ROSTOCK
Wismar
Demmin
21 A (as of Apr. 30)
2 SA
Swinemünde
Cammin
Malchin
Neu Brandenburg
Waren
STETTIN (SZCZECIN)
Neustrelitz
Strelitz
Prenzlau
ARMY GROUP VISTULA
Units of 6 AF
3 Panz A
2nd BYEL FRONT
4 AA
Gartz
Schwedt
Oder
Dömitz
Wittenberge
Neuruppin
Salzwedel
Sandau
Eberswalde
Berlin
Berlau
Landsberg
Stendal
Falkensee
BERLIN
Küstrin
Ketzin
Seelow
Fürstenwalde
Brandenburg
Potsdam
Frankfurt-on-Oder
1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT
16 AA 18 AA
MAGDEBURG
Units of 9 A and 4 Panz A
Treuenbrietzen
Baruth
Golßen
Lübben
Jüterborg
Luckenwalde
Gubin
Wittenberg
Dessau
Elbe
Vetschau
Cottbus
Forst
4 Panz A
Torgau
5 Gd A
Finsterwalde
Spremberg
Spree
1st UKR FR
2A (Pol.)
2 AA
52 A
HALLE
LEIPZIG
4 Gd TA
3 Gd TA
18 A
3 Gd A
2 A(Pol.)
Grossenhain
Bautzen
Görlitz
Bunzlau
Meissen
DRESDEN
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
Units of 4 AF
17 A
Weimar
Altenburg
3 A (US)
7 A
Freiberg
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Positions on Apr. 28
Soviet positions on Apr. 30
Soviet positions, morning of May 2
Victory Banner on Reichstag building
2.V 1945
Berlin surrenders
Symbols:
1. Moltke Bridge
2. Gestapo
3. Krol-Opera
4. Reichstag
5. Reichschancellory
Scale 1:20 000
Line by Apr.16
Soviet attacks, Apr.16–25
Line by Apr.25
Soviet attacks, Apr.26–May 8
Front-line on Dresden direction by May 6
Baltic Fleet air arm operations
Nazi resistance points
Nazi counter-attacks
Soviet and Allied positions by May 8
8.V 1945
Signing of Surrender Instrument
km 20 0 20 40 80 km


18. BERLIN OPERATION Apr.16-May 8, 1945
ASSAULT ON CENTRAL BERLIN DEFENCES
CENTRAL SECTOR OF BERLIN DEFENCE
1st BYEL. FRONT
3 SA
56 Panz C
8 Gd A
2.V 1945
1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT
29 Gd Inf C
4 Gd Inf C
TIERGARTEN
Charlottenburger Chaussee
LANDWEHR CANAL
SPREE
Nestved
ZEALAND
BORNHOLM (Den.)
Rönne
Nakskov
Nykjobing
LOLLAND
B A L T I C S E A
GERMAN NAVY
BALTIC FLEET
Sassnitz
RÜGEN
Stralsund
ROSTOCK
Wismar
Swinemünde
Cammin
Schwerin
Demmin
Malchin
Waren
Neu Brandenburg
STETTIN (SZCZECIN)
Neustrelitz
Strelitz
Prenzlau
ARMY GROUP VISTULA
Units of 6 AF
3 Panz A
Dömitz
Wittenberge
Neuruppin
Salzwedel
Eberswalde
Berwalde
Landsberg
Stendal
Falkensee
BERLIN
Küstrin
Brandenburg
Fürstenwalde
Frankfurt-on-Oder
1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT
MAGDEBURG
Aschersleben
Ascherzleben
Lutckenwalde
Jüterborg
Wittenberg
Gaben
Dessau
Cottbus
Vetschau
Torgau
Finsterwalde
Spremberg
HALLE
LEIPZIG
Grossenhain
Bunzlau
Görlitz
Bautzen
Meissen
DRESDEN
ARMY GROUP CENTRE
Units of 4 AF
Erfurt
Weimar
Altenburg
Freiberg
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Positions on Apr. 28
Soviet positions on Apr. 30
Soviet positions, morning of May 2
Victory Banner on Reichstag building
2.V 1945
Berlin surrenders
Symbols:
1. Moltke Bridge
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3. Krol-Opera
4. Reichstag
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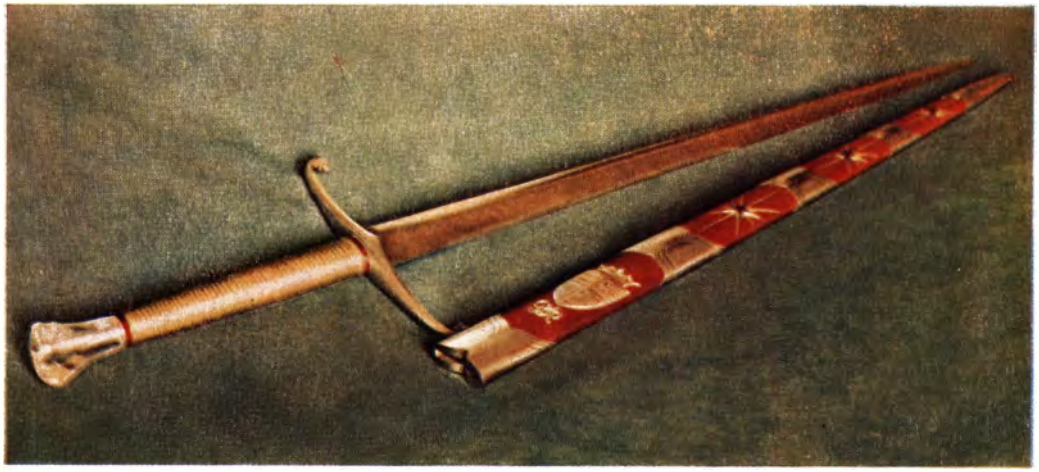
Scale 1:20 000
Line by Apr.16
Soviet attacks, Apr.16-25
Line by Apr.25
Soviet attacks, Apr.26-May 8
Front-line on Dresden direction by May 6
Baltic Fleet air arm operations
Nazi resistance points
Nazi counter-attacks
Soviet and Allied positions by May 8
8.V 1945
Signing of Surrender Instrument
km 20 0 20 40 60 km

In the name of the people of the United States of America, I present this scroll to the City of Stalingrad to commemorate our admiration for its gallant defenders whose courage, fortitude, and devotion during the siege of September 13, 1942 to January 31, 1943 will inspire forever the hearts of all free people. Their glorious victory stemmed the tide of invasion and marked the turning point in the war of the Allied Nations against the forces of aggression.

May 17 1944 — Franklin D. Roosevelt

Washington, D.C.

Scroll presented to the City of Stalingrad by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt



Sword presented to the citizens of Stalingrad by King George VI in commemoration of the battle on the Volga

In the name of the people of the
United States of America,
I present this scroll to the
City of Leningrad
as a memorial to its gallant soldiers and to its loyal men, women and children who, isolated from the rest of their nation by the invader and despite constant bombardment and untold sufferings from cold, hunger and sickness, successfully defended their beloved city throughout the critical period September 8, 1941 to January 18, 1943, and thus symbolized the undaunted spirit of the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and of all the nations of the world resisting forces of aggression.

May 17 1944 Franklin D. Roosevelt

Washington, D. C.

Scroll presented to the City of Leningrad by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt

kia's social system made it possible to settle this issue in a spirit of genuine fraternity.

Relations of friendship and co-operation rapidly took shape between the USSR and Rumania. On March 8, 1945, the Petru Groza Government raised the question of restoring the Rumanian administration in the northern part of Transylvania. On the next day the Soviet Government transferred the administration of that part of the country to the Government of Rumania, thus fulfilling one of the key points of the armistice agreement with Rumania of September 12, 1944, namely the agreement of the Allied powers to return Northern Transylvania to Rumania. This abolished one of the flashpoints of international conflict created in Southeastern Europe by the nazi aggressors.

Mutual assistance became the keynote of Soviet-Rumanian economic relations for the first time in 1945. Under agreements signed on May 8 and 11, 1945, the Soviet Union undertook to supply Rumania with 33,000 tons of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, 120,000 tons of coke and coal, 20,000 tons of cotton, 240,000 tons of chemicals, 300,000 tons of grain, and also lorries, naval and merchant ships, locomotives and railway carriages. For her part Rumania undertook to supply the Soviet Union with oil products, sawn timber, glass, cement and other items. In 1945 the USSR helped Rumania to surmount a food crisis caused by a severe drought and crop failure. Relying on disinterested Soviet support, People's Rumania began to oust imperialist domination from her economy, particularly from her oil industry. On August 6, 1945, the Soviet Union and Rumania resumed diplomatic relations.

A sound basis was also built up for fraternal co-operation with Bulgaria. "For the Bulgarian people," Georgi Dimitrov said, "friendship with the Soviet Union was as vital as the sun and air are to any living being." These words became the guideline of new Bulgaria's foreign policy. For its part the USSR did its best to alleviate Bulgaria's difficulties by giving her as much economic aid as it could. Under the trade agreement of March 14, 1945, the Soviet Union supplied Bulgaria with about 102,000 tons of oil products, nearly 46,000 tons of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, raw materials for her textile industry, farm machines, lorries and seeds. Diplomatic relations with Bulgaria were restored on August 14, 1945.

Relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia had grown still closer in the flames of the common struggle. A Soviet-Yugoslav Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Post-War Co-operation and a Soviet-Yugoslav Trade Agreement were signed in Moscow in April 1945. The Soviet Union supplied Yugoslavia with industrial plant, chemical materials, ship-hoisting equipment, lorries and other items which were sorely needed to restore her dislocated economy. Parallel with economic assistance the Soviet Union gave the young Yugoslav state extensive political support. It emphatically demanded the transfer to Yugoslavia of Istria and the Slovene maritime region, primordial Slav territories liberated by Yugoslav troops.

Relations between the USSR and Hungary developed along the line of friendly co-operation. In 1945, which was a most difficult time for the Hungarian people, the Soviet Government did all in its power to help them restore their economy and build a democratic state. Soviet-Hungarian agreements on economic co-operation, under which Hungary received 200,000 tons of coke and iron ore, nearly 4,000 tons of non-ferrous metals, 30,000 tons of cotton, 700 lorries, 15,000 tons of sugar and salt and a large quantity of timber, were signed in Moscow on August 27, 1945. In return Hungary supplied the Soviet Union with oil products, cement, optical

instruments, telephone and telegraph apparatuses, fabrics, dried fruit and canned vegetables. The successful development of Soviet-Hungarian friendship showed that in Soviet policy there could be not even a hint of vengeance. Diplomatic relations were restored on September 25, 1945.

Steady headway was made by friendship between the Soviet Union and Albania. A number of vital problems concerning economic aid to Albania were settled at talks held in Moscow in the summer of 1945. In response to a request from Albania the Soviet Union sent to that country experts in industry, agriculture, finance and public education. On the basis of an agreement signed on September 22, 1945, the Soviet Union shipped to Albania a considerable quantity of grain and chemicals, helping the Albanian people surmount the consequences of the severe drought of 1945.

The consolidation of friendly relations between the USSR and countries that embarked on deep-going revolutionary changes had a tremendous international impact. The times when the imperialists used these countries as a barrier against the Soviet Union receded never to return. The political face of Europe underwent a fundamental change: relying on the powerful support of the Soviet Union the liberated peoples successfully started building a new life. The USSR unfailingly stood firm on its internationalist duty, honourably discharging it at the Potsdam Conference as well.

3. POTSDAM CONFERENCE

After the defeat of the fascist bloc in Europe it became necessary to sum up the results of the war and, in accordance with the changed situation, co-ordinate the policies of the three Great Powers on key international problems. For this purpose the heads of the Allied states had a conference in Potsdam from July 17 to August 2. The Soviet delegation was led by J. V. Stalin, the US delegation by Harry S. Truman and the British delegation first by Winston Churchill and then, from July 28 onwards, by Clement B. Attlee, following the parliamentary elections which brought the Labour Party to power.

The attention of the Potsdam Conference was focussed chiefly on the German problem, the issue being to eliminate future German aggression. The Western powers continued toying with the idea of dismembering Germany. The US delegation, for instance, brought to Potsdam the proposal that three German states should be created: Southern Germany with Vienna as its capital, Northern Germany with the capital in Berlin, and Western Germany consisting of the Ruhr and the Saar. But this proposal was found to be unacceptable. The Soviet delegation firmly maintained that the security and independence of nations demanded Germany's deep-going and all-sided democratisation and not her return to the times of political dismemberment.

This stand was supported by democratic forces throughout the world, and this was something the US and British governments could not ignore. The Potsdam Conference drew up general political and economic principles to guide the settlement of the German problem at the initial, control period. It was agreed that the purpose of Germany's occupation was to effect her total disarmament and demilitarisation, abolish industry that could be used for war production, disband the National-Socialist Party and prevent nazi and militarist activity or propaganda, and prepare the ground for the final reorganisation of German political life on

a democratic foundation. Germany was to be regarded as a single economic whole.

The conference's decision to exact reparations from Germany was likewise aimed at the destruction of Germany's military potential. It was agreed that the USSR would satisfy its reparation claims through the corresponding expropriations in the Soviet occupation zone and from German investments in Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Finland and Eastern Austria. In addition, the Soviet Union was to receive from the Western zones 25 per cent of all the confiscated industrial plant, of which 15 per cent was to be received in exchange for the equivalent sum in food, coal and various prime materials, and 10 per cent without compensation. The Soviet Union had to satisfy Poland's reparation claims from its share. Naturally, only such equipment was to be confiscated as was not vital to German peaceful economy.

The reparation claims of the USA, Great Britain and other countries were to be satisfied from the Western occupation zones and from German investments abroad. Moreover, the US-British forces had seized a large amount of German gold. The Soviet Union waived its claims to this gold and it was disposed of in its entirety by the Western powers. As a whole, the reparations plan conformed to the interests of peace and international security. The same interests were served by the Potsdam decisions on the transfer of Königsberg to the Soviet Union, the division of the German surface naval and merchant vessels equally among the USSR, the USA and Great Britain and the trial of the chief war criminals.

At the Potsdam Conference the Soviet delegation gave every support to the legitimate demands of the Polish people. The Soviet Union prevented the USA and Britain from dragging out the final abolition of the émigré Polish Government in London. The Soviet stand on this issue greatly influenced the decision on the question of Poland's western frontier. At the conference there was bitter opposition to the Soviet proposal that this frontier should run along the line west of Swinemünde to the Oder, with the city of Stettin on Polish territory, and farther upstream along the Oder to the mouth of the Neisse, and from there along the Western Neisse to the Czechoslovak frontier. The Soviet proposal fully mirrored the age-old hope of the Polish people that the western Polish territories would one day be incorporated in the homeland. The Polish Government delegation, led by Boleslaw Beiruth, which had been invited to Potsdam, substantiated the just claims of Poland. The US and British delegations had to agree with them and the Soviet proposal was used as the basis for the Potsdam decision on Poland's western frontier. The problem of this frontier was finally settled in 1945. The Soviet-Polish frontier was demarcated under the treaty of August 16, 1945, which concretised the decision of the Crimea Conference regarding the Curzon line.

Among other problems the Potsdam Conference examined the fulfilment of the Yalta Declaration regarding liberated Europe, the restoration of diplomatic relations with Germany's former allies, the attitude to the Franco regime in Spain, and the arrangement concerning the Black Sea straits. Although serious differences came to light, the Potsdam Conference passed a number of important decisions, which struck yet another blow at the plans of the reactionary circles who were hoping to split the anti-fascist coalition.

The calculations of the Japanese imperialists along these lines were particularly dangerous. While continuing the war after Germany's surrender, they staked a lot on a split in the United Nations. But these calculations were not fated to come true either. The desire to co-

operate with the USSR was still in evidence in the USA and Britain. The war in Europe had ended, but hostilities were raging in East and Southeast Asia as well as in the Pacific. The Far Eastern aggressor was yet to be defeated, and the US and British governments considered that this could be achieved only with the Soviet Union's assistance. It was, therefore, no accident that at Potsdam US President Harry S. Truman declared that one of his main aims at the conference was to secure the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan. But there was no need for the American President to exert himself, for agreement on the shape, time and conditions of Soviet action in the Far East had been reached at the Crimea Conference. At Potsdam the US and British delegations became fully convinced that the USSR would fulfil its Allied duty within the set time limits.

Developments thus demonstrated that the anti-fascist coalition continued to play a prominent role in international affairs even after Germany's surrender. Following the conferences in the Crimea and at San Francisco, the Potsdam Conference symbolised the war-time unity of the United Nations. By its activities at the concluding stage of the war, as well, the anti-fascist coalition exemplified the viability of the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems. The Soviet Union's military and political collaboration with the capitalist countries, primarily with the USA and Britain, strikingly confirmed the feasibility of this principle.

The community of interests in the struggle against the fascist aggressors enabled the Soviet Union, the USA and Great Britain to draw up and enforce a far-reaching programme for the world's post-war arrangement. The Soviet Union applied its energy to secure the world-wide acceptance of the motto "Unity in peace as in war" as proclaimed by the Crimea Conference.

But subsequent developments showed that the USA and Britain had no intention of pursuing a co-ordinated policy after the war. When US President Franklin D. Roosevelt died, the helm of power in the United States was taken over by people advocating a hard line towards the USSR. Their political strategy was based on the assumption that war with the Soviet Union was inevitable. Hence the striving to weaken the USSR as far as possible. As early as May 8, 1945, Harry S. Truman, the new US President, ordered a sharp reduction of Lend-Lease supplies to the Soviet Union. The US Government sought to use its monopoly over the atomic bomb obviously to pressure the USSR. Truman's foreign policy was wholeheartedly supported by the British ruling circles. The war had not ended when Churchill ordered the British forces to collect German weapons which he intended to re-issue to German troops, whom he regarded as his future allies in the event of another war against the USSR.

These were the first sinister sparks of the cold war which flashed at the close of the hot war, and they steadily multiplied on the international scene.

THE THIRD PERIOD OF THE WAR

A BRIEF SUMMARY

The third period of the Great Patriotic War lasted sixteen and a half months, from late December 1943 to May 9, 1945. In that period the Soviet Armed Forces dealt the enemy a series of blows, as a result of which the German Army, the strongest in the capitalist world, was smashed and nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally.

In 1944 the Red Army fulfilled the task set by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government of driving the nazi invaders out of Soviet territory. The state frontier of the USSR, violated in a sneak attack by the nazis in June 1941, was restored. Altogether in 1944 the Red Army liberated an area of 906,000 square kilometres or 46 per cent of the Soviet territory occupied by the enemy. Before the war this area was inhabited by nearly 39 million people.

In 1944-45, with tremendous moral and active support from the working people of Europe, the Soviet Armed Forces achieved the next major military and political objective of the war, that of helping many European peoples to win liberation from nazi tyranny. The so-called new order in Europe was abolished. The nazi state in Germany herself was destroyed and the German people delivered from the brown plague.

Early in 1945, as a result of the crushing blows struck by the Red Army, the Allies and the Resistance movement, the nazi bloc in Europe disintegrated and the countries in it (with the exception of Finland) declared war on Germany.*

The Red Army's entry into Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe was by no means an indication that the Soviet Union wanted to seize foreign territory or to impose a social system to its own liking. It was dictated by the need to hasten the defeat of nazi Germany and her allies. As it had always done in the past, the Soviet Government rigidly adhered to the principles of the Leninist foreign policy: non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations and respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of their countries. The victories of the Red Army furthered the growth of the national liberation struggle. In Europe this struggle reached its largest scale in Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, France, Italy and Belgium. The nations delivered from the nazi yoke with the help of the Red Army decided the question of their state system

* After breaking off relations with Germany, Finland expelled the nazi forces from her territory.

by themselves. The Red Army steadfastly supported all the progressive, anti-fascist forces in the struggle against reaction, and this was instrumental in opening the road to people's democratic development in the liberated countries.

As in the preceding two periods, the main burden of the war against nazi Germany was borne by the Soviet Armed Forces. The Second Front in Western Europe was of unquestioned significance to the further course of the war: Germany had to fight the war on two fronts. However, the German Command continued to regard the Red Army as its principal adversary, and it used its main strategic reserves on the Soviet-German front. On January 1, 1945, the Germans had on that front more than half (57.1 per cent) of their divisions as well as two-thirds of their artillery, mortars, tanks and assault guns and nearly half of their air strength (in terms of combat aircraft).

The nazi army suffered its heaviest casualties on the Soviet-German front. The Red Army destroyed or took prisoner 290 divisions and 25 brigades. In addition, 93 divisions surrendered at the end of the war. In the period from January 1, 1944, to May 15, 1945, the enemy lost 3,600,000 men (excluding prisoners and those who surrendered under the act of capitulation).

The Soviet victories had helped the Allied troops. The Red Army onslaught in the Warsaw-Berlin direction and in the Balkans had enabled the forces of the Western Allies to advance successfully in Western Europe.

In January 1945 the Red Army forced the German Command to halt its offensive against the Allies in the West European theatre. This affected the subsequent course of the war: on March 10-23, the American and British forces reached and crossed the Rhine and started an offensive deep into Germany.

A major role in the third period of the war was played by the people's armies of Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Bulgaria, which fought shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army against the common enemy, and also by the Resistance movement in European countries.

During this period the Soviet Armed Forces had all the weapons they needed to defeat the enemy. Resting on the political and economic superiority of socialism, the Soviet war industry produced sufficient quantities of arms and ammunition. The Red Army's technical equipment reached its highest war-time level towards the beginning of 1945. Compared with the beginning of 1944, it had considerably more aircraft, field guns and mortars of all calibre, and tanks and self-propelled guns. This equipment was, as a rule, superior to that of the enemy. The new, better organisational pattern of the combined armies and of the infantry corps and divisions made provision for almost doubling the number of tractor-drawn artillery, and the complete motorisation of engineer and communications units as well as of the army and, partially, the immediate logistical facilities.

The third period of the war witnessed a fresh triumph of Soviet military science, which improved from one campaign to another. In all the three campaigns the Soviet Armed Forces conducted a strategic offensive. A major defensive action was fought only in March 1945—by troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front in the vicinity of Lake Balaton. But even there, as in the Battle of Kursk, defence was chosen with the purpose of repulsing numerically superior armoured forces. The enemy was quickly overwhelmed and troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts at once resumed their offensive in the direction of Vienna.

A feature of the offensive strategy was that relying on the Soviet Union's tremendous economic and military potential, the blows were steadily intensified and the Red Army invariably achieved its objectives.

In the campaign of the winter of 1944 the offensive was developed gradually in the Northwestern and Southwestern directions, involving seven fronts and three fleets. The front-line extended for 2,200 kilometres and the longest distance advanced was 600 kilometres. However, these operations were still on Soviet territory. Only in the Southern sector of the front the Red Army crossed into a foreign country—Rumania.

