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War and Revolution

18010052a Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 10, Oct 87 (signed to press 21 Sep 87) pp 3-7

[Article, published under the heading "Toward the 70th Anniversary of Great October," by Maj Gen I.Ye. Krupchenko, doctor of historical sciences, professor: "War and Revolution"]

[Text] The Great October Socialist Revolution which opened up the age of transition from capitalism to socialism confronted mankind with the inevitability of a decisive break in the old underpinnings of social life. To put it figuratively, if the 10 days of October 1917 shook the world, the years which followed these days altered it. The most vivid proof of this is the complete and final victory of socialism in the USSR, the formation and strengthening of the world socialist system, the collapse of the colonial system of imperialism, the present-day scope of the worker, communist and national liberation movement and the profound restructuring of mankind's spiritual life.

Our class enemies are unable to recognize the natural transition from capitalism to socialism, for this would mean their recognition of the inevitable victory of the socialist revolution on a world scale and the death of capitalism as a social system. And so they have set out to falsify Marxist-Leninist teachings about socialist revolution. In identifying the concepts of war and revolution, the bourgeois ideologists have cynically ascribed to the communists an aggressiveness and a desire to resolve social conflicts by employing war.

Under the conditions of the rapid development of the world revolutionary process, when socialism has become established in the world and is an international force, in a situation of the growing aggressiveness of imperialism and the greater opportunities for employing the achievements of scientific and technical progress in armed combat, the problem of war and revolution has assumed particular urgency.

Certainly, war and revolution do have certain common traits. They are caused by the conditions of an exploiting society and are forms of political struggle. At the same time, war and revolution, as social phenomena, have

fundamental differences, they have different reasons of occurrence, different motivating forces, ultimate goals and social consequences as well as forms and methods of realizing political goals.

However, what has been said above does not exclude dialectical relationships between war and revolution. These relationships are diverse, flexible, mobile and at times profoundly contradictory. Suffice it to say that under certain conditions, a war, for example, is capable of accelerating the maturing of the objective and subjective prerequisites for revolution and even facilitate its victory. Historical experience shows that a war, in causing greater social hardships, becomes the catalyst for the exacerbation of class contradictions and this inevitably leads to revolution.

On the other hand, a revolution can cause a war which impedes the achieving of the revolution's goals and, moreover, can lead to its defeat. Finally, a revolution can accelerate the end of a war.

The experience of World War I of 1914-1918 and the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917 are a convincing illustration of what has been said.

World War I, as is known, broke out as a result of a sharp exacerbation of the economic and political contradictions within the capitalist system. It was the result of the uneven, abrupt development of capitalism in the higher stage of its existence. The war was the result of an exacerbation of the traditional contradictions inherent to premonopolistic capitalism between labor and capital and the new contradictions arising out of imperialism such as the struggle to reapportion an already divided world, for spheres of influence, markets and sources of raw materials. One of the causes of the war was also the desire of the ruling circles in the major states of the world to check the revolutionary and national liberation movement of peoples.

World War I by its nature was an unjust war predatory on the part of both warring coalitions. Having broken out between eight states, it gradually involved in its orbit some 38 countries with a population of 1.5 billion persons. The war required gigantic material outlays. While at its outset each serviceman required supplies and weapons averaging 400 rubles, by the end this indicator had increased by 5-fold, reaching 2,000 rubles. While at the start of the war all the armies were armed with 20,000 guns, by the end there were already 60,000. The total consumption of shells exceeded 1 billion units with a total cost of over 50 billion rubles.(1)

The war again emphasized the class contrasts. Against a background of the general impoverishment of the working masses in the belligerent states, there was a rise in the number of millionaires. The American billionaires gained the most. "They," wrote V.I. Lenin, "have made all, even the richest countries their tributaries. They have plundered hundreds of billions of dollars. On each dollar

you can see the traces of dirt...from the 'profitable' military deliveries which in each country further enriched the wealthy and decimated the poor. On each dollar are the traces of blood from that sea of blood shed by the 10 million killed and 20 million maimed...."(2)

The war was a heavy burden on the shoulders of the working masses. The revolutionary movement grew wider and stronger in all the warring countries. In certain countries it became so strong that the general staffs of these states were forced to consider it in working out their strategic plans.