The Soviet offensive in the summer and autumn of 1944 was on a considerably larger scale. In that campaign the Red Army decimated the main nazi forces on the Soviet-German front and completed the liberation of Soviet territory in all the three theatres of hostilities. The war was carried beyond the frontiers of the USSR. In the summer of 1944, when the liberation of the peoples of Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe was started, victories were won through successive strategic offensive operations. The main blow was struck at the centre of the Soviet-German front. After defeating the enemy in Byelorussia and the western regions of the Ukraine and liberating the eastern regions of Poland, the Soviet Supreme Command concentrated its main effort in the Southwestern and Northwestern theatres.

During the summer-autumn campaign an offensive was launched along the entire front, and it involved all the twelve fronts of the Red Army, three fleets, all the Soviet flotillas and the entire Air Force. The front-line was 3,000 kilometres long and the troops advanced from 400 to 900 kilometres. The enemy naval forces were driven out of the Black Sea and the gulfs of Finland and Riga and from a considerable section of the eastern coast of the Baltic.

In the campaign of 1945 a powerful blow was struck along a broad front, as a result of which the peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe were liberated and the enemy was destroyed.

This campaign featured particularly numerous operations in which large enemy groups were encircled and annihilated—at Korsun-Shevchenkovsky, Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Minsk, Brody, Jassy, Budapest, in East Prussia, at Berlin, and east of Prague.

The Red Army improved its tactics in conformity with strategy. This was achieved by steadily increasing the numerical strength of the assault groups, augmenting the fire power of the artillery, steadily enhancing troop manoeuvrability and stepping up the rate of advance. In most operations the main line of the enemy defences was breached on the first or, at the latest, the second day of the assault, following which Soviet troops went in pursuit of the enemy. Tactics calling for the breaching of deeply-echeloned enemy positions were employed on a steadily increasing scale. This was made possible by the improved equipment, the excellent organisation, the continuous co-operation between all arms of the service and the better administration.

The Air Force and Navy likewise gained experience. With undivided command of the air in its hands, the Air Force concentrated mainly on supporting the land forces. Soviet flyers battered key objectives and enemy reserves and reliably covered the advance of Soviet troops. In this period the Soviet immediate support and long-range aircraft flew 1,406,000 sorties. As in the preceding periods, the Navy assisted in the advance of the land forces in coastal areas. Soviet warships fought the enemy on three seas. The Black Sea Fleet was active in destroying the enemy in the Crimea and in Rumania. The Baltic Fleet helped to break

the siege of Leningrad and participated in the offensives in the Karelian Isthmus, the Baltic area, East Prussia and Pomerania. The Northern Fleet made an appreciable contribution towards the liberation of Soviet territory within the Arctic Circle. During the third period of the war the Navy landed 70 task forces and sank 455 transports (totalling over 1,000,000 tons) and over 400 warships and auxiliary vessels.

The Soviet Government highly appraised the growth of the Armed Forces' fighting efficiency. More than 10,000 units were decorated with Orders in 1944-45 alone.

Co-operation between troops and partisans was accorded an important place in military operations, particularly during the summer and autumn of 1944. Raids deep into the enemy rear by large partisan formations grew more and more frequent, and in 1944 the partisans began operating beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union. Motivated by their sense of proletarian internationalism, experienced detachments of Soviet partisans rendered extensive assistance to partisans in Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe, supplying them with weapons, equipment and ammunition and facilitating their struggle.

Mass heroism, courage and valour were displayed by the Red Army to the very last day of the war. This was the result of the extensive and purposeful ideological work among the troops. Officers and men were infused with an indomitable will for victory. In foreign countries they held high the honour and dignity of the soldier of a socialist country and fully discharged their historic liberative mission.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the architect and organiser of the victory over nazi Germany. Communists were in the front ranks everywhere. They were in the forefront in the most difficult sectors of industry and agriculture and led the work of rehabilitating the economy of the liberated regions. They were the force that cemented the ranks of the Red Army. The people saw in them an example of lofty patriotism, followed them and emerged victorious.

Part V

DEFEAT OF MILITARIST JAPAN

Chapter Twenty-One

ROUT OF THE FAR EASTERN AGGRESSOR

1. MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender left Japan in complete isolation and enabled the anti-fascist coalition to concentrate their forces against the Japanese aggressor. As long as there was another hotbed of war—imperialist Japan—the Soviet Union could not consider its security in the Far East as being safeguarded. That hotbed had to be extinguished as quickly as possible, and to this end the USSR had to enter the war against Japan. A speedy end to the war was desired not only by the Soviet Union but also by the whole of East and Southeast Asia.

For long decades Japanese imperialism had been the most sinister enemy of the peoples of the USSR, China and Korea. Ever since the Great October Socialist Revolution the Japanese imperialists had nursed implacable hatred for the Soviet Union, repeatedly attacking it in pursuance of their plan to seize the Soviet Far East and Siberia up to the Urals. As a member of the fascist bloc, Japan assisted Germany throughout the war, thereby violating her neutrality pact with the USSR. Besides, she was making ready to attack the Soviet Union. The Japanese Command drew up offensive plans in 1941-43, and found it necessary to plan defensive operations only in the spring of 1944, when the Red Army was rapidly advancing towards the western frontiers of the USSR.

The decision to switch from offensive to defensive strategy did not change the substance of Japanese policy; aggression against the USSR remained one of its corner-stones. This compelled the Soviet Union to keep 40 divisions on the frontier with Manchuria. By pinning down these large forces, Japan rendered effective assistance to Germany, her partner in the Tripartite Pact. In addition, the Japanese ruling circles obstructed Soviet shipping in the Far East. In the period from the summer of 1941 to the end of 1944 the Japanese Armed Forces illegally detained 178 Soviet merchant ships. There were unceasing provocations along the Soviet Union's Far Eastern frontiers. In 1944 alone there were 144 cases of frontier violations and 39 cases when Soviet territory was shelled. On April 5, 1945, the Soviet Union denounced the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact. The situation, the Soviet Government Statement declared, had changed: as an ally of Germany, Japan was helping her in the war against the USSR; in addition, she was at war with the USA and Britain, who were allies of the USSR. In this situation, the neutrality pact had lost its meaning and could no longer remain valid.

Let us briefly examine the military and political situation that obtained in the Pacific Basin at this time.

In 1943 the strategic initiative had passed to the American and British Command. In 1944 the Allies started an offensive in several directions. In February 1944 the American troops occupied the Marshall Islands. In the period from June to August they cleared the Japanese out of the Marianas. The fighting for the Philippines began in the autumn of the same year. A major naval battle in which the Japanese suffered a crushing defeat was fought off Leyte at the close of October. In this battle, which lasted three days (October 23-25), the Japanese lost three battleships, four aircraft carriers, ten cruisers, nine destroyers and a large number of aircraft. The American losses were only two aircraft carriers and two destroyers.

In the Burma sector of the front the US, British and Chinese troops, supported by partisans, brought a Japanese offensive to a standstill before it could get under way. Towards the end of the year the Allied forces occupied Northern and part of Central Burma and stood poised for the seizure of the rest of the country and for an invasion of Thailand and French Indo-China. This deprived the Japanese of important sources of strategic raw materials, notably oil and rubber.

In China, however, the situation was different. There the Japanese invaders scored major successes early in 1945, reaching the southwestern provinces and linking up with their troops operating in French Indo-China. An unbroken front existed all the way from Peking to Singapore. This was achieved by Japan thanks to her numerically large land forces. Besides, the passive war policy of the Kuomintang Government played into her hands. Determined resistance to the invaders in China was offered only by the people's armies led by the Communist Party of China.

On the whole, early in 1945 the situation in the Pacific and Southeast Asia favoured the American and British forces. They controlled almost all the islands of the Central and Southwestern Pacific and also Northern Burma. Hostilities were transferred to the South China Sea and the zone of the South Seas. Strategic aircraft were beginning to raid Japan proper.

However, Japan was still a dangerous adversary. She counted on fighting a drawn-out war. The plans of the Japanese Command envisaged maintaining the Kwantung Army in combat readiness on the Soviet frontier in 1945. Japan counted on smashing the people's armies of China and the Kuomintang troops, compelling the Chiang Kai-shek Government to sign a compromise peace and turning China into a bastion. In Southeast Asia the Japanese militarists planned to cling to Burma and keep United States and British troops out of Malaya and Indonesia. In the Pacific they calculated on halting the Allied advance at the approaches to Japan and prepared for decisive battle on the territory of the Japanese Islands.

Despite heavy losses by her Navy and Air Force, Japan still had considerable Armed Forces—more than 7,000,000 effectives, including 5,920,000 in the land and air forces, more than 10,000 aircraft* and nearly 500 warships.

In January 1945 the American and British Command had over 1,800,000 officers and men in the Pacific and Indian oceans as well as in Southeast Asia. In these areas the Americans and British had nearly

* Half of these were obsolete machines or training aircraft.

5,000 aircraft and a naval force of 27 battleships, 103 aircraft-carriers, 67 heavy and light cruisers, 350 destroyers and 217 submarines.

Although the strategic initiative in the Pacific was firmly in the hands of the Americans and British, the Supreme Allied Command still considered that the US and British forces were insufficient for a speedy victory over the Japanese aggressor. This was why at Teheran and Yalta the Western Allies were anxious to secure Soviet agreement to enter the war against Japan. The Soviet Government, it will be recalled, gave the necessary consent, and on February 11, 1945, the leaders of the three powers signed an agreement under which the USSR pledged to enter the war against Japan in two or three months after the defeat of Germany. The following terms were agreed upon: the preservation of the integrity of the Mongolian People's Republic, the return to the Soviet Union of the southern part of Sakhalin Island and all the adjoining islands, the transfer to the USSR of the Kuril Islands, the internationalisation of the trade port of Talien (Dairen), and the joint administration of the Chinese Eastern and the South Manchurian railways by a mixed Soviet-Chinese Company.

The Western Allied Command planned its operations in the Far East with an eye to the fact that the concluding phase of the war against Japan would be fought in strategic co-operation with the Soviet Armed Forces. By August 1945, according to plan, the British and American forces captured the Philippines, Eastern Burma and the islands of Iwojima and Okinawa. This brought the Allied forces to the immediate approaches of Japan proper.

The political situation in Japan was extremely tense. Her economy was in grave difficulties. The war of aggression, which had been raging virtually since 1931, was devouring two-thirds of her national income. The civilian branches of her economy came practically to a standstill in 1945. War production continued to receive most of the Government's attention. However, with the loss of economically vital regions, Japanese industry began to experience an acute shortage of strategic raw materials. This led to a sharp drop in the output of armaments.

Japan was ruled by a terrorist fascist dictatorship. Democratic organisations had been destroyed, and there seemed to be no possibility for open action by the working people. Yet the people waged a struggle against the war, against the capitalists and landowners. The Communist Party of Japan, functioning deep underground, organised anti-war groups at factories and in the Army and Navy. Hunted and persecuted, the Communist Party of Japan was a small (about 1,000 members) but fighting revolutionary organisation.

The position of the Japanese invaders in China deteriorated. The Communist Party of China rallied the people for a determined struggle against the invaders. Armed forces, including regular troops, people's volunteers and self-defence units (totalling 2,200,000 men) were formed in the liberated areas. The regular forces, with the 8th and New 4th armies as their backbone, had 960,000 men in the summer of 1945. However, they were numerically inferior to the Japanese, puppet* and Kuomintang troops operating against them.

The people's forces were very poorly armed, and what weapons they had were obsolete. The conditions of struggle were incredibly difficult. Yet by the beginning of 1945 the revolutionary armies drove the Japanese invaders out of 19 large regions with a total population of over 95,000,000. Democratic rule was set up in these regions, with the Communists as the

* Troops of the puppet Manchoukuo Government.

leading force. They pursued a policy of strengthening the national anti-Japanese front.

An important role in mobilising all the progressive forces of China for the struggle against the invaders was played by the 7th Congress of the Communist Party (April 23-June 11, 1945), which charted measures for preparing the people's liberation armies for a general strategic offensive. In line with the Congress decisions new regular Army units were formed, their organisation improved and weapons and ammunition stockpiled. Democratically-minded people in China were aware that complete liberation from the Japanese invaders could be secured only if there was the firmest friendship with the Soviet Union and therefore insisted that the Kuomintang Government sign a treaty of alliance and friendship with it. Pressured by the people, the Government agreed to negotiations which ended on August 14, 1945, with the signing in Moscow of a treaty of friendship and alliance*.

The national liberation movement grew in many countries of Southeast Asia as well. In most of these countries it was led by Communist Parties. The movement took the most diverse forms—from rallies and demonstrations to national armed uprisings. Armed forces—armies and partisan detachments which successfully fought the Japanese invaders—were formed in Vietnam, Burma, the Philippines and Malaya. In countries where the Communist Parties were small, the liberation movement was headed by the national bourgeoisie, which kept this movement from growing into a democratic revolution, fearing such a revolution as much as it feared the invaders.

Despite the subversive activities of the colonialists in all the countries occupied by Japan, the ground virtually burned under the feet of the invaders. Heartened by the victory over German nazism, the peoples of these countries rose in arms for their national liberation.

The British, American, French and Dutch imperialists were afraid of the broad democratic movement in Southeast Asia and sought to reduce its scale, isolate the Communists from the people and subordinate the people to their influence.

Following the Allied seizure of Iwojima and Okinawa, the Japanese Government hastily began to prepare for the defence of the Japanese Islands. At its 87th Session on June 22 the Japanese Diet passed a law on military service, under which in the event there was a need for it all men between the ages of 15 and 60 and all women between the ages of 17 and 40 could be mobilised.

While the Japanese Command was preparing for "decisive battles" in Japan, the United States and British Command drew up a plan for the invasion of that country. Under this plan the US 6th Army was to be landed on Kyushu Island in November 1945 and the US 8th and 10th armies on Honshu Island in March 1946. Large land, air and naval forces were to take part in these operations.

This is evidence that the Western Allies believed the war against Japan would continue for a long time. This was stated by many political and military leaders in both the USA and Britain. Churchill, for instance, declared in the House of Commons on August 16, 1945, that it was impossible to say how long it would take to crush resistance in Japan proper. In a memo to Truman on July 2, 1945, Henry L. Stimson, US Secretary of War, wrote: "If we once land on one of the main islands and begin a

* Agreements on Port Arthur and the Chinese Changchun Railway and on relations between the Soviet High Command and the Chinese Administration in Northeast China were signed at the same time.

forceful occupation of Japan, we shall probably have cast the die of last ditch resistance.... We shall incur the losses incident to such a war and we shall have to leave the Japanese Islands...." He therefore raised the question: "Is there any alternative to such a forceful occupation of Japan which will secure for us the equivalent of an unconditional surrender of her forces?" Believing that such an alternative existed he proposed that the corresponding warning be made to Japan.

On July 26, 1945, the governments of the USA, Britain and China sent Japan an ultimatum, now known as the Potsdam Declaration, stipulating the terms on which Japan was to surrender: removal of the militarists from power and influence, occupation of localities to be specified by the Allies, confining Japanese sovereignty to Japan proper, the resurrection and consolidation of democratic trends, the punishment of war criminals, the dismantling of the war industry, and so forth. One of the key terms was the unconditional surrender of all the Japanese Armed Forces. The Potsdam Declaration was drawn up without the participation of the Soviet Union. In spite of that its content fully conformed to the interests of the Soviet Union, which subscribed to it on August 8, 1945.

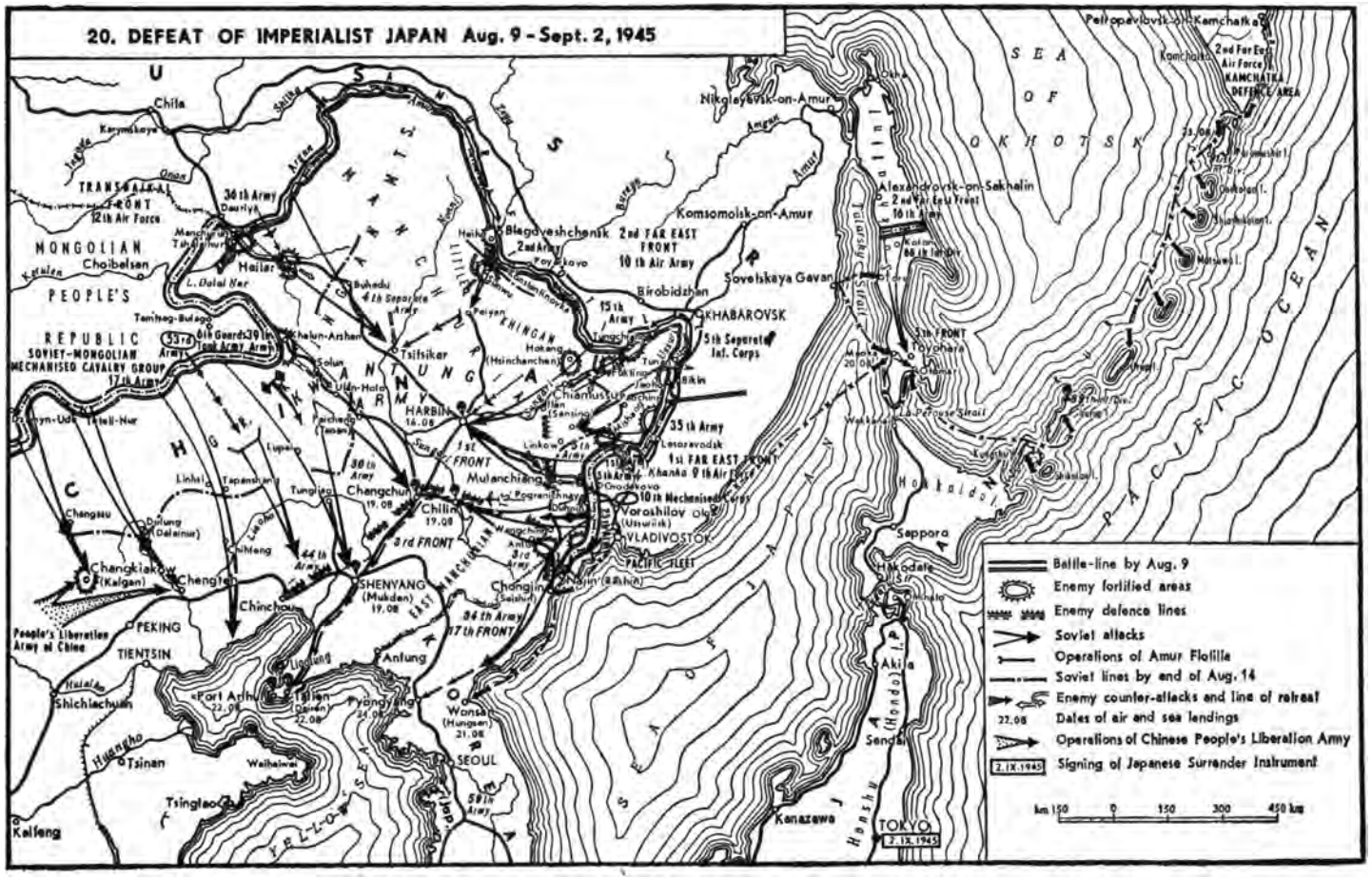
The Japanese Government rejected the Potsdam Declaration. At a press conference on July 28, the Japanese Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki characterised his Government's attitude to this declaration when he said: "We ignore it. We shall relentlessly move forward towards the successful completion of the war."

In deciding to continue the war the Suzuki Cabinet counted on a split in the anti-fascist coalition. In order to engineer this split Japanese representatives held secret talks with the USA and Britain. One of the points on which they insisted was that the emperor should retain his position after the war. The Truman Administration in effect agreed to this, and it was only the Japanese refusal to surrender unconditionally that caused the talks with the USA to break down. At the same time, the Japanese ruling circles wanted to use the Soviet Union as a peace mediator between the USA and Japan, but their overtures were rejected. At the Potsdam Conference the Soviet Government informed the US and British delegations of the Japanese diplomatic manoeuvres, and the attempts to split the anti-fascist coalition failed once again.

In the summer of 1945 the US Government decided to use the atomic bomb, that had just been invented by American scientists, in the war against Japan although Japan was obviously on the verge of surrender, her fate having been predetermined by the course of the Second World War and by the fact that the USSR would enter the war in the near future.

The first bomb was exploded over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. A blinding flash illumined the sky and a deafening explosion shook the ground. The entire city was wrapped in huge clouds of smoke and radioactive dust. A horrible spectacle unfolded when the darkness lifted. Hiroshima lay in ruins. Charred corpses were to be seen everywhere. On August 9 the Americans dropped the second atomic bomb on the coastal city of Nagasaki with the same staggering results: 447,000 civilians died or were crippled in the two atomic blasts.

The imperialist circles in the USA perpetrated a crime that had no parallel in world history. The nuclear bombing of Japanese cities and their conversion into a nuclear testing ground was an act of senseless cruelty. The US Government believed this act would give it strategic advantage, primarily over the Soviet Union. It believed that this bombing would enhance its prestige as the only possessor of the new and


20. DEFEAT OF IMPERIALIST JAPAN Aug. 9 - Sept. 2, 1945
Battle-line by Aug. 9
Enemy fortified areas
Enemy defence lines
Soviet attacks
Operations of Amur Flotilla
Soviet lines by end of Aug. 14
Enemy counter-attacks and line of retreat
Dates of air and sea landings
Operations of Chinese People's Liberation Army
Signing of Japanese Surrender Instrument
km 150 0 150 300 450 km
SEA OF OKHOTSK
PACIFIC OCEAN
SEA OF JAPAN
YELLOW SEA
MONGOLIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
TRANSBAIKAL FRONT
12th Air Force
36th Army
1st FAR EAST FRONT
2nd FAR EAST FRONT
3rd FRONT
17th FRONT
KHABAROVSK
Komsomolsk-on-Amur
Nikolayevsk-on-Amur
Alexandrovsk-on-Sakhalin
Petropavlovsk-on-Kamchatka
Sovetskaya Gavan
Birobidzhan
Blagoveshchensk
Tsitsikar
HARBIN
Changchun
Chilin
SHENYANG (Mukden)
Changchiakow (Kalgan)
PEKING
TIENTSIN
Port Arthur
Dairen
Wonsan (Hungnam)
SEOUL
Vorashilov (Ussuriisk)
VLADIVOSTOK
PACIFIC FLEET
Sapporo
Hakodate
Aomori
Sendai
Kanazawa
TOKYO
2.IX.1945

powerful nuclear weapon. Japanese historians justly assert that "for the United States the use of the atomic bomb was sooner the first serious battle in the cold war that it is waging against Russia than the last military action of the Second World War".

However, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima did not have the effect on Japanese ruling circles that the US Government expected it would. The Japanese Government was more worried by the Soviet Union's attitude towards Japan. Soon this attitude became known to the whole world. In the evening of August 8 the Soviet Government declared war on Japan.

This predetermined the inevitable defeat of imperialist Japan. In fulfilment of its Allied commitments under the Yalta agreement, the USSR entered the war in order to speed up Japan's surrender and hasten the end of the Second World War, ensure the security of the Soviet frontiers in the Far East, deliver the peoples, including the Japanese people, from further sacrifice and suffering and help to liberate the Asian countries, particularly China, from Japanese occupation. This made it a just war.

The Soviet declaration of war against Japan was welcomed by all progressive mankind. The peoples of the whole world now knew that the war would soon end and the long-awaited world peace would come.

2. COLLAPSE OF THE KWANTUNG ARMY

In the spring of 1945 the strategic plan of the Imperial Headquarters assigned defensive tasks to the Japanese forces in Northeastern China and Korea. While they held up Soviet troops at the frontier and then in the Great and Little Khingan and the East Manchurian mountains, reserves would come up from North China and Korea and launch a counter-offensive.

Notwithstanding the American and British offensive in the Pacific in 1945, considerable Japanese land forces were lined up against the Soviet Union in Manchuria, Korea, South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. The Kwantung Army commanded by General Otosoo Yamada was in Manchuria. It was Japan's main land force. In August 1945 this army consisted of three army groups, a separate combined army, two air armies and the Sungari Flotilla (Map 20). Altogether it had 31 divisions, nine infantry and two tank brigades, and one special-purpose (suicide) brigade. Its armaments included 1,155 tanks, 5,360 guns and 1,800 aircraft.

The Japanese Command had at its disposal the armies of Manchoukuo and Inner Mongolia and Army Group Suiyuan, which consisted of eight infantry and seven cavalry divisions and 14 infantry and cavalry brigades. The forces of the 5th Army Group were deployed on South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands and were subordinated to Imperial Headquarters. These forces were composed of three divisions, one brigade and one air regiment.

In August 1945 Japan thus had appreciable forces in the above-mentioned regions: 49 divisions (of which seven were cavalry divisions) and 27 brigades (including two cavalry and two tank brigades). The air force had nearly 2,000 aircraft. Numerically the Japanese forces in these regions stood at 1,040,000 effectives, and with local contingents at more than 1,200,000 men.

Japan had turned Manchuria into a powerful strategic springboard, spending years to build along the frontiers of the USSR and the Mongolian People's Republic strongly fortified areas covering strategic roads and acting as starting points for an offensive by Japanese troops. These

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fortifications, which the Japanese Command believed were impregnable, stretched for more than 1,000 kilometres and included nearly 8,000 permanent weapon emplacements. The Japanese Command relied heavily on its fortified areas.

In the Far East the Soviet Armed Forces launched operations in Northeast China (Manchuria), North Korea, the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk, Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands—an area of some 1,500,000 square kilometres along a front of more than 5,000 kilometres running along the frontier of the USSR and the Mongolian People's Republic. Geographically and climatically the Far Eastern theatre was extremely difficult. There were few railways and motor roads. Soviet troops had to negotiate high mountains, deep and fast rivers, arid deserts and dense forests.

The preparations for war against Japan were started after the Crimea Conference. GHQ defined the strategic objectives in conformity with the political aim of the campaign in the Far East. It was planned to strike two main blows—one from the Mongolian People's Republic and the other from Primorye Territory—supported by several ancillary blows converging on the centre of Manchuria, the objective being to surround, split and destroy the Kwantung Army.

A huge number of troops, particularly mobile units, had to be concentrated in the Far East in order to carry out this plan. The 40 divisions already there were inadequate for the task. In May-July the Soviet Command transferred to the Far East the 39th and 5th armies from East Prussia and the 53rd and 6th Guards Tank armies, as well as General I. A. Pliyev's Mechanised Cavalry Group from the vicinity of Prague. These troops had experience of storming fortified areas and operating in mountainous country. The administration of the former Karelian and the 2nd Ukrainian fronts was also transferred to the Far East.

This redeployment was accompanied by organisational changes conforming to the task of smashing the Kwantung Army. A High Command was set up to provide more efficient leadership. Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky was appointed Commander-in-Chief, with General I. V. Shikin as the member of the Military Council. Three Fronts were organised in the Far East by August 8. These were the Trans-Baikal and the 1st and 2nd Far Eastern fronts. The Trans-Baikal Front (commander—Marshal R. Y. Malinovsky; member of the Military Council—General A. N. Tevchenkov) consisted of the 17th, 39th, 36th, 53rd, 6th Guards Tank and 12th Air armies and a Soviet-Mongolian mechanised cavalry group. The 1st Far Eastern Front (commander—Marshal K. A. Meretskov; member of the Military Council—General T. F. Shtykov) had the 35th, 1st, 5th and 25th armies, the Chuguyev Operational Group, the 10th Motorised Corps and the 9th Air Army. The 2nd Far Eastern Front (commander—General M. A. Purkayev; member of the Military Council—General D. S. Leonov) was made up of the 2nd, 15th and 16th armies, the 5th Separate Infantry Corps, the Kamchatka Defence Area and the 10th Air Army.

Together the three Fronts had 80 divisions (including two tank divisions), 20 fortified areas, four tank and motorised corps and 30 separate brigades—over 1,500,000 men, more than 26,000 field guns and mortars, upwards of 5,500 tanks and self-propelled guns and over 3,800 combat aircraft. This gave the Soviet forces a 1.2:1 superiority in men, 4.8:1 in tanks, 4.8:1 in artillery* and 1.9:1 in aircraft.**

* Excluding the mortars available to the Kwantung Army.

** Excluding naval aircraft, which hardly operated over the land sector of the front.

The Pacific Fleet and the Amur Flotilla consisted of two cruisers, one leader, 12 destroyers, 78 submarines, some 500 other fighting ships and over 1,500 aircraft. The fleet was commanded by Admiral I. S. Yumashev (member of the Military Council—General S. Y. Zakharov) and the Amur Flotilla by Admiral N. V. Antonov (member of the Military Council—Admiral M. G. Yakovenko). The operations of the fleet and flotilla were co-ordinated with those of the land troops by Admiral of the Fleet N. G. Kuznetsov, commander-in-chief of the naval forces.

The tasks of the different fronts were as follows.

The Trans-Baikal Front was to strike its main blow with the 17th, 39th, 53rd and 6th Guards Tank armies from the Tamtsag-Bulago salient in the Mongolian People's Republic in the direction of Changchun and Shenyang (Mukden). Ancillary blows were to be struck by the Soviet-Mongolian mechanised cavalry group from the vicinity of Dzamyn-Ude towards Changkiakow (Kalgan), and by the 36th Army from the vicinity of Dauriya towards Hailar.

The 1st Far Eastern Front was ordered to strike its main blow with the 1st and 5th armies and the 10th Motorised Corps from Grodekovo and Voroshilov in the direction of Changchun and Shenyang, with ancillary assaults by the 35th Army from Lesozavodsk towards Mishang and by the 25th Army from southwest of Vladivostok towards Antu.

The 2nd Far Eastern Front was to assist the neighbouring fronts with an offensive by the 15th Army supported by the Amur Flotilla along the Sungari River towards Harbin.

The Pacific Fleet was to attack enemy communication lanes in the Sea of Japan, protect its own communications and prevent Japanese landings on the Soviet coast.

Preparations were started by the land forces and the navy as early as July upon receipt of a directive from GHQ. The stockpiling of ammunition, fuel, food and kits had been going on since December 1944. Here a large contribution was made by the working people of the Soviet Far East, who during Soviet years had turned their territory from a remote outskirt into a major industrial region. With their help the logistical units supplied the Army with everything it needed for the war against Japan. The troops were amply provided with ammunition and fuel, and the hospital facilities could handle 166,000 men. Much was done to organise a smooth-functioning water supply.

The preparedness of the troops for hostilities largely depended on active and skilful work by the political departments and Party organisations in the different units and formations. One of the difficulties was that the troops were in a relaxed state. The long and bitter war against nazi Germany had just ended and, naturally, the troops wanted to return to a peaceful life. Another difficulty was that the ideological preparation for the war had to be conducted in secret. Use could not therefore be made of newspapers and the radio. Lastly, the new reinforcements were mostly young men born in 1926-27 and they had to be trained for responsible tasks. Commanders, political instructors and agitators explained why the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Treaty had been denounced and showed that the peoples of China and Korea had to be helped to restore their state and national independence. The difficulties of the imminent campaign were not glossed over. Soviet troops knew of the existence of powerful Japanese fortifications and realised that the rugged terrain would be an obstacle. The combat experience gained in the West was, therefore, closely studied with due account for the features of the Far East. The troops were given all the available information about the enemy. Pam-

phlets, bulletins and reference books were published about the Kwantung Army and its armaments. Lectures, reports and talks were arranged.

The Party and Komsomol organisations were strengthened, and new organisations were set up in units where they were non-existent. This was made possible by the large influx of troops into the Party and the Komsomol. On August 1, 1945, more than half (885,478) the number of troops in the Soviet Far East were Communists or Komsomol members.

The Soviet declaration of war on Japan, the messages of the military councils of the Fronts and armies and the orders for an offensive were read to the troops in the night of August 8-9.

All three Fronts attacked the enemy on the same night. In the morning Soviet aircraft heavily pounded key railway junctions and military objectives in the towns of Harbin, Changchun, Chilin (Girin) and the ports of Yuki, Najin (Rashin) and Chongjin (Seishin). The breaking out of hostilities sowed confusion in Japanese ruling circles. At a meeting of the Higher Council for the Direction of the War, Prime Minister Suzuki declared: "The entry of the Soviet Union into the war this morning places us in a totally hopeless position and makes it impossible to continue the war." The question of accepting the terms of the Potsdam Declaration was discussed. However, Japanese General Headquarters ordered the Kwantung Army to start hostilities against the Soviet Union, and the expeditionary army in China was ordered to transfer forces to aid the Kwantung Army.

Reinforced advance units of the Trans-Baikal Front began their advance in the Khingan-Shenyang direction without artillery bombardment. The inconsiderable enemy covering forces along the frontier offered weak resistance. They were quickly destroyed by General A. G. Kravchenko's 6th Guards Tank Army, General A. I. Danilov's 17th Army and General I. I. Lyudnikov's 39th Army. In the course of the first day of the offensive Soviet tanks covered 120-150 kilometres, while advance units of the 17th and 39th armies moved 60-70 kilometres in a south-easterly direction.

The Japanese resistance stiffened in the Tsitsikar direction. Relying on the defences along the Argun River they attempted to halt the 36th Army under General A. A. Luchinsky. Soviet troops fought their way through the Tshalainur-Manchuria fortified area, forced the Argun and advanced rapidly towards Hailar, covering some 40 kilometres on the first day.

They advanced under incredibly difficult conditions. Heavy rains had started in Manchuria on August 8, turning the mountain streams into formidable barriers. The water level in the rivers rose 2-4 metres. The valleys were flooded. The roads became impassable. In spite of everything, the offensive made rapid headway.

The Mongolian People's Republic declared war on Japan on August 10. When hostilities broke out the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army commanded by Marshal Khorlogiin Choibalsan was concentrated on the Mongolian-Chinese frontier. This army was part of the Soviet-Mongolian Mechanised Cavalry Group. By August 14 the Soviet and Mongolian cavalry destroyed the Inner Mongolian army commanded by the Japanese puppet Prince De Wang, and continued their advance towards the town of Changkiakow.

The assault group of the Trans-Baikal Front moved swiftly. General Kravchenko's tanks crossed the Great Khingan Mountains on the third day of the offensive and unexpectedly for the Japanese Command overran the Manchurian Plain and captured the town of Lupei. The main com-

munication lines of the enemy 3rd Army Group were cut. However, the tank army was unable to follow up its success immediately, true, through no fault of its own. The gigantic leap across the Khingan Range had taken it far from its base of supplies, and the tanks ran out of fuel. The lorries could not move along the muddy roads. Transport aircraft of Marshal S. A. Khudyakov's 12th Air Army went to their assistance, and in two days—August 12 and 13—despite the rain and mist, brought adequate supplies of fuel and ammunition to enable the tank army to continue its advance towards Shenyang and Changchun.

The Great Khingan Mountains were crossed by the 17th and 39th armies in the wake of the 6th Guards Tank Army. On August 12-14 they repulsed enemy counter-attacks in the vicinity of Linhsi, Ulan-Hoto and Solun and pressed forward towards Shenyang. On the left wing of the front the 36th Army drove the enemy out of Hailar on August 11, blockaded the Japanese garrison in the fortified area and moved its main forces towards Tsitsikar.

In the fighting from August 9 to 14 troops of the Trans-Baikal Front crushed enemy resistance in all directions and advanced 250-400 kilometres into Manchuria, reaching Changssu, Dolung (Dalainur), Tapanshang, Paicheng (Taoan) and the region west of Buhedu, placing in a practically untenable position the Japanese forces in the northern salient of Manchuria.

The centralised control of the Japanese troops was disrupted soon after the Soviet offensive was started. The Japanese Command threw into battle separate units and formations, which were quickly destroyed by the Trans-Baikal Front. Nothing the Japanese could now do would halt the advance of this front. Convinced that its counter-attacks were useless, the Kwantung Army Command tried to concentrate its main forces on the prepared defensive line running through Changchun, Shenyang and Talien. But it was too late.

The offensive of the 1st Far Eastern Front likewise developed successfully. Its main forces attacked in the morning of August 9 without artillery bombardment.* Its assault group—the 1st Army commanded by General A. P. Beloborodov and the 5th Army under General N. I. Krylov—broke through the enemy's frontier defences and advanced 20 kilometres.

General N. D. Zakhvatayev's 35th Army pushed forward on the Front's right wing. On the first day it forced the Ussuri and Sungari rivers, negotiated a swampy region and advanced 12 kilometres. The 25th Army under General I. M. Chistyakov, which operated on the front's left wing, likewise advanced 12 kilometres.

Fierce fighting flared up on the approaches to the town of Mutanchiang, an important administrative centre which was also a powerful strongpoint covering the road to Harbin. The Japanese Command attached immense importance to this town and hastily transferred reinforcements to it. Suicide troops were used extensively in these battles. Tying tolite or hand-grenades round their waists they threw themselves at the advancing tanks. But this had little effect. The Japanese military brutally wreaked their anger over their setbacks in battle on Soviet prisoners. Sergeant D. T. Kalinin, a Komsomol organiser of the 404th Regiment, 393rd Division, was sadistically tortured. His captors cut off one of his legs, put out his eyes, cut a triangle in his right side, tore his nostrils, scalped him and burned the lower part of his body.

* Only the 35th Army began the offensive with an artillery barrage.

The fighting for Mutanchiang became drawn-out. General I. M. Sokolov's 9th Air Army subjected the town to heavy bombing several times but the enemy hung on. To speed up the advance in the vicinity of Changchun and link up with the assault group of the Trans-Baikal Front, Marshal K. A. Meretskov ordered the troops to by-pass the Mutanchiang centre of resistance from the south and gain the town of Chilin. In pursuance of this objective the front concentrated its effort in the sector of the 25th Army, where advanced units of the 10th Motorised Corps went into action on August 12. Developing their offensive in the direction of Wangching and Chilin, Soviet tanks crushed Japanese resistance south-east of Mutanchiang, while the Front's left-wing forces advanced to make contact with troops of the Trans-Baikal Front. On August 12 the left-flank formations of the 25th Army, which were moving along the shore of the Sea of Japan, captured the North Korean ports and towns of Yuki and Najin in collaboration with ships of the Pacific Fleet. The fighting for Mutanchiang reached a new peak of ferocity on August 14, when, overwhelming Japanese resistance, Soviet troops inexorably moved closer to the town.

In the course of six days' heavy fighting troops of the 1st Far Eastern Front broke through several fortified areas and advanced 120-150 kilometres gaining Linkow, Najin and a point east of Mutanchiang.

Troops of the 2nd Far Eastern Front advanced in the Sungari and Jaoho directions. During the first two days of the offensive General S. K. Mamonov's 15th Army, supported by the Amur Flotilla, crossed the Amur River north of the town of Tungchiang. They crushed the desperate resistance of the Japanese troops entrenched behind permanent fortifications and established a bridgehead on the right bank of the river. Advance units broke into the town of Fukting. They destroyed the fortifications round the town and on August 14 cleared it of the enemy. By August 11 the 5th Separate Infantry Corps commanded by General I. Z. Pashkov forced the Ussuri near Tunan, captured the Jaoho fortified area and began an advance towards Paoching. The 10th Air Army commanded by General P. F. Zhigarev continuously attacked enemy strongpoints, ensuring the advance of the land forces.

On August 11, following up these successes, the Soviet Command enlarged the offensive sector of the 2nd Far Eastern Front from Blagoveshchensk to Bikin and ordered an offensive on Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. The forcing of the Amur by 2nd Army units on ships of the Amur Flotilla had been started as early as the night of August 9. By the evening of the next day this army, commanded by General M. F. Teryokhin, had secured a bridgehead on the river's opposite bank south of Blagoveshchensk, Konstantinovka and Poyarkovo and pushed forward in the direction of Tsitsikar.

By nightfall of August 14 troops of the 2nd Far Eastern Front had advanced 50-200 kilometres into Manchuria, reaching the towns of Heiho, Sunwu, Hokang and Paoching. The Japanese Command made futile attempts to halt the Soviet advance in the Sungari direction.

In six days the Soviet troops thus inflicted a disastrous defeat on the Kwantung Army, capturing sixteen fortified areas and advancing 50-400 kilometres.

The population of the liberated regions of Northeastern China joyously welcomed the advancing units of the Red Army. Rallies and meetings were held in many towns and villages. On August 12 young Chinese liberated from labour camps held a rally at a railway junction east of Mutanchiang and passed a resolution, which stated in part: "We express our

warm gratitude to the Russian people and the Red Army for liberating us from the tyranny of the Japanese brigands, who are the confirmed enemies of the Chinese people.... Now we are free. The Red Army has come and expelled the Japanese marauders." The population eagerly helped the Red Army, repairing roads, building bridges and setting up water-supply points.

On August 14, with the Kwantung Army facing total disaster, the Japanese Government decided on surrender, informing the governments of the USSR, the USA, Britain and China that Emperor Hirohito had accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. The Suzuki Cabinet resigned on the next day. Many of the high-ranking officials responsible for starting the war committed suicide.

However, the Kwantung Army did not cease resistance. In this connection on August 16 Red Army General Headquarters issued a statement pointing out that the Japanese Emperor's surrender communication had been only a general declaration and that he had not ordered a cessation of hostilities, with the result that the Japanese troops had not surrendered. "In view of the aforesaid," the statement concluded, "the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the Far East will continue their offensive operations against Japan." Kwantung Army Headquarters requested the Soviet Command to halt the offensive but again said nothing about surrender. To this Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky radioed General Yamada on August 17: "I invite the Commander of the Kwantung Army to cease all hostilities as from 12.00 hours August 20, to lay down arms and surrender.... Soviet troops shall cease hostilities as soon as Japanese troops begin to lay down arms." But the enemy did not surrender.

By August 19 troops of the Trans-Baikal Front had gained the central regions of Northeastern China. In the vicinity of Changkiakow and Chengteh the Soviet-Mongolian Mechanised Cavalry Group linked up with the Chinese People's Liberation Army, which had begun an offensive on August 11 from North China with the objective of making contact with Soviet and Mongolian troops.

The remnants of the Kwantung Army were isolated from the Japanese forces in North China. The 17th Army captured the town of Chihfeng. The 6th Guards Tank Army liberated the town of Tungliao and advanced towards Shenyang. The tanks pressed forward night and day. The rain had made the roads impassable and they had to move along the railway track. This was an unforgettable march. For a distance of 120 kilometres the tanks advanced at a speed of 4-5 kilometres an hour. Meanwhile, on the left wing of the front the 36th Army entered the town of Tsitsikar.

The 1st Far Eastern Front likewise advanced successfully, encountering fierce resistance only around Mutanchiang. As a result of a Soviet outflanking manoeuvre, the enemy group in that area found itself in semi-encirclement in the morning of August 15. The storming of the town fortifications began, with General A. V. Skvortsov's 26th Infantry Corps acting as the direct assault force. Trained for street-fighting the men of this corps as well as units of the 65th Infantry Corps on August 16 took Mutanchiang, which covered the road to the central regions of Northeastern China.

Troops of the Japanese 1st Army Group rolled back to the west and southwest. The armies of the 1st Far Eastern Front pursued the retreating enemy and advanced rapidly to meet the main forces of the Trans-Baikal Front, the 1st Army moving in the direction of Harbin and the 5th and 25th armies in the direction of Chilin. The 25th Army's southern

group, co-operating with Pacific Fleet units, advanced on Chongjin, a Japanese naval base which had been turned into a powerful fortified area. But Soviet troops maintained their pressure. In one of the actions an assault on a Japanese mountain position was led by Senior Sergeant N. G. Markelov, Party organiser of the 335th Guards Separate Marine Battalion. A pillbox holding up the advance was destroyed by Markelov with a hand-grenade. In the ensuing fighting Markelov, after he had used up all his ammunition, seized a Japanese machine-gun and used it against the enemy. For this action he was created Hero of the Soviet Union. Unflinching courage was displayed in these battles by Maria Tsukanova, medical orderly of the same battalion. In the course of several days she had been giving first aid to wounded marines in face of enemy fire. But then she received a wound herself and was taken prisoner. When the marines broke into the enemy's headquarters they found that she had been tortured and stabbed to death by the Japanese. Maria Tsukanova was posthumously decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Hero of the Soviet Union Senior Lieutenant V. N. Leonov, commander of the 142nd Reconnaissance Detachment of the Pacific Fleet, distinguished himself in the fighting for the Korean port of Chongjin (Seishin). The Japanese clung tenaciously to a bridge on the only road out of the port. At a crucial moment of the battle Senior Lieutenant Leonov led an attack, and in the hand-to-hand fighting the Japanese were dislodged. The Soviet troops captured the bridge and held it until the main forces came up. The port was liberated on August 16. Leonov received his second Gold Star for his part in the battle.

On August 19, after crossing the East Manchurian Mountains, troops of the 1st Far Eastern Front gained the Central Manchurian Plain, crushing all of the enemy's attempts to preserve an unbroken front.

Troops of the 2nd Far Eastern Front were likewise hot in pursuit of the hastily retreating enemy. By August 19 the 2nd Army had covered 150 kilometres in the Tsitsikar direction and approached the town of Peiyan. In the Sungari direction the 15th Army advanced 300 kilometres and reached the town of Ilan (Sansing). The 5th Infantry Corps liberated the town of Poli.

Seeing the futility of further resistance, the Japanese Command ordered hostilities to be ceased immediately. The surrender of Japanese officers and men began en masse in the morning of August 19. Task forces were landed in the larger towns of Northeastern China, Korea and the Liaotung Peninsula in order to hasten the enemy's surrender, save industrial enterprises from destruction and prevent valuables from being taken out of China. Such task forces were landed in Shenyang, Changchun and Chilin on August 19, in Port Arthur and Talien on August 22 and in Pyöngyang on August 24. The task forces were followed by mobile units and then by the main forces. The 6th Guards Tank and the 39th armies were moved to Port Arthur and Talien by rail.

In liberated territory Japanese troops were disarmed and kommandaturas headed by Soviet officers were set up. The Chinese population helped Red Army units to wipe out the small garrisons that were still putting up resistance and to establish law and order in the towns and villages. The surrender continued until August 30, by which time all Japanese troops in Northeastern China, the Liaotung Peninsula and North Korea were disarmed. While the Soviet Armed Forces were fighting the Kwantung Army, the Kuomintang did not conduct any operations against the Japanese invaders. Instead, they attacked units of the People's Liberation Army that were inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. The Japanese troops

VICTORY. REICHSTAG BUILDING CAPTURED

A painting by P. A. Krivonogov

SURRENDER OF NAZI TROOPS IN BERLIN, MAY 2, 1945 — A painting by P. A. Krivonogov

pursued by the PLA rapidly retreated to Peking, Tientsin and Tsingtao. Towards the end of August almost the whole of North China was cleared of the invaders.

Parallel with the offensive in Manchuria Soviet troops attacked the enemy on Sakhalin and on the Kuril Islands.

The 56th Infantry Corps of General L. G. Cheremisov's 16th Army operated in South Sakhalin. There the offensive began on August 11 with the breaching of the defences of the Koton fortified area. The Pacific Fleet landed task forces at Toro and Maoka. South Sakhalin was liberated on August 25 with the rout of the Japanese 88th Infantry Division defending the Koton fortified area.

The Kuril Islands operation was conducted by troops of the Kamchatka Defence Area and the Petropavlovsk base of the Pacific Fleet. A large task force landed on Simushir Island on August 18 under cover of a dense fog. There was heavy fighting for several days. The Japanese garrison surrendered on August 23. The surrender of Japanese troops on the other islands began on the same day and continued until September 1.

That ended the Red Army campaign in the Far East. In 23 days the Red Army destroyed the Japanese Kwantung Army and liberated Northeastern China, North Korea, South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. In this period the enemy lost over 677,000 officers and men, of whom some 84,000 were killed. Soviet troops captured great quantities of weapons. In the sectors of the Trans-Baikal and 1st Far Eastern fronts they seized over 3,700 field guns, mortars and grenade-throwers, 600 tanks, 861 aircraft, nearly 12,000 machine-guns, over 2,000 lorries, some 13,000 horses and 679 ammunition dumps and many other trophies. The 2nd Far Eastern Front and the Amur Flotilla captured all the ships of the enemy Sungari Flotilla. This was the most disastrous defeat suffered by the Japanese imperialists in the Second World War. The Red Army's losses amounted to nearly 32,000 men.

The Soviet offensive in the Far East was a truly lightning campaign that ended with the complete encirclement and piecemeal destruction of the Kwantung Army. The might of the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces with their vast combat experience, high morale and political consciousness was the main factor ensuring speedy victory.

In Northeastern China the Red Army displayed great manoeuvrability, using tank and motorised units. In addition to one tank and two motorised corps, the 6th Guards Tank Army of the Trans-Baikal Front had two separate motorised infantry divisions. This enabled it to operate independently, in isolation from the Front's main forces. The combined armies likewise included tank formations and units. The suddenness of the attack was of decisive importance. Despite the huge scale of the preparations, the Japanese Command was unable to determine the objectives of the Soviet Command or the time of the assault. It never expected Soviet troops to begin the offensive in August, in the period of the autumn rains.

An important part was played in the Far Eastern campaign by the Navy and the Air Force. The Pacific Fleet participated in the liberation of North Korea, South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. The Amur Flotilla supported the 2nd Far Eastern Front in forcing the Amur and Ussuri rivers and in the offensive along the Sungari River.

The Air Force supported the land and naval forces. Bombers attacked railway junctions and fortified areas. The air armies of the committed fronts flew nearly 9,000 missions. Transport aircraft carried fuel and ammunition for units of the Trans-Baikal Front.

In the Far Eastern campaign the Red Army made good use of its four years' experience of war against nazi Germany. At the same time Soviet troops gained their first experience of battle in deserts and heavily forested mountains. The Red Army once again demonstrated its knowledge of modern military science.

The extensive and purposeful ideological work by the political administration and Party and Komsomol organisations kept the political consciousness and morale of the troops on a high level. Officers and men thoroughly understood the purposes and aims of the war and in battle they displayed valour and mass heroism.

The Soviet people highly appraised the military achievements of their sons. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted the "For Victory Over Japan" Medal, which was awarded to all the participants in the Far Eastern campaign. Many units and ships were decorated with Orders. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to 87 soldiers, including Marshal R. Y. Malinovsky. Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky was awarded the second Gold Star of Hero of the Soviet Union. More than 308,000 Soviet soldiers were decorated with Orders and medals.

A tangible contribution to the defeat of the Japanese Kwantung Army was made by the Mongolian People's Republic. Its troops fought shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army against the Japanese militarists, who had time and again encroached upon the territorial integrity and national independence of the two socialist countries. Friendship between the peoples of the USSR and Mongolia was cemented by the jointly shed blood.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RED ARMY'S VICTORY IN THE FAR EAST

While Soviet forces were fighting for the Kuril Islands, the US Command began the occupation of Japan proper. On August 28 an American advance unit landed at an airfield near Tokyo, and was followed by the main force two days later. General Douglas MacArthur, Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Far East, arrived in Japan.

The act of surrender was signed on September 2 in Tokyo Bay on board the US battleship *Missouri*. The first to sign the act were the Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and General Yoshijiro Umezu, Chief of the General Staff. It was then signed by representatives of the Allied powers: General Douglas MacArthur for the United Nations, Admiral Chester Nimitz for the USA, the Kuomintang General Su Yung-chang for China, Admiral Bruce Fraser for Britain, General K. N. Derevyanko for the Soviet Union, and by representatives of Australia, Canada, France the Netherlands and New Zealand. Under this act Japan accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration and announced the unconditional surrender of her own Armed Forces and those under her control. The military and civil administration was ordered to carry out all the demands of the Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Far East. The Japanese Government was ordered forthwith to release all prisoners of war and civilian internees. The powers of the emperor and the activity of the Government were subordinated to the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

Japan ceased resistance after signing the act, but the surrender of Japanese troops was drawn out in East and Southeast Asia, particularly in Central and North China. The document on the surrender of the Japanese in these areas was signed at Nanking on September 9, but this

was only a formal act. Chiang Kai-shek tried to prevent the Japanese troops from surrendering to the people's liberation 8th and 4th armies. On top of that he used Japanese troops against these armies until 1946. Three months after the surrender 225,000 Japanese troops were doing "guard duty" in a number of provinces of China. This policy had the backing of the USA, which gave the Kuomintang every possible assistance against the people's liberation armies—weapons, equipment, instructors and military advisers. Large numbers of Kuomintang troops were transported by US aircraft to Shanghai, Nanking and Tientsin.

The signing of the act of surrender put an end to the war against Japan and the Second World War. It was an event of world-wide importance. In the Soviet Union September 3 was proclaimed the Day of Victory over Japan.

With the end of the war many war-time organs of administration were abolished. On September 4 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a decree stating: "In connection with the termination of the war and the cessation of the state of emergency the further existence of the State Defence Committee is recognised as unnecessary, in virtue of which the State Defence Committee is dissolved and all its affairs are turned over to the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR."

The termination of the war in the Far East saved the lives of thousands upon thousands of American and British officers and men, delivered millions of Japanese from incalculable sacrifice and suffering and halted the further extermination of the peoples of East and Southeast Asia by the Japanese invaders.

US and British political and military leaders highly evaluated the operations of the Soviet Armed Forces, which defeated the Kwantung Army, and correctly assessed the Soviet Union's role in hastening the end of the war against Japan. One of them, General Claire L. Chennault, commander of the US Air Force in China, declared in August 1945: "The Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan was decisive in hastening the end of the war in the Pacific, which would have occurred even if atomic bombs were not used. The swift blow struck at Japan by the Red Army completed the encirclement which forced Japan to her knees."

As a result of Japan's surrender, South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands were incorporated in the Soviet Union, which now received a free exit to the Pacific. All the springboards and military bases built by the Japanese imperialists for an attack on the USSR were dismantled and the security of the Soviet Far Eastern frontier was ensured.

Japan's surrender and the end of the war in the Far East created for the peoples of China, Korea and other countries of East and Southeast Asia favourable conditions for a successful struggle for freedom and independence. For many years the Japanese imperialists had ruthlessly plundered these peoples, turning them in effect into colonial slaves. The Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and other peoples courageously fought the Japanese invaders, but the forces were unequal. It was only the powerful blows struck by the Soviet Armed Forces at the concluding phase of the war that forced the Japanese Army to surrender. With the support of the US imperialists Chiang Kai-shek began large-scale preparations for a civil war throughout the length and breadth of China. On the pretext of maintaining internal peace in China and assisting the Kuomintang to disarm the Japanese army, the US Government landed troops in Tientsin, Taku and Tsingtao. Peking, too, was occupied. At the close of 1945 there were 113,000 US troops in China.

With enormous military aid from the US Government, the Kuomintang intensified military operations against the people's liberation armies. US and Japanese troops co-operated in these operations. The US imperialists hoped to dominate China, chiefly Northeast China. But this hope was not fated to come true. The liberated population of Northeast China united with the rest of the country's population and at once set about building a democratic state. Communists and democratic leaders, who had been active against the Japanese invaders, headed the organs of people's power. The USSR did not interfere in China's internal affairs and under the treaty of August 14, 1945, withdrew its troops from Northeast China, with the exception of Port Arthur and Talien, where Soviet troops were stationed under special agreements.*

Friendship between the Soviet and Chinese peoples strikingly manifested itself during the decisive battles against the Japanese invaders. It was cemented by blood in the fighting against the common enemy. Mao Tse-tung wrote at the time: "The Red Army went to the assistance of the Chinese people. This is unprecedented in the history of China. Its impact is incalculable." Also of appreciable assistance to the revolutionary forces was the fact that all the weapons and ammunition of the defeated Kwantung Army were turned over to the People's Liberation Army by the Soviet Command. Subsequently, the Soviet Union rendered enormous economic, technical and cultural assistance to the Chinese People's Republic.

The defeat of the Kwantung Army and the entry of Soviet troops into Korea gave impetus to democratic changes in that country as well. For many years the Korean people had been waging a bitter struggle against the Japanese invaders. Until August 1945 this struggle was carried on by Korean partisan detachments and a volunteer army. But alone they were unable to deliver their people from Japanese imperialist oppression. By defeating the Kwantung Army, the Red Army brought genuine freedom to the people of Korea. An impressive monument dedicated to the Red Army was erected on Mount Moranbon in Pyöngyang. The words inscribed on it read: "Eternal glory to the heroic army of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which liberated the Korean people from Japanese slavery and ensured the freedom and independence of Korea. August 15, 1945." On October 16, 1948, the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Korean People's Democratic Republic instituted the "For the Liberation of Korea" Medal, which was awarded to Soviet soldiers who had helped to deliver Korea from colonial oppression.

In August 1945 the Korean people began to carry out democratic reforms. But this was hindered by the USA, which landed troops in South Korea and turned the temporary demarcation line between Soviet and US troops along the 38th parallel into a frontier between North and South Korea. The country was thus divided into two parts.

The Soviet victory over Japan brought about a fresh upsurge of the revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia. An uprising led by Communists broke out in Vietnam and the Japanese invaders were expelled from that country. A Provisional Government headed by Ho Chi Minh was formed on August 25, 1945, and on September 2 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed at Hanoi and a Declaration of Independence was adopted. Patriotic demonstrations were held in Indo-

* The evacuation of Soviet troops from these cities ended in May 1955.

nesia, where combat detachments were formed. The Indonesian Republic was proclaimed on August 17. The national liberation movement grew in Burma, Malaya and the Philippines.

The defeat of the Kwantung Army and Japan's surrender as a result of that defeat were of epochal significance. This brought the long-awaited world peace. The road to democratic development was opened for the countries of East and Southeast Asia. The proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam symbolised the beginning of the downfall of the imperialist colonial system.

Part VI

RESULTS OF THE WAR

Marshals A. M. Vasilevsky (centre) and K. A. Meretskov interrogate General S. Hata, Kwantung Army Chief of Staff, August 1945

Negotiating the surrender of the Kwantung Army, Changchun, 1945

Signing of the instruments of Japan's surrender on the battleship *US Missouri*. Lieutenant-General K. A. Derevyanko signs on behalf of the Soviet Union, September 1945

Meeting Japanese truce envoys, August 1945

Weapons captured by Soviet troops, August 1945

Red Army field kitchen serves hot meals to Berliners, May 1945

Polish citizens, liberated by troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front, return home from German captivity, March 1945

Frenchmen, liberated by troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, return home from German POW camps, 1945

Group of Americans, liberated by Soviet troops, in Odessa before sailing home, March 1945

A. A. Gromyko, deputy head of the Soviet delegation, signs the UN Charter

D. Z. Manuilsky, head of the Ukrainian delegation, signs the UN Charter

K. V. Kiselev, head of the Byelorussian delegation, signs the UN Charter

Allied sentries at the Central Kommandatura in Berlin, July 1945

Chapter Twenty-Two

HISTORIC VICTORY OF THE USSR

1. MAIN RESULTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union against nazi Germany and her allies in Europe and Asia was the most just of just wars. In it the Soviet people defended their country, their socialist gains and the great cause of communism. The just, liberative character of that war was predetermined by the nature of the socialist state and its Leninist foreign policy. In Soviet society there are no classes or social groups desiring wars of aggrandisement. Soviet foreign policy rests on principles calling for peace, equality, the self-determination of peoples, respect, and the independence and sovereignty of all countries.

This truly great war was the main element of the Second World War. Breaking out as an imperialist, unjust clash between two capitalist coalitions, the Second World War, by virtue of the new historical conditions, evolved into a just war of liberation. The process whereby the character of the war changed with the growth of popular resistance to the nazi "conquerors of the world" was completed when it was entered by the Soviet Union as a result of its invasion by nazi Germany.

The results and effects of this gigantic armed conflict were far-reaching. For its scale and tension and for the number of people involved, the quantity and quality of equipment, and the colossal loss of life and material damage, it overshadowed all wars in history. It lasted six long years and drew into its orbit most of the countries of the world. Thirty-six countries with a total population of over 1,000 million fought in the First World War; the war of 1939-45 embraced 61 countries with a population of 1,700 million, i.e., three-fourths of mankind. It was served by gigantic productive forces. Hundreds of thousands of factories and hundreds of millions of people built aircraft and tanks and manufactured machine-guns, rifles and other weapons. The output of consumer goods dropped drastically, hardly covering the minimum requirements of the people. The disease rate soared and the death-rate climbed steadily. The war was profitable only to the owners of the capitalist monopolies.

Hostilities raged on three continents—Europe, Asia and Africa, with the territory of 40 countries turned into a battleground. The principal role was played by the hostilities in Europe, and the decisive sector was the Soviet-German front. The armed forces of the belligerents grew to fantastic proportions. In 1914-18 there were 70 million men in the armies and navies, while in 1939-45 this number rose to 110 million. The figures for armaments are still more striking. During the First World War six

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countries—the USA, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Russia produced 190,000 aircraft, over 9,000 tanks and some 140,000 field guns. In the Second World War four of the belligerents—the USA, Britain and Germany in 1939-45 and the USSR in 1941-45—produced about 653,000 aircraft, 287,000 tanks and 1,041,000 field guns. The fire power, range and manoeuvrability of weapons were much greater than during the First World War.

Small wonder that the belligerents suffered colossal losses in manpower and equipment. Fifty million lives was the terrible price that mankind paid for the war and for the imperialist system that gave rise to it. Particularly heavy losses were inflicted on the Soviet Union, which bore the brunt of the struggle. The USSR lost 20,000,000 of its sons and daughters—fighting men who fell on the battlefield, and civilians and prisoners of war killed or tortured to death by the nazis on occupied Soviet territory. Huge losses were also suffered by the population of the Soviet rear as a result of the siege of cities and air raids. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet people were exterminated in concentration camps in Germany herself. The nazis destroyed 1,710 Soviet towns and town-type settlements and more than 70,000 villages, 32,000 factories, 98,000 collective farms and 1,876 state farms. They blew up 65,000 kilometres of railways and damaged or removed from the country 16,000 locomotives and 428,000 railway carriages. The country's national wealth diminished by 30 per cent. The Soviet Union's material losses amounted to the astronomical sum of nearly 2,600,000 million rubles.

In this most sanguinary and most destructive war in history the Soviet Union upheld its socialist gains and advanced social system and defended its freedom and independence. World reaction miscalculated when it believed that the war would exhaust and weaken the Soviet Union economically and politically. Despite the huge losses, the end of the war saw the USSR stronger and more powerful than ever before.

The springboards used by the German and Japanese invaders for their attacks on the USSR ceased to exist. In the West and South the Soviet Union now has common frontiers almost everywhere with fraternal or friendly countries.

The Great Patriotic War thus demonstrated that no force exists in the world that can conquer socialism, and force to its knees a people that is true to the ideals of Marxism-Leninism, devoted to its socialist motherland and united round its Leninist Party. "These results," state the Theses of the CC CPSU on the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, "are a stern warning to the imperialist aggressors and a harsh and unforgettable lesson of history."

The defeat of nazi Germany and imperialist Japan—those two mighty vultures—was of great historic significance. German nazism was the most ferocious and overt dictatorship of the most aggressive monopoly capitalist circles. In its bid for world supremacy it barbarously trampled the state independence and culture of the peoples in the occupied countries and pursued a monstrous policy of physically exterminating "non-Aryan races". Nazi Germany was the bulwark of the fascist states, the shock force of the international counter-revolution and the mainstay for fascists in other countries. Imperialist Japan, which tried to impose her rule on Asia and the Pacific Basin, was a "worthy" partner. East and Southeast Asian countries that fell under the heel of Japan experienced the horrors of refined political violence and ruthless exploitation.

By defeating the war machine of the nazi bloc, the Soviet Union

shoulder to shoulder with the democratic forces of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Albania brought these countries freedom and national independence. With the support of internal anti-fascist forces, the USSR also liberated the peoples of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, which were Germany's satellites in the Second World War. Conditions favourable to the development of people's democratic revolutions took shape in all these countries.

Revolutionary political and social changes were started in a number of countries under the leadership of Communist and Workers' Parties. These changes took place in a situation where the forces of the external and internal counter-revolution had been weakened. Although the Red Army did not interfere in the internal affairs of the people, its presence fettered these forces. All this facilitated the settlement of the question of the state system by the working people themselves. Naturally, the revolutionary processes in the European countries developed in their own way, in conformity to the specific historical and socio-economic conditions and features of each country.

The Red Army brought liberation from nazism to the German and Austrian peoples. The nazi regime fell and the National-Socialist Party was disbanded as a result of the defeat of Hitler's Wehrmacht. Austria regained her national independence.

The defeat of imperialist Japan, the most bellicose, aggressive force in Asia, removed the military threat to the Soviet Union in the East and opened wide possibilities for the peoples of Asia. It was of particularly great significance to Korea and China. By defeating the crack Kwantung Army of the Japanese militarists the Red Army made an essential contribution to China's liberation from the Japanese invaders. The liberation of Northeast China by the Red Army created the prerequisites for the complete victory of the democratic forces of the Chinese people over the Japanese aggressor. By using these conditions, the Chinese revolution triumphed.

The most important outcome of the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War and of the mighty revolutionary movement of the close of the war and the first post-war years was the creation of the world socialist system. The Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic are no longer the only standard-bearers of socialism. The peoples of Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, China, the Korean People's Democratic Republic, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are also advancing along the road of socialism and communism. Later they were joined by the Republic of Cuba. "The international working class and its main creation—the world socialist system—are in the centre of the modern epoch," it is said in the Statement of the Meeting of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties of November 1960. "They are the guarantee of victory in the struggle for peace, democracy, national liberation, socialism and human progress."

Another historic outcome of the defeat of the nazi coalition was the rapid growth of national liberation wars and revolutions, a process sparked by the Great October Socialist Revolution. The heroism of the Soviet people in the Second World War and the victory over the nazi bloc raised this struggle to a new stage and gave it fresh impetus in India, Burma, Ceylon, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos and other enslaved countries. The proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945 was evidence that the colonial system had begun to disintegrate. The collapse of colonial slavery was greatly

accelerated by the formation of the world socialist system and the growth of the international revolutionary working-class movement. New possibilities for achieving independence presented themselves to all the oppressed peoples.

In the capitalist countries the influence of the Communist and Workers' Parties increased tremendously and the working-class and communist movement rose to a higher level. The Communists honourably passed the tests that fell to their lot during the war. They showed themselves to be the staunchest and most consistent fighters against fascism. The Communist and Workers' Parties played the leading role in organising the anti-fascist movement. Their initiative brought about the formation of national fronts and large partisan armies and led to national uprisings. The rapid growth of their membership is evidence of their great influence on the masses. In 1939 the Communist Parties had a total membership of about 4,000,000; in 1945 they had nearly 20 million members, despite their heavy losses in the struggle against fascism. The increased activity of the working masses and the growth and strengthening of the trade union movement were due to the selflessness of the Communists. The World Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's International Democratic Federation and the World Federation of Democratic Youth were set up immediately after the war. The Trade Union Federation alone united 67 million workers. In the capitalist countries the working class is taking militant action in defence of its economic and political interests.

The second stage of the general crisis of capitalism developed during the Second World War and the socialist revolutions. The breach in the front of imperialism was considerably widened when a number of European and Asian countries dropped out of the capitalist system. The balance of forces changed within the imperialist camp itself. Of the five capitalist Great Powers, Germany and Japan were defeated, and Britain and France were weakened. The USA, which had waxed rich on war profits and the arms race and had seized the most important sources of raw materials, markets and investment spheres, became the largest exploiter in the world, the main bastion of world reaction and an international policeman. But the uneven development of capitalism and the constantly changing balance of forces between the imperialist countries continues to give rise to acute contradictions between them. Deep internal contradictions are rending each of the capitalist countries individually.