The revolutionary situation in Russia grew particularly quickly and abruptly. As in the other countries, here the war had caused the ruin of the national economy and had brought untold suffering to the workers and peasants. In the people there was growing dissatisfaction with the war and the policy of the Tsarist autocracy. The worker strike movement grew stronger. While in 1915, there were 938 strikes involving 539,000 workers, in 1916, there were over 1,400 strikes involving over a million workers.(3) The Tsarist authorities cruelly suppressed the people's actions even to the point of shooting down the workers. A revolutionary explosion was eminent.

The political situation on the front always depended upon the situation in the rear. The new recruits who arrived at the front, having been electrified by the exacerbating class contradictions in the rear, again fell into an atmosphere of depression, corruption and humiliation from the autocratic-bourgeois officer class.

Letters from relatives and close friends had a great impact on the soldiers. Messages of hunger and exploitation by the bourgeoisie and landowners and of the growing dissatisfaction and revolutionary movement in the rear further strengthened revolutionary attitudes, but now in the army.

Thus, World War I significantly exacerbated the antagonistic contradictions between labor and capital, between the laborers and the capitalists. On the one hand, we can see the greatly increased income from the filling of military orders and, on the other, the impoverishment of the masses of people, the hunger, destruction, the millions of losses in humans, the depletion of the material supplies of the belligerents and so forth. The class struggle became sharply exacerbated and this accelerated the maturing of objective prerequisites for a revolution.

The deep basis for these prerequisites was the conflict between the productive forces and the production relations as refracted through the prism of a complex system of sociopolitical and class relations. It developed historically that Russia, being economically a medium-developed country, was the weakest link in the system of international imperialism and a key point in all its contradictions.

One cannot help but say that one of the reasons for the success of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia was the fact that it developed in the course of the world imperialist war. Neither the Entente nor the German bloc at first was able to provide direct military aid to the Russian bourgeoisie. They helped it materially and by organizing sabotage and conspiracies. Foreign military intervention began only in 1918 and by this time the socialist revolution had been victorious throughout the enormous Russian empire.

The support of the international proletariat was of great importance for the victory of the revolution in Russia. Under the influence of the October Revolution, the mass revolutionary movement grew stronger in all the capitalist countries and this not only tied the imperialists' hands but also shook the capitalist world down to its foundation. Precisely at this time in the West there arose the proletarian slogan "Hands Off Soviet Russia!" Millions of enslaved peoples joined the movement from the colonial countries. Ultimately, the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia accelerated the ending of World War I. It could not have been otherwise. In moving toward revolution, the Russian workers set as one of the most important tasks the struggle to withdraw from the war. It can be boldly asserted that this was the most antiwar revolution. Its victory decisively altered the balance of forces of war and peace.

The victory of the October Revolution which broke the chain of imperialism and opened up an opportunity to establish a new, socialist society, confirmed the strength of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism as well as the correctness of the strategy and tactics of the Bolshevik party.

The founders of Marxism-Leninism, in working out a theory of socialist revolution, did not consider war to be an objective and essential condition for revolution. In the fight against Trotsky and the "leftist" communists who denied the necessity of the Brest Peace, V.I. Lenin pointed out that they assumed supposedly that "the interests of the international revolution require the forcing of it and only war could be such a forcing.... Such a 'theory' runs fully counter to Marxism which has always denied the 'forcing' of the revolution which develops as the class contradictions, which give rise to the revolution, mature."(4)

V.I. Lenin emphasized that if a revolution is linked to a war then "one could not imagine a more torturous, harder transition, more acute need and a harsher crisis which would undermine all the productive forces."(5) The ultimate goal of a socialist revolution is not merely the overthrow of capitalism but also the building of communism. The future society must safeguard everything created by previous generations. Consequently, a revolution does not require war.

If this conclusion was valid for that period, it is all the more correct for our times. A new world war cannot be viewed as an accelerator of the movement toward socialism. As is known, fundamental changes in military

equipment have been the result of scientific and technical progress. Weapons have been invented which have never before been known in the history of mankind.

In speaking to participants of the international forum on "For a Nuclear-Free World, for the Survival of Mankind," the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, M.S. Gorbachev, said that at present "one strategic submarine has the potential for destruction equal to several World Wars II." (6) It is perfectly obvious that if a world thermonuclear war is started, its consequences can cost hundreds of millions of human lives and the loss of the greatest material and spiritual values. "Imagination," continued M.S. Gorbachev, "is powerless to imagine the hell, the negation of the very idea of man, if even the smallest part of the present nuclear potential is put into action.... Nuclear death will obliterate both socialists and capitalists...." (7) Is it really possible for a world socialist revolution to come to victory through a nuclear war?