The emergence of the world socialist system, the upsurge of the national liberation movement which has led to the formation of independent, neutral countries, the growth of the communist and working-class movement and the sharp aggravation of all the contradictions of imperialism are evidence that the general crisis of capitalism has entered a new, third stage. The key feature of this stage is that it did not start as a direct consequence of the world war. On the contrary, it started during the competition between the two world social systems, in a situation where world socialism is increasingly influencing the course of social development, the contradictions of world imperialism are growing more and more acute and the peace-loving forces are working successfully for peaceful coexistence, national liberation, for democracy and socialism.

The Second World War strikingly showed that the masses play a growing role in war and in deciding questions of war and peace. During the Russo-Japanese War at the turn of the century, Lenin wrote: "The time has gone for ever when wars were fought by mercenaries or by representatives of castes that are semi-isolated from the people. Wars are now fought by the peoples." Noting this development, which came

to the fore during the First World War, Lenin pointed out: "... war has begun to teach and indeed teaches the masses revolution, creating and deepening and extending a revolutionary situation." During the Second World War, i.e., after the proletariat had triumphed and built socialism in one of the largest countries and become a powerful mainstay of revolution and progress, and after it had grown numerically and politically in the capitalist countries, the influence of the masses on the war and on the decision of the question of war and peace increased tremendously.

Like World War I, the Second World War greatly accelerated social development by shaking capitalism at its foundations, stirring, uniting and revolutionising the masses and creating a revolutionary situation in a number of countries. But Marxism-Leninism has never regarded world wars as a self-contained factor determining social development. No Communist Party has ever advanced the idea of a world war as an indispensable condition for the revolutionary remaking of the world.

For their scale and historic significance the results and consequences of the war are truly momentous.

2. THE SOVIET UNION'S DECISIVE ROLE IN DEFEATING THE FASCIST BLOC

Victory over nazi Germany and her allies was won through the concerted efforts of the countries in the anti-fascist coalition, by the peoples fighting the invaders and their hangers-on. But the Soviet Union played the decisive role in this armed clash between the world's forces of progress and reaction. It was the most active and consistent fighter against the nazi invaders.

The Soviet-German front was the main theatre of the Second World War. On it nazi Germany concentrated her main Armed Forces in the course of 1941-45. This is convincingly shown by the following table.

Deployment of German Divisions in 1941-45*

Date	German divisions (total)	Number of divisions on the Soviet-German front		Number of divisions on other fronts		Number of divisions in occupied territory and in Germany	
		aggregate	% of total	aggregate	% of total	aggregate	% of total
June 22, 1941	217.5	153	70.3	2	0.9	62.5	28.8
December 1, 1941	223.5	156.5	70.0	3	1.3	64	28.7
May 1, 1942	237	182	76.7	3	1.3	52	22.0
November 1, 1942	268.5	193.5	72.0	4.5	1.7	70.5	26.3
July 1, 1943	297	196	66.0	7.5	2.5	93.5	31.5
January 1, 1944	317	201	63.4	21	6.6	95	30.0
June 1, 1944	328	181.5	55.3	26.5	8.1	120	36.6
January 1, 1945	313.5	179	57.1	118**	37.6	16.5	5.3

* In terms of two brigades equal to one division.

** Including the 12 divisions that operated against the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia.

Thus, from 153 to 201 German divisions operated on the Soviet-German front until the beginning of 1944. The British and United States forces, on the other hand, faced from two to 21 German divisions, and until Italy's surrender, i.e., until the autumn of 1943—only from two to 7.5 divisions. In other words, for two years almost the whole of Germany's military might was pitted against the Red Army. For three years, two-thirds of the total number of German divisions operated against the Red Army. True, in this period the American and British forces had against them from 38 to 86 Italian divisions. On the other hand, the Red Army faced from 37 to 72.5 satellite divisions.

The second front in Western Europe somewhat changed the ratio of German divisions fighting on the Eastern and Western fronts. But it did not change the significance of the Soviet-German front as the main theatre of the war. In July 1944 the Red Army faced 174.5 German and 60.5 satellite divisions. US and British troops were opposed by 135.5 German divisions. Prior to the concluding campaign of 1945 the Red Army faced 179 German and 16 Hungarian divisions, and the US and British troops 106 German divisions.

The fact that the main forces of the German Wehrmacht were on the Soviet-German front is not all that gave that front its decisive importance. It has to be borne in mind that before and after the second front was opened the fighting on the Eastern front was much heavier than elsewhere, the scale, duration and ferocity of the battles being incomparably greater than on the Western front. Moreover, the Soviet troops fought the best divisions of the Wehrmacht. The German formations that operated against the Soviet Union's Allies were as a whole less battle-worthy.

Colossal enemy armed forces, mainly their backbone—the land forces—were whipped in the battles on the Eastern front. On September 27, 1944, Churchill wrote to Stalin: "I shall take the occasion to repeat tomorrow in the House of Commons what I have said before, that it is the Russian Army that tore the guts out of the German military machine and is at the present moment holding by far the larger portion of the enemy on its front." Indeed, in the course of the war the Soviet Armed Forces took captive or destroyed 506.5 German divisions, which is more than three times the strength of the nazi divisions that invaded the USSR. In addition, it smashed 100 satellite divisions. In Western Europe, North Africa and Italy the Allies defeated not more than 176 divisions. Most of the Luftwaffe was likewise destroyed on the Soviet-German front. In the war against the USSR Germany lost 10 million men, which is three-fourths of her total World War II loss of 13,600,000 men.

A heavy defeat was inflicted by the Red Army on the Armed Forces of imperialist Japan as well. During the short campaign of August 1945 it crushed the Kwantung Army, which lost more than 677,000 officers and men, most of whom were taken prisoner. The devastating defeat suffered by the Kwantung Army was one of the factors bringing about Japan's surrender.

The just war of the socialist state was closely linked with the anti-fascist, liberation struggle of the peoples of Europe and Asia. This link was mutual and was of great importance both for the Soviet Union and the European and Asian countries. The democratic forces of the peoples of Europe rendered the USSR immense assistance by pinning down a large number of enemy divisions for a long time and giving advancing Soviet troops every co-operation in their own countries. The courageous

struggle of the partisans, the sabotaging of the measures taken by the invaders and the mass-scale wrecking seriously sapped the strength of the enemy. Polish, Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Rumanian troops operated actively against the enemy in 1944-45 side by side with the Red Army. A large contribution towards the defeat of imperialist Japan was made by the Chinese and other Asian peoples.

Soviet people highly value the heroic struggle that was waged by the freedom-loving peoples of Europe and Asia. But because they were inadequately armed none of the people's liberation partisan armies could defeat the superbly armed occupation troops without all-round assistance from without, much less win a victory over the powerful aggressor states. The European and Asian peoples who shook off the chains of nazi German and Japanese imperialist slavery considered that the Soviet Union played the decisive role in delivering them from foreign tyranny and that it was none other than the Soviet people who bore the brunt of the war and rendered them tremendous assistance. This is admitted in the statements of Party leaders and statesmen of the liberated countries, and is testified to by the jubilant welcome that was given to the Red Army by the people.

3. SUPERIORITY OF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEM AND IDEOLOGY OF SOCIALISM

It was not "military fortune", not an accident that gave the Red Army its smashing victory. The outcome of the titanic struggle between the two armies was determined by a number of factors, the most important of which was the superiority of the economic and political organisation of socialist society and of its advanced Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The military might of a state rests on its economy, which decisively influences the course and outcome of a war. Guided by this basic postulate of Marxism-Leninism, the Communist Party had, long before the war, taken every step to surmount the technical and economic backwardness inherited from tsarist Russia and secured outstanding successes. In 1940 industrial output was 7.7 times that of tsarist Russia in 1913 (within the corresponding frontiers). In the same period the output of the engineering and metal-working industries increased 29.6-fold. The Soviet Union built large iron-and-steel, fuel, automobile, tractor, aircraft, artillery, tank and other industries capable of ensuring the country's defence. Collectivisation and technical re-equipment gave the country a large-scale mechanised agriculture, which in 1940 was, in the main, satisfying the Soviet Union's food and raw material requirements. At the beginning of 1941 the railway network consisted of 106,100 kilometres of track or almost twice the length of Russia's railways in 1913 and the freight turnover had increased fourfold. On the eve of the war the Soviet Union had many millions of skilled workers in industry and transport, trained engineers, technicians and scientists, and combine operators in agriculture.

However, on the eve of her attack on the USSR, Germany, which had subordinated almost the whole of Europe, possessed a much larger economic potential. The German industrial base, which included the industry of the conquered countries, was 50-100 per cent larger than the Soviet industrial base. In 1942, after occupying some of the Soviet Union's

richest economic regions, her industrial potential was 200-300 per cent greater than that of the USSR. Following her seizure of countries in Southeastern Europe and of part of Soviet territory, she was well-provided with farm produce.

The USSR, on the other hand, found itself in a very difficult situation. But socialist economy proved strong enough to withstand the sternest tests. The world witnessed a huge country placing her economy on a war-time footing on an unparalleled scale. Soviet war economy not only recovered but created all the necessary material requisites for fighting a major war and achieving victory.

The following table gives an over-all idea of the development of Soviet war-time economy.

Development of Soviet War-Time Economy

(1940=100)

Basic indices	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
National income	92	66	74	88	83
Total industrial output	98	77	90	104	92
including:					
output of aircraft, tank, weapons and ammunition industries	140	186	224	251	—
Total farm output	62	38	37	54	60
Freightage	92	53	61	71	77
Investments by state and co-operatives (excluding collective farms)	86	53	53	72	89
Number of factory and office workers (annual average)	88	59	62	76	87
Retail trade by state and co-operatives (in comparable prices)	84	34	32	37	45
State budget revenues	98	92	113	149	168

The sharp drop in the second half of 1941 and during the first six months of 1942 was due to the switch of the economy to war-time production and to the territorial losses in the early stage of the war. The colossal work accomplished by the Communist Party, the Soviet Government and the entire Soviet people during the first 18 months of the war cannot help but evoke profound admiration.

The economy was reorganised in an extraordinarily complex situation. A vast programme of redistributing production capacities, material funds and manpower was carried out. During the second half of 1941 more than 1,360 large, chiefly war, enterprises and over 10,000,000 people were evacuated to the eastern regions from the threatened areas. This required a million and a half railway carriages. A kind of industrial revolution took place in the eastern regions. All this was accomplished in such an organised and energetic manner that the output of weapons and ammunition grew steadily. In the second half of 1942 the Soviet Union had, in the main, a smoothly working and growing war economy. The war plants and the heavy industry enterprises linked up with them worked at full capacity. The building of new industrial projects was begun at the same time.

The economic reorganisation, started in the second half of 1942, was completed in 1943. That year substantial successes were registered by industry and transport. Compared with the preceding year, total industrial

output increased 17 per cent and the output of the war industry 20 per cent. It is significant that this growth was no longer due to the redistribution of material and manpower resources. Here the principal role was played by enhanced labour productivity through improved organisation and technology, as well as through an increase in manpower and the commissioning of new enterprises. Naturally, there were difficulties as well. The oil industry lagged behind, and the output of lead and zinc dropped. Agriculture was in dire straits. And it took a great effort to satisfy the food, clothing and housing requirement of the population.

In 1944 the war economy reached the peak of its development. Compared with 1943 total industrial output increased 15.3 per cent and for its volume it exceeded the pre-war level. War industry output grew by 15 per cent, investments by 36 per cent and total farm output by 48 per cent. For the first time in the war the state budget did not show a deficit. Compared with the preceding year there was a relative drop in military expenditures, although there was a certain increase of these expenditures in absolute terms. Large-scale work was launched to rehabilitate the economy in the liberated areas and peace-time industries began to revive.

Lastly, the massive switch of the war economy to peace-time production was a feature of 1945. Total output fell but this took place because war output was curtailed.

Throughout the war, of course, Soviet war economy concentrated on the production of weapons and ammunition. It gained the upper hand over the German war economy, as the following table clearly illustrates.

Output of Armaments in the USSR and Germany

Item	Unit	USSR (from July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1945)		Germany (1941-44)	
		Total	Annual average	Total	Annual average
Rifles and carbines	million	12.0	3.0	7.5	1.8
Submachine-guns	thous.	6,103	1,525	1,247	311
Light and heavy machine-guns	"	954.5	238	617	154
Mortars	"	347.9	86.9	68	17
Field guns (75-mm and larger)	pieces	97,768	24,442	44,800	11,200
Tanks and self-propelled guns	"	95,099	23,774	53,800	13,450
Combat aircraft	"	108,028	27,007	78,900	19,725

These outstanding results were achieved despite the fact that Germany's output of basic strategic materials like steel and coal was several times greater than that of the Soviet Union. In 1940-44 Germany (together with the occupied and satellite countries) annually produced 31-32 million tons of steel and 390-460 million tons of coal (in terms of anthracite). In 1940 the USSR produced 18 million tons of steel and 154 million tons of coal (in terms of anthracite). In 1942, with the loss of important economic regions, the output of steel fell to 8 million tons and of coal to 63 million tons. In 1944 the output of steel climbed to 11 million tons and of coal to 121,500,000 tons. Thus, in the war years, with 3-4 times less steel and 3-3.5 times less coal the Soviet Union produced almost twice as much armaments as Germany. The USSR used its annual 8-11 million

tons of metal more effectively than Germany did her 32 million tons. The secret of this "economic miracle" lay in the advantages of the socialist system. From the technical point of view a large role was played by the sharp increase in the output of quality steels in the country's eastern regions.

The Soviet war industry surpassed that of Germany not only for the quantity but also for the quality of many types of weapons. During the war almost the entire armament of the Red Army underwent a qualitative change. Submachine-guns became the most widespread weapon of the infantry. New types of machine-guns were placed in production. The Army received more modern field guns, and the old artillery was modernised. The 160-mm mortars made their appearance, and large numbers of rocket launchers were produced. The medium T-34 and heavy KV tanks were improved. Aircraft plants began the production of new types of planes, their outstanding achievements being the new Il-2 and Il-10 attack aircraft. The Army's continuously increasing requirements in ammunition, fuel and other materials were uninterruptedly satisfied.

Socialist agriculture likewise coped with its war-time tasks. The conditions in this sphere were different in the USSR and Germany. Until the second half of 1944 Germany could draw on the tremendous food resources of the occupied countries. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, contended with enormous difficulties. Large agricultural areas were occupied by the enemy. Most of the able-bodied rural male population went into the Armed Forces. Part of the machinery of the collective farms was sequestered for war requirements.

Making the maximum use of available labour and material resources, the collective farmers, in the main, resolved the food problem. Although farm output fell substantially, the state was able to concentrate huge quantities of marketable farm produce in its hands. In 1941-44 it procured 68,992,000 tons of grain, while during the First World War Russia procured only 22,284,000 tons. By introducing planned, centralised rationing (in 1942-45 food was rationed to from 62,000,000 to 80,500,000 people), the Soviet Union was able to ensure uninterrupted food supplies for the Armed Forces and satisfy vital minimum requirements of the population. This was possible thanks to the collective-farm system, which was established long before the war.

A noteworthy example of the socialist economy's vitality is the large-scale restoration that was started in the liberated areas during the war. Towards the end of the war the industrial output of these areas reached one-third of the 1940 volume. An important point is that the rejuvenated enterprises satisfied the latest technological requirements. In 1945 farm output in the liberated areas reached 51 per cent of the 1940 level.

On the whole Soviet economy successfully coped with all its war-time tasks, the reason for this being that it was founded on public ownership of the means of production, which ruled out all possibility of rivalry and anarchy of production. The State Defence Committee was able to mobilise all the economic forces in order to supply the Armed Forces with armaments and food, and build up the economic effort by flexibly and quickly manoeuvring with production capacities and manpower. Socialist relations of production were characterised by their usual comradely co-operation among people free of exploitation and by mass emulation. Soviet war economy plans were selflessly fulfilled by workers, collective farmers and intellectuals, who displayed mass labour heroism. During the war 204,000 working people were decorated with

Orders and medals, and the title Hero of Socialist Labour was conferred on 198 people. More than 16 million people were decorated with the medal "For Valiant Labour in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945". The great advantages of socialist society made it possible to build up a powerful, planned and organised war economy that eclipsed the war economy of nazi Germany.

The German Government made every effort to build up a "planned" and "organised" war economy. However, private ownership of the means of production and capitalist relations of production limited the scale on which it was possible to mobilise economic resources for war-time requirements. Though the nazis created a powerful war economy, this economy was unable to make full use of the huge production apparatus and of its own gigantic potentialities.

In Germany because of the insuperable barriers created by the objective laws of capitalist production there was only relative planning and organisation. Planning and the management of industries were in the hands of the monopolists themselves or their representatives in the industrial management committees and commissions. Small wonder that only those plans and instructions were fulfilled that brought super-profits to the monopolies. Ruthless competition between the monopolies and between enterprises not belonging to trusts, as well as anarchy of production prevented the attainment of a higher level of productivity.

At the war plants the workers were hideously exploited. An acute man-power shortage made the nazis utilise the forced labour of foreign workers and prisoners of war. This was, in effect, slave labour. Draconic measures were taken to increase the productivity of this labour. But despite the tyrannical regime at the factories, the foreign workers, the prisoners of war as well as part of the German office and factory workers took recourse to sabotage, wrecking and even strikes. All this hindered the fulfilment of state arms production plans.

The contradictions inherent in capitalist economy made it impossible for nazi Germany to reach the Soviet 1943-45 level of armaments production, much less to exceed it.

The Soviet political system likewise demonstrated its superiority during the war. Politics, as Lenin defined it, is the concentrated expression, generalisation and completion of economy. The economic interests of the ruling class are most fully expressed precisely in politics. Therefore the political system, which is called upon to champion the basic interests of the ruling class, directly and decisively influences the nature and outcome of war.

The Soviet socialist state is a state of a new type. It was created under the leadership of the Communist Party headed by Lenin, by the working class in the interests of the whole nation, and its strength and stability lies primarily in the fact that it concentrates in its own hands the socialist socialised means of production, that it is a weapon of the people and acts as their representative. The Soviet state draws its might from the alliance between the workers and peasants led by the working class. This alliance went from strength to strength with the triumph of socialism and with the change that had been accomplished in the make-up of the workers, peasants and intellectuals. The social and political unity of Soviet society took shape and became consolidated and the social basis of the Soviet system was considerably enlarged.

The might of the socialist state also has a national foundation, namely, friendship among the peoples of the USSR. New, socialist nations basically differing from the bourgeois nations were moulded during the drive to

build socialism. Socialist nations are not torn by class antagonisms. They are intrinsically homogeneous. The friendship among the peoples of the USSR is cemented by socialist ownership, the alliance between the workers and peasants, the single Marxist-Leninist world outlook, Soviet patriotism, proletarian internationalism and respect for the Russian people, who are in the forefront among equals.

The consolidation of the social and political unity of Soviet society and the enlargement of the social basis of the Soviet system was accompanied by an extension of proletarian democracy, which gradually began to turn into popular, socialist democracy.

Socio-political unity and friendship among the peoples led by the Communist Party were the foundation of the Soviet Union's invincible might and the main weapon of its defence.

The Soviet Union was opposed by nazi Germany, a state created by monopoly capital as an obedient tool for the oppression of the working masses. Having set its sights on war the nazi state concentrated chiefly on building up a large, obedient and well-trained and well-armed army. In order to draw the people into a war of aggrandisement the nazi rulers promised the urban middle strata that they would abolish all taxes and curb the appetites of the big merchants and industrialists; the peasants were promised that their debts would be annulled, that a land reform would be carried out and that the village poor would be given land; the workers were promised freedom and "national socialism" founded on conciliation between classes.

But these were and remained empty promises. The nazi state consistently pursued a policy calculated to ruin the petty bourgeoisie and make short work of those who opposed the big capitalists. Far from receiving land, the land-hungry and landless peasants found themselves in greater distress than ever before and in the complete power of the kulaks and landowners.

The nazi party, nursed and reared by monopoly capital and militarist circles, was the mainspring in the mechanism of the nazi state. It was the principal instrument for befuddling the masses, preparing and conducting a piratical war and brutally crushing the active sections of the working class in Germany and the peoples of other countries. The nazi party created round itself a network of police and terrorist organisations of the military and para-military type, such as the security organs (SS) and the storm troops (SA).

In suddenly attacking the Soviet Union the nazis calculated that by various political subterfuges they would drive a wedge between the working class and the peasants, and between the Russian and other peoples of the USSR. But they grossly miscalculated. The war brought the workers and peasants still closer together and called forth an unparalleled upsurge of patriotism. Friendship among the peoples of the Soviet Union grew even more stronger in the struggle against the nazi invaders. No nation flinched in face of the "whip" of the invaders nor was tempted by any "cake" offered by them. In the territory of the Soviet republics occupied by them the nazis were unable to create puppet governments after the Norwegian, Slovak or other models. Under the leadership of the Communist Party the whole country—the front and rear—was turned into a single military camp.

During the war the socialist state concentrated on building up and strengthening the Armed Forces, organising the war economy by giving full scope to the creative initiative of the people and consolidating the Soviet Union's international position. All power was concentrated in the

hands of the State Defence Committee headed by Stalin. It was the highest organ directing the country and the Armed Forces. It efficiently co-ordinated the work of the Council of People's Commissars, the various commissariats and local government bodies and organisations in the different republics. The leadership it provided was purposeful, concrete and operational. It had its authorised representatives at the defence industry commissariats, and in the different territories, regions and large war plants. During the war it passed nearly 10,000 decisions, which were quickly translated into practice by central and local bodies. Local defence committees were set up in 1941-42 in Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa, Sevastopol, Stalingrad and other front-line cities. The State Defence Committee played a key role in mobilising the country's resources and achieving victory.

Rigid centralisation of administration during the war years was combined with the democracy of the Soviet social system, with broadly representative organs of Soviet power. Apart from extraordinary bodies there functioned permanent constitutional organs—the Soviets of Working People's Deputies and their executive committees. In all its work, the socialist state relied on the masses, maintaining close contact with them through the Soviets of Working People's Deputies and through a ramified network of public organisations and voluntary societies. Under the Party's leadership the local Soviets organised the people for the fulfilment of defence tasks and did much to mobilise manpower, material resources and financial means.

All the measures ordered by the state were actively supported by the trade unions and the Komsomol. Extensive work was accomplished by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, the Soviet women's and youth committees and the scientific, technical, cultural and defence societies. The consumers' co-operatives played a big role in supplying food for the population and procuring local resources to meet the country's requirements.

In foreign policy the Soviet Union sought to create the most advantageous international conditions for a victorious war. Soviet diplomacy foiled the intrigues of the imperialists, who sought to isolate the USSR in the international arena by forming a united anti-Soviet imperialist front. It skilfully averted an attack by nazi Germany for two years, giving the Soviet Union the opportunity better to prepare for war.