Under present-day conditions, war has ceased being a fatal inevitability. This conclusion is based upon a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the modern age, the age of transition from capitalism to socialism on an international scale. And this means that a socialist orientation is assuming ever-greater importance in social development. The historical patterns of capitalism, including the inevitability of world war, have ceased to be dominant in world development. The decisive forces capable of preventing a world war at present are the world socialist system, the international working class, the national liberation movement and the world peace movement.

Since the first days of the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, a general direction in Soviet foreign policy has been the fight against war, the fight for peace and friendship of peoples. Over all its history, the Soviet Union has carried out a peace policy corresponding to the interests of all mankind. The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress pointed out that at present objective conditions have come into being "under which the struggle between capitalism and socialism can occur **only and exclusively in forms of peaceful competition and peaceful rivalry.**" (8)

The Soviet Union has constantly come forward with proposals aimed at ensuring a lasting peace in the world. A vivid confirmation of the peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union and all the socialist commonwealth countries is the statement of the session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact States on their military doctrine.

"The military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact states," states the Communiqué of the designated meeting, "is strictly defensive and proceeds from the fact that under present conditions the use of the military way to resolve any disputed question is inadmissible." (9)

In acting against imperialist wars, and particularly against world war, the Marxist-Leninists proceed from V.I. Lenin's tenet that peace "moves things forward an infinite number of times better than does a war...." (10)

Thus, although war and revolution arise out of the general conditions of an antagonistic society, they represent different social phenomena. A social revolution is the result of an extreme exacerbation of social contradictions within a country and a product of the action of the law of the conformity of production relations to the nature of productive forces. V.I. Lenin pointed out: "The rule of capitalism would be impossible to stop if all economic development of the capitalist nations did not lead to this. A war accelerated this process and this has made capitalism impossible. No force would destroy capitalism if history had not undermined and eroded it." (11)

No war would cause a revolution if the objective prerequisites for it had not matured inside the country. The experience of World Wars I and II is a visual illustration and confirmation of this. In the first instance the war involved 38 states, but revolution was victorious only in Russia. World War II encompassed more than 60 states, however revolutions broke out only in 11, and here not only in those countries where the Soviet troops had carried out their liberating mission. For example, the Soviet Army was not in Albania and it fought very briefly in parts of the territory of Yugoslavia, China and North Korea. However, in all these countries people's democratic revolutions were victorious. At the same time, revolutions did not occur in Austria, Norway, Denmark and Finland where the Soviet troops did fight.

Experience shows that if a revolutionary situation occurs in a country, then a war can act as a trigger mechanism putting into action the covert springs of a social revolt. "A war," wrote K. Marx, "tests a nation.... Just as mummies decompose instantaneously when they are exposed to the effects of atmosphere, so a war passes final sentence on social institutions which have lost their viability." (12)

At the same time, the founders of scientific communism repeatedly emphasized that, in employing the entire arsenal of the means of a revolutionary overthrow, it is essential to seek out the ways for a less painful form of revolutionary change. They felt that for the proletariat it would be desirable to come to power peacefully, without armed violence, with a minimum of human sacrifice and damage to the productive forces so as to thereby accelerate the construction of socialism. Confirmation of this is the experience of Great October as well as the revolutions which have occurred in a number of European, Asian and Latin American countries in the 1940s and 1950s.

Footnotes

1. "Mirovaya voyna v tsifrakh" [The World War in Figures], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1934, p 28.

2. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 37, p 50.
3. "Mirovaya vojna v tsifrakh," p 88.
4. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 35, p 403.
5. Ibid., Vol 36, p 397.
6. *PRAVDA*, 17 February 1987.
7. Ibid.
8. "Materialy XXVII syezda KPSS:" [Materials of the 27th CPSU Congress], Moscow, Politizdat, 1986, pp 65-66.
9. *PRAVDA*, 30 May 1987.
10. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 40, p 247.
11. Ibid., Vol 32, p 90.
12. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Sobr. soch." [Collected Works], Vol 11, p 551.

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Results of Discussion on Strategic Operations of Great Patriotic War 1941-1945

18010052b Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 10, Oct 87 (signed to press
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[Unattributed article, published under the heading "Soviet Military Art": "Results of Discussion on Strategic Operations of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945"]

[Text] A study and more thorough investigation of the history of wars and military art, in particular the Great Patriotic War of 1941- 1945, continue to remain one of the most important tasks of military history science. In solving this, a significant role has been played by debates making it possible to bring up for discussion urgent problems of military history among a broad range of generals and officers as well as other specialists.

In 1985-1986, on the pages of *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal* a discussion was held on the strategic operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War. The necessity of this was caused by the fact that many military history works and articles defined differently the number and name of such operations. Some gave over 50 strategic operations while others gave over 50 strategic offensive operations by groups of fronts or simply 50 operations of groups of fronts, although it is well known that certain strategic operations were conducted by the troops of a single front or a single front and the naval forces. The operations were not only offensive

but also defensive. No clarity to this question was added by the *Sovetskaya Voennoyaya Entsiklopediya* [Soviet Military Encyclopedia] and *Velikaya Otechestvennaya vojna 1941-1945. Entsiklopediya* [The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. An Encyclopedia] which were published in recent years. Quite understandably this had a negative effect both on the study of the individual operations as well as on research of the problems of the history of military art as a whole.

The beginning to the discussion was made by the article of Maj Gen V.V. Gurkin and Lt Gen (Ret) M.I. Golovin with the setting out of the main criteria by which one or another operation could be put in the category of strategic. The publication was supplemented by a list of the strategic operations.(1) As a discussion of the list, the editors of the journal received rather many comments and proposals from the readers and the most essential and basic of these were published. In particular, articles were published by Maj Gens N.K. Glazunov, A.I. Mikhailov and Kh.M. Dzhelaukhov, Cols B.N. Petrov, V.I. Kudryashov and B.I. Pavlov and Capt 1st Rank V.S. Shlomin.(2)

A careful study of the received replies made it possible to have a more sound approach to settling the question of categorizing one or another operation as strategic and thus clarify the list of these operations. For example, Maj Gen N.K. Glazunov and Col B.I. Pavlov argued against including the **1941 Odessa-Melitopol Defensive Operation, the Voroshilovgrad-Rostov and Rzhev-Vyazma Offensive Operations of 1943** among the strategic. They backed up their viewpoint with solid grounds and one cannot but agree with them.

Along with this, Maj Gen N.K. Glazunov and Col B.I. Pavlov as well as Col B.N. Petrov proposed that the strategic operations should include the **1941 Tikhvin and Rostov Offensive Operations**. The designated operations were of great military-political and strategic significance. The Soviet troops in the course of carrying them out tied down large enemy forces and caused them significant damage and this contributed largely to the defeat of the Germans at Moscow as well as to the stabilizing of the situation on the flanks of the strategic front. These arguments were very persuasive.

At the same time, other proposals voiced in the course of the discussion were, in our view, not sufficiently sound. It would be wise to take up certain of these in greater detail.

Thus, Maj Gens (Ret) Kh.M. Dzhelaukhov and N.D. Saltykov as well as Capt 1st Rank V.S. Shlomin proposed that the first defensive operations conducted by the Soviet troops from 22 June through 6-10 July 1941 in the **Baltic, Belorussia and Western Ukraine**, be excluded from the strategic while the military operations carried out in these regions should be called border engagements. They based their proposals on the fact that the military leadership did not take a special decision to

conduct them and that the combat operations of the Soviet Army and Navy during that period were not coordinated in terms of place, time and goal by a single over-all concept and plan of the High Command but were conducted spontaneously.

These arguments cannot be recognized as valid. As is known, in line with the change of the state frontier in the West in 1939-1940 and the growing threat of a military attack by Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union, the Red Army General Staff worked out a "Plan for the Defense of the State Frontier." In accord with this plan, directives of the People's Commissariat of Defense in the first half of May 1941 ordered the Baltic, Western and Kiev Special Military Districts, the Leningrad and Odessa Military Districts to organize a defense of the state frontier and work out the corresponding plans prior to 25 May.

Each border military district in the West was given specific tasks, zones of action, particularly crucial sectors for defense, the composition of the cover armies as well as the forces which should be left at the immediate disposal of the district commander. In addition, the task was set of building rear defensive lines in depth in the event of the retreat of the units and formations.

The directives assumed that the defensive would be based upon the stubborn holding of the fortified areas and field fortifications along the state frontier and it was pointed out that the troop actions should be of an active nature while any attempt by the enemy to push into the defenses were to be immediately thwarted by counterattacks of the corps and army reserves. The mechanized corps and aviation of the districts were to be employed for destroying the large motorized enemy groupings in the event that they broke through the defenses.(3)

Thus, the border military districts which from the start of the war were changed into fronts (with the exception of the Odessa Military District which fielded an army) in essence had tasks to conduct defensive operations which were not formally termed this but were called tasks "to cover the frontier."