Soviet foreign policy demonstrated its ability to tackle and correctly solve the most complicated problems concerning relations with the liberated peoples. The USSR consistently upheld the national independence and state sovereignty of the peoples of Europe and Asia and rendered them all the aid in its power. Thanks to the consistent implementation of the Leninist principles of foreign policy, the Soviet Union established with these countries a new type of relations based on respect for all peoples, big and small, on co-operation and mutual assistance and on proletarian internationalism.

While nazi foreign policy, founded on compulsion, pillage and scorn for other peoples, inevitably doomed nazi Germany to isolation, Soviet foreign policy, which is one of friendly co-operation with all peace-loving peoples, enabled the USSR to extend and strengthen its relations with other countries. On the eve of the war the USSR had diplomatic relations with 25 countries, and by the end of the war such relations existed with 49 countries.

The superiority of the Soviet political system over the political regime of nazi Germany was thus indisputable, as was proved by the stern test

of war. The nazi state collapsed despite the fact that in order to achieve its sanguinary aims it managed to enlist the support of huge forces from among the deluded strata of the German people. The Soviet state headed by the Communist Party gained the upper hand because its strength lay in the consciousness of the people and because it had more reserves and sources of might and closer bonds with the masses.

Besides showing the indisputable advantages of the Soviet economic and political system, the war demonstrated the strength of socialist ideology, which is the spiritual weapon of the Soviet people.

The fact that the triumph of socialism in the USSR had brought with it a far-reaching change in the ideological field, in the minds of the people, was of the utmost importance in bringing about the defeat of nazi Germany. In addition to shaping the social and political unity of the Soviet people, the triumph of socialism moulded ideological and moral unity founded on Marxism-Leninism, the most advanced and the only scientific ideology. Communist morality became part and parcel of the Soviet people, who are active fighters for socialism and communism.

The moral and political unity of the Soviet people emerged and grew stronger in the struggle against all manifestations and hues of bourgeois ideology. However, by virtue of the tenacity of capitalist survivals in the minds of the people and due to the influence of the capitalist encirclement this struggle was not completed. Hostile ideology continued to exert a pernicious influence on unstable and unsteeled elements among the Soviet people. The Communist Party, always fully armed to combat bourgeois ideology, worked tirelessly to strengthen the ideological and moral unity of the people.

Nazism, which propounded the most reactionary and dangerous form of bourgeois ideology, was the most hostile to socialism. It preached war and delirious ideas of racial supremacy with the object of winning world domination for German monopoly capital. The nazis resorted to all kinds of ideological subterfuges in order to justify their suppression of the revolutionary and democratic movement in their own country and turn the German people into an obedient tool of the capitalist monopolies. Moreover, they sought to prove that the Soviet Union, bulwark of socialism, democracy and peace, would inevitably be destroyed. Lastly, they sought to justify the subjugation of their imperialist rivals and prove that it was necessary to seize their colonies. In German nazi ideology, reactionary, man-hating and bellicose, racism and extreme chauvinism interlocked with rabid anti-communism and predatory militarism. It was saturated with social demagogy, accompanying its preaching of reactionary ideas with acts of terrorism and intimidation. The result of this was that many millions of Germans found themselves captive to nazi demagogy. The brutal racial theory and the slogan of Lebensraum poisoned the minds of a large part of the German people. Degenerates and sadists in SS uniform and heartless murderers in soldiers' greatcoats became heroes of the day.

Two opposing ideologies, socialist and bourgeois-nazi, were locked in fierce combat during the war. This was a struggle for people's minds, for influence among the masses because ideas are strong only when they are thoroughly understood by the masses.

During the war the Communist Party's ideological work was aimed first and foremost at exposing the man-hating philosophy of nazism, at consolidating socialist ideals and further enhancing the political consciousness

of Soviet people and making every citizen of the USSR keenly aware of his responsibility for the destiny of his country.

The Communist Party educated Soviet people in the spirit of socialist ideology and morals, bringing to light the entire ideological wealth of Marxism-Leninism and subverting the vile bourgeois-nazi theories of "national socialism". Devotion to communism strengthened the Soviet people's confidence in victory. Communism incorporates the duty to defend the socialist motherland, fidelity to which signifies a dedicated struggle to safeguard and consolidate the victorious socialist system. While fostering Soviet patriotism among the people, the Communist Party exposed the nazis as inveterate chauvinists.

The Communist Party infused the people with the spirit of proletarian internationalism, fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries, intolerance of enemies of their socialist motherland and devotion to peace and the freedom of nations. The ideas of internationalism helped Soviet people to understand the villainy and reactionary significance of the nazi division of mankind into "higher" and "lower" races and nations.

In opposition to the barbarous theory and practice of exterminating and destroying everything non-German, the Communist Party propagated and championed friendship among peoples and socialist humanism. While implacably hating the nazi vandals, Soviet people did not identify them with the German nation. When the Red Army entered German territory it continued destroying nazi hangmen but treated the population with genuine humaneness.

The lofty ideals of the Soviet people and their patriotism and internationalism were manifested most strikingly in their heroism. This was a heroism of a new type, for it was displayed en masse. The mass heroism of troops, partisans and underground fighters and their high morale were in many ways determined by the close bond with the rear. Victories at the front inspired the people in the rear to perform outstanding feats of labour. Surmounting hardship and displaying great staunchness they worked with dedication for victory. This mass heroism, dedication, staunchness and organisation of the Soviet people and their Armed Forces during the war have no parallel in history.

The war mercilessly laid bare the brutality of the German Army and showed the hollowness of the reactionary ideology gripping that army. The German officers and men who fought under the banner of racism and anti-communism showed themselves to the world as pillagers and ravishers. At the same time the war revealed the progressive nature and unprecedented mobilising strength of socialist ideology, under whose banner a great victory was won over nazi Germany and imperialist Japan.

4. MIGHT OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES

Socialist economy, the Soviet political system and Marxist-Leninist ideology demonstrated their overwhelming superiority over German capitalist economy, the nazi system and reactionary nazi ideology. In the long run these advantages told on the armed struggle. The Soviet Union's military victory was decided by the Armed Forces, by their organisation and combat skill.

The German Army was the military machine of an imperialist state, an instrument of the ruling capitalist class and it was used by that class to carry out its reactionary home and foreign policy by compulsion. The

commanding personnel in that army, particularly the General Staff and senior officers, came from the propertied classes. Many of them were from aristocratic Prussian Junker families. The mass of the soldiers, poisoned by racist ideology and chauvinism, deceived by nationalistic demagogy and intimidated by nazi terror, were trained to obey orders blindly. This was the foundation of the discipline in the German Army.

At the time of their attack on the USSR, the German Armed Forces had accumulated considerable fighting experience and were surrounded by a halo of invincibility. The victories won in Western and Southeastern Europe made the German Command confident of its own and its army's superiority. The German men and non-commissioned officers and the sub-units and units as a whole were excellently trained and welded together. Mobile and well-organised, they were an efficient offensive and defensive machine.

At the outbreak of the war the Soviet troops were found to be wanting some of these extremely important qualities such as combat experience. But they had valuable qualities which the enemy neither had nor could have. The Red Army was the army of a socialist state. Common interests and tasks firmly linked it with the people, and it relied on advanced socialist economy. Its rank-and-file and commanders were from the working people and no class or social estate partitions existed between them. The single command exercised by the officers did not clash with the will of their subordinates. Soviet troops regarded the orders of their officers as coming from their country. The Red Army fought to uphold a just cause, defending the freedom and independence of its country. The immortal ideals of Marxism-Leninism were the driving force behind it, and it was cemented and led by the Communist Party.

In face of the growing threat of invasion the Soviet Armed Forces gained considerable numerical strength by June 1941, but, as we have already pointed out, a series of objective and subjective factors put the Soviet troops in an extremely difficult position at the beginning of the war. The invading nazi hordes pushed deep into the country. The Army, suffering heavy casualties, was forced to retreat. However, resistance mounted steadily. The people rose to defend the gains of the October Revolution. The Red Army wrecked the nazis' plan for a blitzkrieg, winning time in which to enable the country to reorganise its economy and build up its might.

The changes in the numerical strength and armaments of the Soviet and German armies on the Eastern front in 1942-45 very convincingly illustrate the growth of the Red Army's strength and its superiority over the German Armed Forces. This is strikingly shown in the following table. (See Table on p. 449.)

These are very eloquent figures: the balance of forces during the first period of the war on the Soviet-German front was against the USSR. Yet the great offensive of the winter of 1942-43, which turned the tide of the war, was started by the Red Army under conditions of almost complete equality of strength with the enemy. Subsequently, the strength of the German Army on the Eastern front dwindled, while the numerical and weapons strength of the Red Army grew continuously.

By the autumn of 1942, despite the economic difficulties and the huge losses at the firing lines, on the whole, the Red Army secured equality with the enemy in strength and armaments. On the eve of the last campaign in January 1945 its superiority over the enemy was 90 per cent in men, 220 per cent in field guns and mortars, 180 per cent in tanks and self-propelled guns, and 640 per cent in aircraft. This provides the most

SURRENDER OF JAPANESE ARMY

A painting by P. F. Sudakov

VICTORY CELEBRATION

A painting by B. V. Ioganson

Number of Troops and Armaments*

Date	Effectives of fronts and fleets ('000)	Field guns and mortars (excluding 50-mm mortars and missiles)	Tanks and self-propelled guns	Combat aircraft
June 1941	2,900 5,500	34,695 47,260	1,800 ** 2,800 ***	1,540**** 4,950
December 1941	4,200 5,000	22,000 26,800	1,730 1,500	2,495 2,500
May 1942	5,500 6,200	43,640 43,000	4,065 3,230	3,160 3,400
November 1942	6,124 6,270	72,500 70,980	6,014 6,600	3,088 3,500
July 1943	6,442 5,325	98,790 54,300	9,580 5,850	8,290 2,980
January 1944	6,165 4,906	88,900 54,000	4,900 5,400	8,500 3,000
June 1944	6,500 4,000	83,200 49,000	8,000 5,200	11,800 2,800
January 1945 *****	6,000 3,100	91,400 28,500	11,000 3,950	14,500 1,960

striking and convincing proof of the vitality and might of the socialist state's military organisation.

The Red Army's superiority in manpower and weapons over the enemy was unquestionably of great significance but it was far from being its only advantage. The basic features of the Red Army as an army of a new type manifested themselves in their full stature during the war. A lofty sense of military duty and firm discipline resting "not on the lash but on conscious devotion and the dedication of the workers and peasants themselves", as Lenin put it, made the Red Army many times stronger than the most powerful enemy.

Unbounded patriotism and hatred for the enemy, iron staunchness, tenacity, endurance, selflessness and confidence in victory were what spurred on the Soviet troops who fought the nazi hordes at the approaches of Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad and the Caucasus. The stern trials of the initial period of the war steeled the troops and deepened their hatred for the invaders. This helped them to smash the vulturine and brutal enemy. Every manifestation of cowardice and panic was resolutely cut short and universally condemned and held up to scorn. When the Red Army forced the German troops to turn and flee to the west, the political consciousness and morale of the Soviet troops began to rise ever higher as victory was followed by victory. The joy of liberating the motherland, the horrible destruction wrought by the nazis and the atrocities committed by them, the determination to put an end to German nazism once and for all and the desire to help the European peoples gave the troops the drive that was needed to achieve final victory.

The war showed that the political consciousness and morale of the Red

* The numerator gives the figures for the Red Army, and the denominator for the German Army.

** Including 1,475 tanks of new models. This figure does not include light tanks.

*** Excluding light tanks.

****This figure is only for aircraft of new types.

***** The figures for the Red Army do not include the Leningrad Front and the 37th Army. Polish, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian, Rumanian and Yugoslav troops fought shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army.

Army were unmatched. History knows of many acts of heroism by officers, soldiers and sailors. But on the scale heroism was displayed by the Red Army there is no parallel in history. Lenin was right when he said: "...Russia is able to produce not only solitary heroes.... We were right when we said that Russia will produce such heroes from the masses, that she will be able to move forward such heroes in their hundreds and thousands."

The defence of Brest, Odessa, Sevastopol, Kiev, Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad will live eternally as examples of courage and valour on the part of troops and the population. Thousands of Soviet soldiers won everlasting glory. The immortal action of infantrymen A. K. Pankratov, V. V. Vasilkovsky and A. M. Matrosov was repeated more than 200 times, and over 70 pilots followed the example of N. F. Gastello, who crashed his burning plane into a column of enemy vehicles. History will always remember the names of Y. V. Smirnov, A. P. Maresyev, the men of the Panfilov division, the task force of K. F. Olshansky, and many, many others. The names of D. M. Karbyshev and M. Jalil (M. M. Zalilov) have become symbols of unbending will. Nation-wide fame was earned by M. A. Yegorov and M. V. Kantariya, who raised the victory banner over the Reichstag. The highest distinction, Hero of the Soviet Union, was awarded to 11,603 soldiers. It was conferred twice on 104 of them, three times on two men—I. N. Kozhedub and A. I. Pokryshkin and four times on G. K. Zhukov. The names of many heroes have been entered in the roster of various units in perpetuity (about 300). Regiments and divisions were decorated with the Orders of Lenin, the Red Banner, Suvorov, Ushakov and other high awards over 10,900 times. Many units were decorated with Orders several times, with 29 units receiving five or more Orders.

The number of Orders and medals awarded to all ranks is likewise indicative of the mass heroism displayed during the war. Decorations were received by more than 7 million officers and men. Of these 8,800 received the Order of Lenin; 238,000, the Order of Red Banner; 324,000 the Order of the Patriotic War 1st Class; 951,000, the Order of the Patriotic War 2nd Class; 2,811,000, the Order of the Red Star; 2,200, the Order of Glory 1st Class; 46,000, the Order of Glory 2nd Class; and 868,000, the Order of Glory 3rd Class. Many officers were awarded the orders of Suvorov, Ushakov, Kutuzov, Nakhimov, Bogdan Khmelnitsky and Alexander Nevsky. The medals "For Valour", "For Meritorious Action", "For Labour Valour" and "For Labour Merit" were received by 7,580,000 servicemen.

Among those who were decorated with Orders and medals are representatives of all the peoples of the USSR, among them 8,160 Russians, 2,069 Ukrainians, 309 Byelorussians, 161 Tatars, 108 Jews, 96 Kazakhs, 90 Georgians, 90 Armenians, 69 Uzbeks, 61 Mordovians, 44 Chuvashes, 43 Azerbaijanians, 39 Bashkirs, 32 Ossetians, 18 Maris, 18 Turkmens, 15 Lithuanians, 14 Tajiks, 13 Latvians, 12 Kirghizes, 10 Komis, 10 Udmurts, 9 Estonians, 9 Karelians, 8 Kalmyks, 7 Kabardinians, 6 Adygeis, 5 Abkhazians, 3 Yakuts and many others. "The genuine friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union that was moulded in peace-time," said M. I. Kalinin, "burned brightly during the war and astounded not only our enemies but also our friends. This friendship has been steeled in the stern test of war." Eighty-six women, including twenty-nine airwomen, were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

The administration of the Soviet Armed Forces likewise proved to be equal to the task set it by the war. Overall direction of military operations

was exercised by GHQ of the Supreme High Command. It consisted of prominent military, Party and Government leaders. J. V. Stalin was the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. He showed great firmness and directed military operations on the whole correctly and with distinction.

In recent years memoirs and articles dealing with various aspects of the war have been published by A. M. Vasilevsky, A. A. Grechko, G. K. Zhukov, I. S. Konev, K. A. Meretskov, K. K. Rokossovsky, S. M. Shtemenko and other prominent military leaders who followed Stalin's military activity at first hand. It is quite obvious that contrary to subjective assertions, despite the complexity and contradictoriness of his character, Stalin was an outstanding military leader and strategist. In drawing up the strategic and operational plans of the Red Army he worked skilfully with a team of the Party's military experts.

It is difficult to direct a war in general, particularly one like the Great Patriotic War. Shortcomings and miscalculations were inevitable. Removing and surmounting these shortcomings, the top leadership of the war—GHQ, the General Staff and the commanders of the fronts—capably directed operations and led the Soviet Armed Forces to an epoch-making victory.

GHQ gave the fronts direct leadership, setting them combat tasks, ensuring them with manpower and weapons and controlling the fulfilment of directives. There were two cases of a departure from the GHQ-Front pattern of leadership. Northwestern, Western and Southwestern commands were set up early in the war, on July 10, 1941, as a response to the rapidly changing strategic situation and frequent breakdowns in communications between GHQ and the various fronts. But when the situation was stabilised and the work of the Front headquarters improved these commands were abolished. Leadership of the Armed Forces in the war against Japan was assumed by the High Command of the Far Eastern troops, owing to the independence of that war theatre and its great distance from the Soviet Union's central regions.

There was day-to-day contact between GHQ, the General Staff and the various fronts. It was maintained both by technical means and personal contact. GHQ representatives formed an important link in the live contact with the fronts. On the spot they co-ordinated the operations of the fronts, helped their commands and controlled fulfilment of GHQ directives, G. K. Zhukov, A. M. Vasilevsky, K. Y. Voroshilov and other senior officers at various times acted as GHQ representatives. "As a whole," General S. M. Shtemenko writes, "we feel that the work of GHQ representatives justified itself." General Staff officers frequently toured the firing lines. Besides, there were General Staff representatives in the fronts and armies, and, in some sectors, even in corps and divisions.

The General Staff was GHQ's main working body, which, to use Marshal M. V. Zakharov's words, enabled the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and GHQ "to keep their finger on the pulse of war".

The General Staff shouldered an enormous burden watching the course of events, gathering daily information about the situation on the fronts, working out draft instructions and directives and reporting them twice a day to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and once a day to GHQ. The General Staff devoted much effort to the planning of strategic operations, carefully studying and assessing the situation and the potentialities of both its own and enemy troops, to the distribution of forces and facilities, and the solution of complex logistical problems. As a rule, Front Commanders and members of Front Military Councils were summoned to GHQ where in co-operation with the General Staff they prepared draft

operational directives and participated in their further discussion. The General Staff worked out problems relating to the organisation of the Armed Forces, and exercised control over the formation and reactivation of divisions, corps and armies, supervised operational shipments, studied and generalised the war experience and dealt with many other problems.

The intelligence and counter-intelligence services were of special importance to the functioning of GHQ and the General Staff. State security organs made a large contribution to the defeat of nazi Germany. They frustrated the enemy's attempts to conduct large-scale espionage. Many Soviet intelligence officers operated behind the enemy lines, sending the Command valuable military and economic information. The Soviet people's vigilance, high level of political consciousness and sense of responsibility helped the security services to win the "invisible" battle. Military reconnaissance, which obtained information about the enemy in the course of battles, operated very successfully.

A brilliant galaxy of commanders was trained by the Communist Party during the war. Their names are nationally famous. In token of deep appreciation of their services they were mentioned by L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CC CPSU, at a meeting in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses on the 20th anniversary of the victory. They include I. K. Bagramyan, A. M. Vasilevsky, N. F. Vatutin, K. A. Vershinin, N. N. Voronov, L. A. Govorov, A. G. Golovko, S. G. Gorshkov, A. A. Grechko, A. I. Yeremenko, G. K. Zhukov, M. V. Zakharov, I. S. Isakov, I. S. Konev, N. I. Krylov, N. G. Kuznetsov, R. Y. Malinovsky, K. A. Meretskov, K. S. Moskalenko, A. A. Novikov, F. S. Oktyabrsky, I. Y. Petrov, M. M. Popov, K. K. Rokossovsky, V. D. Sokolovsky, F. I. Tolbukhin, V. F. Tributs, I. D. Chernyakhovsky, V. I. Chuikov, B. M. Shaposhnikov and I. S. Yumashov. To these names we must add those of the old guard, of Civil War fame—S. M. Budyonny, K. Y. Voroshilov and S. K. Timoshenko.

A large role in directing the war and planning major strategic operations was played by leading members of the General Staff and Chiefs of Staff of the fronts and commanders of the services. Prominent among them were A. I. Antonov, S. S. Biryuzov, A. N. Bogolyubov, M. P. Vorobyov, A. Y. Golovanov, M. S. Gromadin, V. V. Kurasov, M. S. Malinin, I. T. Peresypkin, A. P. Pokrovsky, Y. M. Fedorenko, A. V. Khrulev and S. M. Shtemenko.

An invaluable contribution towards preparing and conducting operations was made by commanders of all-arms, tank and air armies and of flotillas. To mention a few, they were P. I. Batov, A. P. Beloborodov, P. A. Belov, N. E. Berzarin, S. I. Bogdanov, I. V. Boldin, V. T. Volsky, N. A. Gagen, K. N. Galitsky, V. V. Glagolev, F. I. Golikov, A. V. Gorbatov, S. K. Goryunov, I. T. Grishin, M. M. Gromov, D. N. Gusev, M. G. Yefremov, A. S. Zhadov, F.F. Zhmachenko, G. F. Zakharov, N. D. Zakhvatayev, M. I. Kazakov, M. Y. Katukov, V. Y. Kolpakchi, I. T. Korovnikov, K. A. Koroteyev, A. G. Kravchenko, S. A. Krasovsky, Y. G. Kreizer, V. I. Kuznetsov, P. A. Kurochkin, D. D. Lelyushenko, K. N. Leselidze, A. A. Luchinsky, I. I. Lyudnikov, I. M. Managarov, N. F. Papivin, I. A. Pliyev, V. S. Popov, M. A. Purkayev, N. P. Pukhov, M. A. Reiter, P. L. Romanenko, V. Z. Romanovsky, P. A. Rotmistrov, S. I. Rudenko, P. S. Rybalko, S. D. Rybalchenko, V. A. Sudets, S. G. Trofimenko, F. Y. Falaleyev, I. I. Fedyuninsky, F. M. Kharitonov, T. T. Khryukin, S. A. Khudyakov, V. D. Tsvetayev, P. G. Chanchibadze, I. M. Chistyakov, M. N. Sharokhin, I. T. Shlyomin and M. S. Shumilov.

Despite the huge losses, the Soviet Armed Forces had many outstanding

corps, division and special unit commanders who scattered the myth of the superiority of German military tactics.

On instructions from the Communist Party and the Soviet Government many new military schools were opened soon after the war broke out, and numerous improvement courses were started for commanding, technical and political cadres. In the course of the war the military schools trained nearly two million officers.

Lastly, the Red Army had a new weapon which only a socialist state could produce. This was, to use the words of M. V. Frunze, Party and political work. The responsibility for organising this work lay with the Main Political Administration of the Red Army and the Main Political Administration of the Navy, which were vested with the rights of departments of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Towards the end of the initial period of the war there were 240,000 political instructors, devoted fighters of the Communist Party, in the Armed Forces. The importance of primary Party organisations was enhanced with the abolition in 1942 of the institute of military commissars and of deputy political commanders in 1943. An outstanding contribution to the victories of the Red Army and Navy was made by the militant organisational and ideological-political work of the political departments and Party organisations.