In carrying out the instructions of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the district and army commanders took the appropriate decisions and set tasks for subordinates. At the same time, due to the limited amount of time the defensive was not properly organized. It was not possible to create establishing the defensive groupings and lines. The surprise enemy attack, the enemy's superiority in forces, particularly on the most important strategic axes, as well as the incomplete readiness of our troops to repel massed enemy attacks created a difficult situation for the fronts in the West and as a whole determined the inconclusiveness of their defensive operations in the initial period of the war.

Regardless of this, the Northwestern, Western, Southwestern and Southern Fronts put up stubborn resistance to the enemy groupings both on the lines close to the frontier as well as in depth. By counterstrikes of the combined-arms formations and mechanized corps and by air strikes the fronts caused the enemy significant damage and by the actions of the surrounded units and formations tied down and weakened the enemy forces and on individual axes forced it to halt the offensive and go over to the defensive.

With the outbreak of war, fierce engagements developed on a broad front, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, to a depth from 350 to 650 km. Military operations were not conducted everywhere on an improvised basis. As a whole they were controlled by Headquarters of the High Command, by the command of the fronts and armies, although there were many major shortcomings in their activities of troop leadership during that period. Over the period from 22 June through 10 July 1941, Headquarters issued to the fronts and individual armies up to 50 directives and orders to clarify and set additional tasks, for organizing and conducting combat, for employing reserves and aviation, for regrouping the troops, for preparing defensive lines and on other questions. For providing help to the fronts in organizing the rebuff of the enemy, on 22 June the following individuals were sent as representatives of the High Command: MSU B.M. Shaposhnikov to the Western Front, Army Gen G.K. Zhukov to the Southwestern, and somewhat later Lt Gen N.F. Vatutin to the Northwestern Front.

The goals and plan of the Soviet High Command during that period were having the troops of the first strategic echelon, in concentrating their main efforts on the most threatened axes, cause maximum damage to the main enemy groupings, to stop them or reduce the rate of advance and thereby create conditions for deploying the second strategic echelon of the Armed Forces.

Due to the heroic resistance of our troops and to the measures taken by Headquarters to reinforce the fronts fighting on the main axes using the strategic reserves (22d, 19th, 20th and 21st Armies and individual formations), at the end of the first 10 days of July, it was possible for a certain time to stabilize the front on a line of Pyarnu, Tartu, to the south of Lugi, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Sarny, Zhlobin, Novograd-Volynskiy, Zhitomir, Proskurov. The enemy had been caused significant harm. Just in the ground troops of the German Army losses on the Soviet-German Front by mid-July were around 100,000 men and almost one-half of the tanks; the German Air Force had lost 1,284 aircraft.(4)

Thus, proceeding from the set goals and tasks as well as considering the significant scope of the combat and the results achieved, the defensive operations of the Soviet troops in the Baltic, Belorussia and the Western Ukraine during the initial period of the war should be viewed as strategic.

In the course of the discussion, great attention was given to the **Dnieper-Carpathian Strategic Offensive Operation** (24 December 1943—17 April 1944). Due to the fact that this included several front offensive operations as well as two operations—Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy and Proskorovo-Chernovtsy—each conducted by the fronts of two fronts, it was proposed that it be split into two or three strategic operations.

Such a proposal is not sufficiently valid. The defeat of the Nazi troops on the Right-Bank Ukraine in all the military history works has been viewed as a single strategic operation which included ten front (front groups) operations. It was carried out according to the single plan of Hq SHC [Headquarters Supreme High Command] by the forces of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts and the Second Belorussian Front in the aim of defeating the large strategic enemy grouping and capturing important economic regions of the nation. The planning and conduct of the operation were a matter of particular attention for Hq SHC, as its results would decisively influence the success of the entire 1944 winter campaign. The operation was conducted continuously, and in the course of it Headquarters adjusted and set additional tasks for the fronts considering the achieving of the over-all goal of the operation, while the representatives of Headquarters coordinated the troop actions, remaining directly on the fronts.

If one agrees with the proposal to divide this operation, then the same must be done to certain others, for example, the Belorussian, which was carried out by four fronts. In the course of it eight front offensive operations were carried out while two (Vitebsk-Orsha and Minsk) were carried out by two or three fronts.