The Soviet Armed Forces' advantages stemming from the socialist economy, the political system and the progressive ideology could not bring victory by themselves. They had to be correctly utilised for the build-up of the Red Army and for achieving a high level of military skill.

The Soviet Armed Forces were efficiently organised at the time the war broke out. In the course of the war the organisational pattern was changed and improved depending on the quantity and quality of armaments and the growing requirements of military science. Giving every consideration to war industry achievements and the experience gained in battle, GHQ and the General Staff adapted the organisational pattern to allow improving troop control and increasing the manoeuvrability and fire and assault power of the different units.

The land forces were the backbone of the Soviet Armed Forces. The outcome of the war was determined by land battles, in which land forces played the decisive role. They were supported by the Air Force, the Navy and, frequently, troops of the Anti-Aircraft Defence.

The general trend in the changes taking place in the structure of the infantry divisions was towards an increase of the number of automatic small arms and field guns and mortars and a certain decrease of manpower. In the army in the field most of the divisions were largely undermanned. In 1942-44 only one in four divisions had up to 8,000 men, the rest had from 5,000 to 7,000 men, while some had as few as 3,000 to 4,000 men.

The artillery was the main fire power of the infantry both in defence and during offensives. The fire power of Soviet artillery may be gauged from the fact that in defence its density was 25-35 field guns and mortars per kilometre of front. In the offensives of the second and third periods of the war artillery density frequently reached from 200 to 250 field guns and mortars per kilometre of front.

Multiple rocket launchers proved to be a formidable weapon during the war.

Whereas artillery constituted the main fire power in land battles, armoured troops were the Army's main assault and manoeuvrable force. Tanks were used as a means of directly supporting and accompanying

infantry and as a means of providing broad operational manoeuvrability and developing successes.

The Red Army had cavalry divisions and corps throughout the war and in a number of battles these units gave a good account of themselves, particularly when they acted as part of mechanised cavalry groups. But modern equipment ousted the horse from the battlefield. The duel between cavalry and armoured troops, started during the First World War, ended in favour of the latter.

Engineer and signals units also made great headway during the war.

The importance of engineer support was demonstrated during the war. Engineer armies were formed during the campaign of the winter of 1941-42 in order to build defence belts and works. After fulfilling their missions they were converted into field building administrations and engineer brigades. The engineer brigades, motorised pontoon-bridge regiments and brigades, army engineer brigades and other engineer units and formations built fortifications, set up obstructions, cleared passages across enemy mine-fields, ensured the crossing of rivers, took part in attacks and in repulsing counter-attacks, and so on. Many thousands of officers and men of the engineer units were awarded high distinctions.

Signals units ensured uninterrupted contact between commands, units and formations, and between neighbouring units. During the war they achieved a high level of organisation, grew numerically and received improved equipment. In 1941-45 they built or repaired many hundreds of kilometres of overhead lines, and millions of kilometres of field cable and cable-pole lines which allowed communication to be maintained with units that frequently changed position in the course of the battles. A large role in maintaining communication was played by radio and the field postal service. The Army postal services handled 843 million letters, 3 million parcels, 2,800 million leaflets, placards, pamphlets and books, and 753 million copies of newspapers and magazines. The meritorious services of the signalmen likewise received recognition, and thousands of them were decorated with Orders and medals. Many were created Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Aircraft took part in all operations of the Second World War. In 1941-45 Soviet aircraft flew 3,125,000 sorties and dropped 30,450,000 bombs of various weight, destroying 55,000 German aircraft in air battles and on the ground. At the closing stage of the war the Soviet Air Force greatly outnumbered the German Air Force. Qualitatively Soviet aircraft were inferior to the German planes at the beginning of the war, but subsequently they surpassed those of the enemy. Most of the Soviet aircraft were fighters. A new type, attack planes, was developed quickly. In 1944 in terms of per hundred aircraft the Soviet Air Force had about 50 fighters, 30 attack planes and 20 bombers.

The Soviet Navy operated effectively during the war, co-operating with the land forces, covering and supporting their sea flanks, guarding its own bases and lines of communication, attacking enemy sea lanes and landing task forces. The main burden of the struggle at sea was borne by light surface craft and submarines, as well as naval aircraft, which flew more than 384,000 sorties during the war. The Navy inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Soviet naval aircraft, submarines and torpedo-boats sank more than 700 enemy warships and boats (including three battleships, three cruisers, 19 destroyers and 48 submarines). Soviet sailors fought heroically on land as well.

The Anti-Aircraft Defence was a new and independent fighting service. These troops passed through several stages of organisation and grew into

a powerful combat force. They shot down over 7,000 enemy aircraft; about 60 per cent of this number were brought down in air battles and the rest by anti-aircraft artillery.

Throughout the war the Red Army's logistical service was in direct contact with the country's economy, ensuring the troops with supplies. During the war the army in the field used 427 million artillery and mortar shells, 13 million tons of fuel, and nearly 17,000 million cartridges. The Armed Forces were supplied with 40 million tons of food, 38 million greatcoats, 73 million tunics, 70 million pairs of trousers, and nearly 64 million pairs of leather footwear. These figures give a general idea of the scale of the war-time supplies. The role of railway, lorry, road maintenance, medical and other logistical services grew immeasurably. At the close of the war the railway and road-maintenance troops alone were nearly half a million strong. The excellently organised medical and evacuation services restored to the ranks 72.3 per cent of the wounded and more than 90 per cent of the troops who fell ill.

A new feature of the Soviet Armed Forces was the creation of Guards units. This movement was started during the defensive battles in Byelorussia, near Smolensk, and at the distant approaches of Moscow in the summer and autumn of 1941. The title of Guards was conferred on units that won distinction in battle.

In the Red Army there were men of all the nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union. There also were national formations—Azerbaijanian, Armenian, Georgian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and others—operating as units of the Red Army.

By defeating the strongest military machine of the capitalist world of those days, the Soviet Armed Forces proved the superiority of Soviet over bourgeois military science and art. The basic principles of Soviet military science that had taken shape before the war (they are dealt with in Chapter Two) proved to be viable: the stern trial by war demonstrated that they were correct. At the same time, the experience gained in the war enriched Soviet military art and gave powerful impetus to its further development.

Even in the initial period of the war, when the Soviet High Command did not always strike a balance between the forces and possibilities available to it and the tasks which it set these forces, Soviet strategy, founded chiefly on the country's colossal inner strength, also utilised the advantages of the coalition of freedom-loving nations against nazi Germany. The concerted military effort of this coalition played a very big role. However, the contradictions in the coalition made an imprint on the strategy employed by it. Participation in the common struggle against Germany was greatly limited by the reactionary class objectives of the ruling circles of Britain and the USA. These countries made use of all their military potentialities only during the last months of the war, after the landing in Northern France in June 1944, when the victorious offensive of the Red Army and the great upsurge of the national liberation struggle of the European peoples made Germany's defeat a foregone conclusion.

During the war Soviet operational skill, representing the theory and practice of preparing and conducting operations by fronts, armies and fleets, proved its maturity and reached a high level of development. The pre-war propositions of Soviet military science on the nature and forms of operations, the organisation of material and technical supplies and the command of troops were, in the main, borne out in practice. Naturally, the war greatly enriched military science.

The tactics employed by the Soviet troops conformed to the high level of operational skill. At the outbreak of the war there were many defects in these tactics due to the lack of combat experience, the shortage of weapons, the poor training of junior officers and troops and the undermanning of the different units. But experience was quickly gained and within a short period the weapons shortage was eliminated. By the autumn of 1942 Soviet troops were considerably better armed. Their tactical training improved uninterruptedly.

5. FIGHTING BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES

The struggle waged by millions of Soviet patriots behind the enemy lines was a major contribution to the great victory over nazi Germany. This struggle raged on a vast territory (1,926,000 square kilometres) embracing the Karelo-Finnish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics and many regions of the Russian Federation, Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Moldavia. Prior to the war this territory had a population of about 85 millions. Part of this population evacuated deep into the country or was in the Red Army. But the bulk, on account of the rapid enemy advance, was unable to avoid occupation.

The nazi invaders counted on uprooting all Soviet institutions on occupied territory. They hoped to gain rapid control over the Baltic republics, the western regions of Byelorussia and the Ukraine and the western Moldavian regions incorporated in the USSR shortly before the war. But these calculations failed utterly. The people actively joined in the patriotic struggle.

A reign of terror was instituted with the object of breaking the will of Soviet people. The nazis brutally killed or drove into slavery millions of Soviet citizens. In their criminal activities the invaders relied on bourgeois-nationalist rabble that followed in the baggage train of the German Army and also on criminals and on class-hostile elements dragged out of the cesspool of history. But the nazis and their agents were unable to shake the staunchness of the Soviet people.

The heroic history of the USSR is replete with examples of dedicated struggle against foreign invaders. The names of the glorious partisans of the Patriotic War of 1812 have been preserved in the memory of succeeding generations. Soviet people revere the partisans and underground fighters who fought courageously behind the lines of the foreign interventionists and whiteguards in 1918-20. But the wave of popular wrath had never risen so high and there had never been so much unity among the people as during the Second World War. The inextinguishable patriotism of Soviet people, their unbounded devotion to the socialist system and the lofty ideals of communism and their unbending will for victory were strikingly displayed. This was induced by the fact that they were defending the great gains of socialism, for a feat such as theirs could only have been accomplished in a war for the honour, freedom and independence of their country, for the liberation of mankind from the nazi plague.

The monstrous atrocities committed by the nazis and their accomplices only intensified the hatred of the Soviet people for the invaders and poured oil on the fire of the struggle. This struggle, M. I. Kalinin said, "grows from a simple comparison by the people of the nazi regime with the Soviet system, where the Soviet citizen feels he is the master of his country. No free and active person, man or woman, can become reconciled

КРАСНОЙ АРМИИ -СЛАВА!

"GLORY TO THE RED ARMY!"

Poster by L. F. Golovanov, 1946

"GLORY TO THE RED ARMY,
GLORY TO THE LIBERATORS!"

Poster by L. F. Golovanov, 1945

to nazi slavery without a bitter life-and-death struggle. It has never happened in the past in Russia, and all the less will it happen today in the free Soviet Union".

The fighting masses were led by the Communist Party. The general Party leadership of the people's struggle behind the enemy lines was provided by the Party Central Committee, which rested on the support of the Central Committees of the national Communist Parties and the large network of underground Party organisations that functioned in occupied territory. During the war in the Ukraine there were 14 underground regional Party committees, 154 town and district committees and 725 primary Party organisations; in Byelorussia, nine regional Party committees, 174 town and district committees and 1,297 primary Party organisations; in Lithuania, two regional and 20 uyezd and city Party committees; and in Latvia, two regional and three uyezd underground Party committees. Two area and 11 inter-district Party centres functioned in Leningrad Region (in the second period of the war), and 28 district committees and 141 primary Party organisations functioned in Smolensk Region. There were underground Party and Komsomol organisations in other occupied regions as well, and they became the organisers and leaders of the armed struggle of the partisans and underground fighters.

These organisations were given extensive assistance by the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union republics and by the territorial and regional Party committees on unoccupied territory. The work of underground Party and Komsomol organisations as well as the combat activity of the partisans and underground fighters were regularly scrutinised at meetings of the CC and regional Party committees. Party and Komsomol leaders and commanders and commissars of large partisan formations were usually summoned to attend these meetings. In the Central Committees of the Union Republics the organisation of the struggle behind the enemy lines was directed by P. Z. Kalinin, V. N. Malin, P. K. Ponomarenko in Byelorussia; D. S. Korotchenko and N. S. Khrushchev in the Ukraine; J. E. Kalnberzin in Latvia; A. Y. Snečkus in Luthuania; and N. G. Karotamm in Estonia. In the territorial and regional Party committees this work was handled by A. A. Zhdanov in Leningrad Region; I. P. Boitsov in Kalinin Region; P. I. Seleznev in Krasnodar Territory; A. P. Matveyev in Orel Region; D. M. Popov in Smolensk Region; M. A. Suslov in Stavropol Territory, and others. They were in direct contact with the leaders of underground Party and Komsomol organisations and with the commanders and commissars of the partisan detachments and formations.

Despite the brutal reign of terror instituted by the nazis, the Party organisations in the occupied regions rallied the people for resistance to the invaders. They utilised every possible media to explain the decisions of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to the people, informed them of the situation at the front and in the country and exposed the lies peddled by nazi propaganda. The press played a very important role. Great numbers of central and republican newspapers as well as pamphlets and magazines were dropped behind the enemy lines. On occupied territory newspapers were put out by almost all the Party organisations and by many partisan formations. In Byelorussia, for example, they published 162 newspapers and many leaflets. Nearly 400 million leaflets, newspapers and pamphlets published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine were distributed in the Ukraine during the war years.

The work of underground Party organisations behind the enemy lines

is a vivid example of the link between the Party and the people. The close bond of the Communists with the population, personal example in struggle against the enemy and the ability to express the vital interests of the people accurately and opportunely ensured to the underground organisations the role of leader in the war that spread in the occupied regions.

The mass partisan movement was the main form of resistance to the enemy. The Party organisations formed a huge partisan army of nearly one million armed partisans (workers, peasants and intellectuals). Women formed a large contingent, their number reaching 10-25 per cent of the strength of some of the detachments.

People of many nationalities of the Soviet Union were to be found in the partisan detachments and among the underground fighters. For instance, in the partisan detachments which operated in Krasnodar Territory there were Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Georgians, Azerbaijanians, Armenians, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Estonians, Moldavians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Jews, Adygeis, Mordovians, Chuvashes, Maris and others. The composition of the partisan detachments and underground organisations in other regions, territories and republics was similarly multi-national. This vividly demonstrated the militant unity of Soviet nations.

Effective assistance was afforded to the partisans and underground fighters by the entire people, who supplied them with food and clothes, kept them informed of enemy movements and provided them with messengers and guides. The strength and success of the partisan movement was that it drew on the manpower resources of the local population.

Throughout the war the partisans and underground fighters kept the invaders in a state of constant tension, disorganising their logistics and striking at their communications. They controlled huge territories where the invaders could not obtain food or raw materials and where they were afraid to station their logistical units. The German Command was forced to keep its logistical units only in the big towns and at key railway junctions.

By hitting enemy communications the people's avengers pinned down considerable German forces. As early as at the beginning of 1942 the German Command had to assign front-line troops to help the police and security units protect the rear and the communications. In February 1942, at the height of the joint offensive by the Western and Bryansk fronts, General Kluge, commander of Army Group Centre, sent four divisions against the partisans in Smolensk and Bryansk regions. On February 24, when he reported the situation to Headquarters he asked Hitler for permission to divert another three divisions from the front. As from mid-1942 up to 10 per cent of the German land forces on the Soviet-German front were used to fight the partisans. In 1943 the partisans tied down nearly 25 first-line divisions in addition to SS and SD formations and half a million troops from auxiliary units. In March and April 1944 the Ukrainian partisans operating round Kovel, Lvov and Peremyshl forced the enemy to draw some ten divisions from the front to protect his lines of communications.

The Red Army offensives were combined with partisan operations behind the enemy lines. This co-operation made itself felt as early as during the Battle of Moscow, when the Red Army was substantially aided by partisans in Kalinin, Smolensk and Bryansk regions. However, in the early period of the war interaction between the partisans and the Red Army was not systematic. In the course of the war experience

was gained, the leadership of the partisan movement was improved and liaison was established between the partisans and the Red Army.

Much was done to improve the organisation of the partisan struggle by the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union republics, the regional Party committees and the different headquarters of the partisan movement. Many wireless operators were infiltrated into the enemy rear. In early 1944 they operated more than 400 wireless stations on occupied territory, maintaining communication with over 1,100 partisan formations and units. The better communication between the units and formations as well as between them and the bodies directing the partisan movement helped to increase the scale of the struggle. The military councils of the different fronts were able to supply the partisans regularly with explosives, weapons and ammunition and, in some cases, provide them with air support. A service was organised to evacuate the wounded and the sick. The partisans began to receive increasingly important combat assignments from the Soviet Command, which made the most expedient use of the partisan forces and co-ordinated their operations with those of the Red Army. As from the spring of 1943 offensives of the Red Army was supported by partisan operations behind the enemy lines.

The co-ordination of the operations of the partisans and underground workers with the offensives of the Red Army was particularly effective in 1944. In many of the operations conducted by the Red Army in that year GHQ gave the partisans concrete assignments. The plan for using partisan formations and detachments in these offensives was drawn up by the bodies directing the partisan movement in accordance with instructions from GHQ. This plan stated the tasks of the partisans in the period of the preparations for these offensives and then during the offensives, and provided for the supply of armaments, medicaments and so on for the partisans. In 1944 an army of 250,000 partisans helped liberate Karelia, Leningrad and Kalinin regions, the Baltic republics, Byelorussia, the Ukraine, the Crimea and Soviet Moldavia.

The partisans employed flexible tactics to counter the enemy's cunning. They were mobile and elusive, lying in ambush and launching sudden attacks on small troop columns and garrisons. They fought offensive and defensive actions. Through their wrecking activities they inflicted huge losses on the enemy without coming into direct contact with him. Sometimes the partisan units of several regions combined to attack enemy communications. Operation Rail War, for instance, involved nearly 96,000 men. They frequently organised raids deep into enemy-held territory.

The underground fighters concentrated on wrecking at factories, where they damaged plant, held up production and lowered the quality of the output. On the railways they delayed the formation of trains, put locomotives out of commission, reduced traffic capacity and hindered the forced transportation of Soviet people to Germany. In the villages they disrupted enemy measures. Many nazi officials and traitors were punished by them. The reconnaissance work of the partisans and underground fighters was of inestimable value to the Soviet Command.

During the war the partisans killed, wounded or took prisoner hundreds of thousands of German troops, collaborators and officials of the occupation administration. They derailed more than 18,000 trains, and destroyed or damaged thousands of locomotives and tens of thousands of railway cars and cisterns. The partisan war affected the morale of the German Army, keeping the German troops in a constant state of fear.

Soviet people were active in the anti-fascist struggle of the European peoples. We have already mentioned that Soviet partisan detachments and groups operated in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Thousands of Soviet people fought in the ranks of the Resistance in France, Italy, Germany and other countries. They were escaped prisoners of war or people forcibly driven into slavery. They courageously conducted underground work in the concentration camps among the prisoners or fought as members of partisan detachments. Immortal fame was won by M. Huseinzade in Yugoslavia, F. A. Poletayev in Italy and V. V. Porik in France.

The Soviet Government highly assessed the valour and courage of partisans and underground fighters. More than 127,000 of them were decorated with the medal "Partisan of the Great Patriotic War". In addition, over 184,000 were decorated with other medals and battle Orders, 190 were created Heroes of the Soviet Union, while S. A. Kovpak and A. F. Fyodorov, commanders of partisan formations, were awarded that title twice.

6. THE COMMUNIST PARTY—ORGANISER AND INSPIRER OF VICTORY

The glorious Communist Party was the leader, inspirer and organiser of the Soviet people during war as in time of peace. Everywhere—at the firing lines, in the rear and on enemy-occupied territory—the Party came forward as a united fighting, mobilising and directing force. By personal example and by encouragement the Communists strengthened the morale of the people and led them in battle and in work.

This was a role for which the Party had been prepared by its entire history. From the moment that it took over the helm of state it consistently fulfilled the Leninist policy of defending the socialist motherland, of strengthening the military might of the Land of Socialism. Soon after the Civil War and the foreign military intervention, Lenin said: "We have passed through one period of wars, and we must prepare for another. We do not know when it will come, but we must see to it that when it does come we shall be prepared for all contingencies." In line with this behest the Party built up the country's military and economic might, mobilised the moral and political forces of the people and improved and strengthened the Red Army. The building of socialism was the decisive factor ensuring the Soviet Union's defence might. The mortal danger that threatened the country as a result of the nazi invasion made it imperative to reorganise the Party's work in order to enable it to cope with the wartime conditions. The granite foundation that made it possible for the Party to withstand the test of war was the close solidarity round the Central Committee, the unshakable unity of its ranks, the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, discipline and organisation, and the unbreakable bond of the working people in the rear with the fighting men.

Long before the war the Party had crushed the Trotskyites, Right opportunists and bourgeois nationalists, surmounted vacillation among the membership and freed itself from defeatists and sceptics. The war still further united the Party under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, and throughout the war it operated as a monolithic organisation, as a fighting alliance of like-minded people who knew neither wavering nor discord.

The pre-war achievements in socialist construction strengthened the Party's link with the people and brought an increasing influx of fore-

most people into its ranks. More than 1,500,000 people joined the Party during the two years preceding the war, and on July 1, 1941, it had close to 4,000,000 members united in 184,238 primary Party organisations. This large membership and numerous network of primary organisations, which formed the Party's basis, enabled it to lead the troops at the firing lines and the heroic work of the people in the rear, and to influence all aspects of the life and work of the state. The Party concentrated its strength in sectors where the destiny of the country was being decided. A million and a half Communists, including tens of thousands of leading Party, Government, trade union and Komsomol workers, joined the Army.

The grim war years witnessed an unparalleled upsurge of political activity by workers, collective farmers, intellectuals and men of the Red Army. Soviet people demonstrated their firm ties with and profound faith in the Communist Party. Evidence of this is the unprecedented growth of the Party ranks. A total of nearly 2,166,000 people became candidate-members of the Party in the course of four years before the war, and more than 5,000,000 people joined the Party during the war. "The Party," L. I. Brezhnev said in the report on the twentieth anniversary of Victory Day, "lost 3,000,000 of its sons at the front." Nonetheless, the Party had almost 6,000,000 members when the war ended. The number of primary Party organisations rose to over a quarter of a million. This gives an idea of the Party's strength during the war.

The Central Committee, elected at the 18th Party Congress in 1939, was the Party's fighting headquarters. J. V. Stalin was the General Secretary of the Party Central Committee and Chairman of the State Defence Committee. He played an important role in defeating the enemy. A. A. Andreyev, N. A. Voznesensky, K. Y. Voroshilov, A. A. Zhdanov, M. I. Kalinin, A. N. Kosygin, D. Z. Manuilsky, A. I. Mikoyan, M. A. Suslov, N. S. Khrushchev, N. M. Shvernik, A. S. Shcherbakov, Y. M. Yaroslavsky and other leading Party workers and statesmen helped to direct the Party, the country and the Army. Many members of the Central Committee headed republican, territorial and regional Party organisations, purposefully and operationally carrying into effect decisions of the Party Central Committee and the State Defence Committee and showing initiative in resolving the basic political and economic problems posed by the war.

In 1945 there were 15 republican, 160 territorial and regional Party committees which provided town and country with Party leadership through city and district Party committees, through the primary Party organisations. Millions of Communists, utterly devoted to the cause of communism, led the people by personal example.

The All-Union Lenin Young Communist League, or Komsomol as it is popularly known, was the Party's staunch assistant and reserve. In response to the Party's call it reorganised its ranks to meet the war-time situation. When war broke out a large proportion of the Komsomol members joined the Armed Forces. Those who remained in the rear displayed unparalleled heroism in work. The glory of the Komsomol has been perpetuated by its feats in battle and in labour.

Relying on the Soviets as organs of state power and on the trade unions, the Komsomol and other public and political organisations the Party educated Soviet people on the ideals of Marxism-Leninism and revolutionary traditions, in a spirit of selflessness. Prominent Party and Government leaders were drawn into the work among the masses. The Central Committee passed a decision obligating them to report to the

people on the country's internal situation and international position and answer questions by the people.

The press, radio, literature, art and the entire propaganda work of the Party organisations were turned into media for the communist education of the masses. The military situation made it imperative to intensify the ideological struggle against the racist, man-hating theory of nazism and actively expose the anti-popular nature of this theory. Using concrete examples showing the monstrous extermination of the Slav and other peoples by the nazis, the Party bared the brutality of the nazi invaders and fostered in the people deadly hatred of them.

The Central Committee strictly guarded the purity of the Marxist-Leninist teaching, avoiding any deviation from its principles. This is shown in the Central Committee's war-time decisions on ideological questions. Extensive political work was conducted on the basis of these decisions with special attention paid to the liberated areas, where the nazis had made every attempt to resurrect private-ownership psychology and morals and plant the man-hating ideology of racism. But nazi propaganda found itself helpless in face of the ideals of communism. As soon as the invaders were driven out the people restored Soviet rule, started on economic rehabilitation and actively assisted the front.

In many ways the success of the Party's ideological work was due to the uninterrupted Marxist-Leninist training of the propaganda cadres and of all Communists. This training was particularly necessary because a predominant section of the membership was new, having joined the Party in 1942-45. Many Party schools were opened with the object of drawing all Communists into political activity.

The Party concentrated the attention of all Government, economic and public organisations on the need to build up a smoothly-functioning war-time economy capable of supplying everything required by the front. The cadres remaining behind after hundreds of thousands of Communists went to the front were reassigned to new jobs. Departments for the direction of key industries were set up at central and local Party committees. The institution of Central Committee Party organisers at factories, introduced on the eve of the war, was considerably enlarged. Steps were taken to strengthen the political departments on the transport and to set up such departments at machine-and-tractor stations and state farms. On instructions from the Central Committee the Party organisations at industrial enterprises began to make fuller use of the right, given them by the Rules, to control the work of economic leaders. Communists were sent to the most difficult sectors.

Soviet people unanimously supported the Communist Party, sending into its ranks their finest sons and daughters, ardent patriots devoted to communism. During the war more than a million people working in the rear joined the Party. In addition some 600,000 Communists wounded at the front and released from further service in the Army strengthened the rear organisations. Towards the end of the war, despite the fact that more than 1,640,000 Communists went to the front, the pre-war numerical strength of the Party organisations in the key branches of the economy was more or less preserved.

The Party's slogan "Everything for the front, everything for victory!" determined life in the rear. A mass socialist emulation movement was started throughout the country as soon as the war broke out. This movement was initiated by Communists and Komsomol members, who launched a drive to double output norms, one norm for oneself and the other for the comrade at the front. Soon drives were started to overfulfil the norm

three, five and even ten times. Many Komsomol-youth teams were formed; at the close of 1944 these had a total of nearly one million members. The drive to operate several machine-tools simultaneously, the movement to master allied specialities and the other forms of the socialist emulation movement were evidence of the intense political activity of the masses, of their labour heroism.

Relying on the initiative of the working people the Party organisations supported and broadly disseminated advanced experience, achieving an improvement of production technologies, an increase in output and the timely delivery of this output to the Red Army. Through the efforts of Party organisations many factories went over to mass line production, which enabled them to produce more weapons and ammunition with fewer workers and without any increase in plant.

When difficulties arose the Party appealed to the people and the response was always gratifying. With Communists setting the example, Soviet people worked without stinting their time, frequently 12-15 hours a day on meagre rations. They did not leave the factories for days, weeks and sometimes months on end. They worked without vacations, frequently refusing to use their off days, giving all their strength to fulfil the Party's assignments.

An acute problem during the war was that of skilled labour. New workers were quickly trained to take the place of the experienced workers who joined the Army. A system of apprenticeships was started at factories and on the transport under the leadership of Party organisations and with the active assistance and direct participation of the trade unions and the Komsomol. Various schools and courses were opened.

Agriculture experienced enormous difficulties. The Party leadership in the countryside was strengthened, and the political departments, set up at the machine-and-tractor stations and state farms in the autumn of 1941, existed until the summer of 1943 and did much to improve the organisational and political work in the countryside. The decisions of the Council of People's Commissars and the Party Central Committee to provide material incentives for collective farmers and mobilise the able-bodied population of the towns and rural localities for work in the countryside helped to increase farm output. In response to the call of the Communist Party millions of collective farmers and workers of state farms and machine-and-tractor stations joined the nation-wide socialist emulation movement.

The Party gave unremitting attention to the day-to-day requirements of the people. A centralised supply of necessities was organised throughout the country. By decision of the Central Committee workers' supply departments were set up at all the large factories, on the railways and on the river transport to find additional sources of food supplies. The Party encouraged the urban population to organise collective and individual kitchen-gardens and enlarge the public catering network. Much was done for the evacuated population, for the families of men at the front and for war invalids.

The Communist Party gave unremitting attention to the day-to-day needs and combat requirements of the Armed Forces.

The victory of the Red Army over the nazis was a victory of the Party's war policy and of the principles of Soviet military development that had been charted by Lenin. One of the most important of these principles was that the leadership of the Armed Forces should be in the hands of the Party. A decision adopted by the Central Committee as early as December 1918 stated: "... the policy of the war department, as of all

the other departments and offices, is pursued strictly in line with the general directives issued by the Party through its Central Committee and under its direct control." This determining principle underlay Soviet military development during the Second World War as well. The Communist Party gave its utmost support to the development of Soviet military thought and awakened the creative initiative of military leaders, making sure that everything of value learned during the war was quickly applied in practice. The Party exerted its influence over the Army and Navy and implemented its military policy through the Main Political Administration and the military councils, the commanders, the political bodies and the Party organisations.

The military councils of the fronts, armies, fleets and flotillas were organs of collective leadership. However, this did not restrict the right of commanders to adopt decisions on operational questions. The activities of the Party organisations and the political work were directed by the political departments of the fronts, armies, fleets and flotillas. This leadership was implemented through the political organs directly in the formations and the political apparatus of the units. The members of the military councils as well as the heads of the political departments were prominent political workers who were in the Armed Forces before the war broke out, and also members of the Central Committee and secretaries of the Communist parties of the Union republics, of the territorial and regional committees sent by the Party to strengthen political work in the Armed Forces. They included I. I. Azarov, V. N. Bogatkin, V. R. Boiko, L. I. Brezhnev, M. A. Burmistenko, S. F. Galadzhev, I. S. Grushetsky, K. A. Gurov, A. A. Yepishev, P. I. Yefimov, A. S. Zheltov, K. A. Zykov, M. K. Kalashnik, A. P. Kirilenko, M. A. Kozlov, K. V. Krainyukov, N. M. Kulakov, D. S. Leonov, D. A. Lestev, Y. Y. Maltsev, S. I. Melnikov, V. P. Mzhavanadze, A. P. Pigurnov, A. M. Pronin, M. M. Pronin, N. A. Radetsky, I. V. Rogov, S. N. Romazanov, M. V. Rudakov, A. G. Rytov, Z. T. Serdyuk, F. P. Stepchenko, N. Y. Subbotin, I. Z. Susaikov, A. N. Tevchenkov, K. F. Telegin, N. A. Torik, G. L. Tumanyan, D. I. Kholostov, G. K. Tsinev, S. S. Shatilov, I. V. Shikin and A. V. Shchelakovsky.

The military councils played an outstanding role in the war, their main functions being to direct military operations, train and educate the troops and ensure military and technical supplies for them. On the territory of a front or army they exercised state power in full measure. Acting on behalf of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government they concerned themselves with strengthening the immediate rear and directing all its efforts to assist the front.

They were helped by the officers and the political organs. Officers of the Red Army and Navy were commanders of a new type. About 80 per cent of them were either Communists or members of the Komsomol. They conformed their organisational work, the training of the troops and their leadership of military operations to the instructions, policy and ideology of the Party.

The political organs were first and foremost the force organising troops for the fulfilment of combat assignments. At the beginning of the war the Party amended the unjustified restriction of the duties of political organs to political propaganda and gave them the function of strengthening the might of the Army and Navy, ensuring the Party's day-to-day influence and rallying the troops round the Party and its Central Committee.

The Party sent its finest sons to the front in order to enhance the Party leadership of the Armed Forces and boost the role of the political organs

Nuremberg trial in session

War criminals in the dock

Memorial to Red Army troops in Treptow Park, Berlin

and Party organisations. Communists were the mainstay of the commander in battle. They were always to be found in the most difficult and dangerous sectors of the front, where courage and skill were required. The finest of the finest troops joined the Party, regarding it as the greatest honour to be a Party member and to fight and, if necessary, die as a Communist.

During the war the Party organisations in the Army and Navy accepted 3,820,000 members. Hundreds of thousands of officers and men who had applied for Party membership died the death of heroes before they were able to go through the necessary formalities. Far from decreasing, the number of Party members increased despite the huge losses among Communists in battle, rising from 1,300,000 in 1941 to 3,000,000 at the end of the war. During the Civil War there were five Communists per 100 men in the Red Army; at the outbreak of the war there were 13 and when the war ended the number stood at 25. Approximately 20 out of every hundred troops were members of the Komsomol. In other words, almost every second soldier in the Red Army was either a Communist or a Komsomol member.

The number of primary Party organisations rose steadily during the war, increasing from 14,000 to over 73,000. The political organs made every effort to strengthen the company Party organisations in infantry units, where Communist losses were the highest. In addition to admitting new members from among officers and men who had distinguished themselves in battle, the military councils and political organs transferred Communists to infantry companies from logistical units and even from other arms. Political work was centred in the infantry companies and the corresponding units in the artillery, tank, air and other arms of the service.

Young soldiers were powerfully influenced by the Komsomol. Before the outbreak of war there were 1,710,000 Komsomol members in the Army and Navy. When war broke out, almost 2,000,000 more Komsomol members were mobilised. Over 700,000 members of the Komsomol were mobilised by special decisions of the Komsomol Central Committee and sent to air-borne units, assault ski battalions, Guards rocket launcher units and the Navy. In the Red Army there were more than 300,000 girl-members of the Komsomol. All in all 3,500,000 Komsomol members were drafted into the Army and Navy. During the war over 5,000,000 troops joined the Komsomol, and despite the huge losses and the drain due to age, the number of Komsomol members in the Army was about 2,500,000 when the war ended. Like the Communists, the Komsomol members were in the forefront of battle and political and combat training, and could always be relied on to fulfil the orders of the commanders, political organs and Party organisations. In addition to being the Party's assistant, the Komsomol was also its reserve: nearly half of the young troops admitted to Party membership during the war came from the Komsomol.

Notwithstanding the war-time difficulties, the political organs and Party organisations, acting on instructions from the Party Central Committee, did much to raise the ideological level of Communists and Komsomol members. Study was based on decisions of the Communist Party and of the Government as well as on major Party documents. Independent study was the principal form for achieving a higher level of theoretical knowledge. Where possible they arranged lectures, reports, theoretical conferences, talks and seminars.

Communists and Komsomol members persistently surmounted all the

difficulties of life at the firing-lines and were in the vanguard of the struggle against the enemy. It was quite natural, therefore, that nearly half of the men decorated with Orders and medals were Communists or members of the Komsomol. Of those decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union 74 per cent were Communists and 11 per cent were members of the Komsomol. During the war in Communists and Komsomol members, troops saw the staunchest, most fearless and most disciplined soldiers who stinted neither strength nor their very lives for the sake of the victory of the just cause in which they had unshakable faith and inspired others by their faith.

The stern years of the war thus fully bore out Lenin's wise conclusions about the decisive role of Party leadership and his words that "when millions of working people unite as one and follow the best people from their class, victory is assured". The Party emerged from the war stronger than ever before, having grown numerically and become steeled ideologically.

7. PEOPLE, BE VIGILANT

The Theses of the CC CPSU on the centenary of the birth of V. I. Lenin give the following assessment of the results and lessons of the war: "Under the leadership of the Communist Party, our people accomplished an immortal feat in the name of socialism, displaying mass heroism during the Great Patriotic War. This war was the sternest of tests and a school of courage. It ended in a great victory because socialism ensured the indestructible unity of the whole of Soviet society and the might and unparalleled mobility of its economy, raised military science to a high level of development and reared splendid soldiers and commanders. The defeat of the assault forces of world imperialism—German nazism and Japanese militarism—and the fulfilment by the Soviet Army of its mission of liberation were the decisive factors facilitating the success of the national-democratic revolutions in a number of countries in Europe and Asia."

During the first half of the twentieth century imperialism plunged mankind into the abyss of two sanguinary and destructive world wars. These wars weakened imperialism, led to the victory and consolidation of a new social system—socialism, and split the world into two antagonistic systems. Although the forces of imperialism have relatively diminished, it must never be forgotten that its nature has remained unchanged. It continues to be the source of modern wars. Lenin was right a thousand times when he said that imperialism, i.e., monopoly capitalism, "is, by virtue of its fundamental *economic* traits, distinguished by a minimum fondness for peace and freedom, and by a maximum and universal development of militarism".

The second half of the present century witnesses an exacerbation of the general crisis of capitalism. In an effort to save the outworn capitalist system and restore its former undivided supremacy in the world, the monopoly bourgeoisie and their political, military and ideological servitors are once again pursuing a dangerous policy fraught with the threat of another world war. Imperialism seeks to surmount the socio-political and economic contradictions of the modern world by an arms race, by increasing military expenditures, enlarging peace-time armed forces and employing scientific and technological achievements for war purposes. The imperialist states are becoming militarist police states. Militarism permeates

the life of bourgeois society and is already today bringing the people privation and suffering presaging the horrors of a world missile-thermonuclear war.

"Militarism," L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CC CPSU, who led the CPSU delegation, said at the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in June 1969, "has always been part and parcel of imperialism. But today it has acquired truly unparalleled proportions. It is the fault of imperialism that the labour of many millions of people, the brilliant achievements of the human intellect, of the talent of scientists, researchers and engineers, are used not for the benefit of mankind, for promoting progress and the remaking of life on earth, but for barbarous, reactionary purposes, for the needs of war, the greatest of calamities for the peoples."

In almost all parts of the world imperialism has formed aggressive military blocs spearheaded against the socialist and other peace-loving states. The imperialists support and instal reactionary regimes in Latin American, Asian, African and European countries and fight the revolutionary and national liberation movements.

World reaction is reviving, more actively than ever before, the policy of "throwing bridges", of undermining the political and ideological foundations of socialism, of a "quiet", "creeping" counter-revolution vis-à-vis the socialist countries. But this stake on reactionary forces within and outside socialist countries has collapsed twice already. It has encountered determined resistance from socialist countries, which regard the defence of the socialist gains of each country as the defence of world socialism as a whole, as their loftiest internationalist duty. The reply to the show of force by the reactionary governments of both hemispheres has been and will be the further strengthening of the defence capability of the entire socialist community in Europe.

The socialist camp is the main force upholding world peace. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and fraternal countries consistently oppose wars of aggrandisement. Soviet foreign policy, the Programme of the CPSU states, pursues the object of "ensuring peaceful conditions for the building of communist society in the USSR and for the development of the world socialist system and, together with all peace-loving nations, delivering mankind from a devastating world war".

The community of socialist countries opposes the imperialist foreign policy founded on relations of domination and subordination, oppression of the weak by the strong, command and threats, and compulsion and arbitrary rule, with a policy that is totally new in international relations. This policy is founded on peace, equality, the self-determination of nations, respect for the independence and sovereignty of all states, and the honest and humane principles of socialist diplomacy.

The Soviet Union and fraternal socialist countries are the truest and most sincere friends of the peoples who are fighting or have shaken off imperialist oppression. They are resolutely and consistently discharging their internationalist duty. Without interfering in the internal affairs of these peoples they are helping them morally and materially to strengthen their national independence or win liberation from colonial slavery.

The Soviet Union and the entire community of fraternal socialist countries are pursuing a policy of peace and making every effort to avert another world war.

Another war, if the imperialists unleash it, will be unlike the Second World War.

It is quite obvious that a missile-nuclear war would wipe out whole countries and reduce to ashes the largest industrial and cultural centres. Hundreds of millions of people would be killed and many generations would be doomed to terrible suffering. Modern war is a formidable threat not only to belligerents but to the rest of the world as well.

In view of the existence of two opposing systems, each of which possesses nuclear weapons and missiles, war and peace have become the most pressing problem of modern times. Safety will not be found beyond seas or mountains. Shelters will be useless.

"The problem of war and peace," declares the Programme of the CPSU, "has become a problem of the life and death of hundreds of millions of people.... *The main thing is to avert a thermonuclear war, to prevent it from breaking out.*"

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government champion the principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different socio-political systems and urge the settlement of outstanding international issues by negotiation. The peaceful coexistence of socialist and capitalist countries is objectively necessary for the development of human society. War cannot and must not serve as a means of settling international conflicts. Peaceful coexistence or catastrophic war is how the question is posed by history.

It is emphasised in the Programme of the CPSU that a world war can be averted by the concerted efforts of the mighty socialist camp, the peace-loving non-socialist states, the international working class and all other forces upholding the cause of peace. The working class of all countries, the class of revolutionaries and creators, is another powerful anti-war force. The cause of peace is rendered effective assistance by the national liberation movement of the colonial and dependent countries. Many peace-loving neutralist states of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America are doing everything in their power to avert the threat of war. The millions of participants in the world-wide peace movement are active in the struggle against war.

Today the forces of peace are stronger than the forces of war. However, all peace fighters must show the greatest vigilance and actively participate in the struggle against the warmongers.

The peoples have a clear-cut programme of struggle to avert war. This programme was exhaustively expounded in the decisions of the 23rd Congress of the CPSU, the Peace Manifesto and the Address to the Peoples of the World adopted at the 1957 and 1960 meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties, and in the documents of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the socialist and capitalist countries.

The programme of struggle for peace, against war, was reaffirmed, enlarged on and specified in line with present-day tasks in the Appeal in Defence of Peace adopted by the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties on June 16, 1969. In this document of world-historic importance it is stressed that in the world today there are powerful social and political forces which oppose war and champion peace. The consistent policy of peace pursued by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, the upswing of the struggle of the working people in the capitalist countries, the growth of the national liberation movement and action by broad circles of world democratic opinion and by peace fighters are removing the fatal inevitability of war and creating a real possibility for effectuating the striving of the peoples for peace. Founded on a realistic assessment of the modern situation, the Appeal opens up bright prospects for the triumph of peace throughout the world.

21. KEY TO SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

KEY TO GEOGRAPHICAL DENOMINATIONS

TOWNS AND VILLAGES

★	MOSCOW	Capital of USSR
◉	BERLIN KIEV	Capitals of states and Union Republics of USSR
●	BISSAU	Capitals of colonies
○	LENINGRAD	Major cities
○	Belgorod	Other important cities
○	*Prokhorovka*	Other towns and villages

BORDERS

- Of states
- Union Republics of USSR
- Colonies and possessions
- USSR possessions within Polar Circle
- Leased territories
- Demilitarised zones

COMMUNICATIONS

Stations — Railways

Shipping canals

Bridges

A	Army	Gd A	Guards Army	Panz C SS	Panzer Corps SS
AA	Air Army	Gd Cav C	Guards Cavalry Corps	Panz Div	Panzer Division
AC	Army Corps	Gd Inf C	Guards Infantry Corps	Panz Gr	Panzer Group
AF	Air Force	Gd Mot C	Guards Motorised Corps	PLA	People's Liberation Army
ACr	Army Group	Gd TA	Guards Tank Army	SA	Strike Army
Brig	Brigade	Km	Kilometre	S Fr	Southern Front
Byel Fr	Byelorussian Front	Ld Fr	Leningrad Front	SW Fr	Southwestern Front
C	Corps	Mech Cav Gr	Mechanised Cavalry Group	TA	Tank Army
Cav C	Cavalry Corps	Mot Div	Motorised Division	TC	Tank Corps
Cav Gr	Cavalry Group	Oper Gr	Operational Group	Ukr Fr	Ukrainian Front
Div	Division	Panz A	Panzer Army	W Europe	Western Europe
Fr Oper Gr	Front Operational Group	Panz C	Panzer Corps		

On black-white maps enemy troops are given in italics

SYMBOLS OF OPERATIONS

(Colour of symbol accords with colour of belligerent nation)

- Troop concentrations
- Areas occupied by armoured units
- Areas occupied by cavalry or motorised troops
- Reserves
- Front-line*
- Troop positions*
- Troop attacks*
- Armoured and motorised attacks*
- Cavalry attacks*
- Cavalry mechanised group attacks*
- Joint operations by infantry and tanks*
- Encirclement and mopping up
- Partial annihilation of encircled force
- Withdrawal
- Withdrawal in battle
- Deployment and regrouping
- Defence lines*
- Junctions of fronts and army groups
- Junctions of armies
- Gun emplacements and fire sectors
- Air operations
- Airborne landing
- Operations of naval units
- Transport and landing of naval forces
- Submarine operations
- Torpedo-boat operations
- Naval communication lines
- Mined areas
- 17.01 — 17.01 — Dates of liberation of cities, naval and air landings
- 9.V.1945 — 11.V.1945 — Dates of enemy surrender

* The design of symbols may vary

The Appeal has won the approval and warm support of tens and hundreds of millions of people. More millions of people must join the ranks of the peace champions and enter the struggle against the imperialist system, which gives rise to war and the threat of a world-wide nuclear catastrophe.

The forces of peace must be alert. The tragedy of the Second World War, multiplied over and over again by new destructive weapons, must not be repeated. The peoples cannot allow a missile-nuclear war to break out. Instead of appeasing the aggressors, their plans must be exposed and wrecked! Their dangerous acts must be rebuffed! The anti-imperialist forces must be strengthened! That is the command of our times. Peace will not come by itself; it must be worked for today, tomorrow and every day.

People, safeguard peace!
People, be vigilant!

REQUEST TO READERS

Progress Publishers would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and design and any suggestions you may have for future publications.

Please send all your comments to 21, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, USSR.

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