Ideas have been voiced also on splitting the **Chernigov-Poltava Strategic Offensive Operation of 1943** into three strategic operations: Bryansk, Chernigov-Priluki and Poltava-Kremenchug. This is scarcely advisable. It must be considered that the Chernigov-Poltava Operation was carried out upon instructions of Hq SHC by the forces of the Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts and which cooperated closely on adjacent axes in the aim of defeating the opposing enemy which was endeavoring to reach the middle courses of the Dnieper and capture bridgeheads. Within this operation, three front operations (Chernigov-Priluki, Sumy-Priluki and Poltava) were carried out. The Bryansk Offensive Operation was carried out by the Bryansk Front alone on an independent axis and according to the accepted criteria it must not be considered as strategic.

Nor can one agree with the proposal to split the **Moscow and Stalingrad Strategic Defensive Operations** into two each. Both of these were conducted on the same independent strategic axes, in truth, with slight pauses, but without any major changes in the troop groupings of the sides.

Maj Gen (Ret) N.D. Saltykov has proposed that the **Northern Caucasus Defensive Operation of 1942** be named the Defensive Operation in the Caucasus Foothills and its start would be not from 25 July, as has been pointed out in the military history works and encyclopedic publications, but from September, as up to September, in his opinion, the Soviet troops were basically retreating. This argument cannot serve as valid grounds for changing the dates and the name of the operation, since a retreat is a type of maneuver in conducting defensive operations, when the defending troops under the effect of superior enemy forces are forced to abandon the occupied lines and retreat in the aim of establishing a new grouping on a better line for combat. V.I. Lenin wrote: "If there are clearly few enough forces, then the most important defensive means is a retreat into the interior of the nation...."(5)

Also invalid, in our view, is the proposal to name the **Lower-Dnieper Strategic Offensive Operation of 1943** the Kremenchug-Pyatikhatka Operation. The problem is that Kremenchug and Pyatikhatka are 70 km apart. Both points were in the zone of advance of just the Steppe (Second Ukrainian) Front, while the Lower-Dnieper Operation was carried out by the forces of two other fronts, the Southwestern (Third Ukrainian) and Southern (Fourth Ukrainian) in the zone from Kremenchug to the Black Sea. In the course of the operation, the Soviet troops almost completely liberated the Left-Bank Ukraine in the lower courses of the Dnieper, they sealed off from the land the enemy Crimean grouping and captured bridgeheads on the western bank of the Dnieper up to 400 km long along the front and up to 100 km in depth. Hence, the Lower Dnieper Strategic Offensive Operation in terms of its content and in terms of the zone where it was carried out corresponds fully to the accepted name and there is no need to change this.

Certain comrades feel that from the strategic operations we should drop the **defensive operation in the Arctic and Karelia in 1941, the Kerch-Feodosiya Landing Operation of 1941, the Operation to Break the Leningrad Blockade of 1943, the Novorossiysk-Taman Offensive Operation of 1943 and the Petsamo-Kirkenes of 1944** for the reason that they were small in scope.

In actuality, in terms of the forces involved in these operations, the width of the zone of advance and the depth, these operations were small, however, as a result of carrying them out, major military-political and strategic tasks were carried out. Each of these involved naval (flotilla) forces.

Thus, in the course of the operation in the Arctic and Karelia, troops from the Karelian Front in cooperation with forces of the Northern Fleet and White Sea Naval Flotilla in stubborn defensive battles caused great harm to the enemy, they halted its offensive, they prevented the capture of the Kiev Railroad and held Murmansk, a major unfreezing port in the north of our nation which

was of important strategic significance. In the Kerch-Feodosiya Landing Operation a major amphibious force was landed in the Crimea. A new Crimean Front was established on the captured beachhead consisting of three combined-arms armies and by their actions tied down large Nazi troop forces. As a result of the operation to lift the blockade on Leningrad, the troops of the Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts in cooperation with the Baltic Fleet restored the land communications of Leningrad with the rest of the nation and thereby thwarted the enemy's evil plan to starve the city's population.

There was also a proposal to exclude from the strategic the **Kharkov Defensive Operation of 1943** and call it, as before, the Kharkov Engagement due to the fact that the troops on the right wing of the Southwestern Front conducted defensive battles and engagements, in repelling the enemy counteroffensive, while a portion of the Voronezh Front was advancing.

It is impossible to agree with this, since the main content of those events at Kharkov was still the defense of the Southwestern and Voronezh Fronts which they conducted from 19 February until 25 March against large enemy panzer and motorized formations which had gone over to a counteroffensive. The strategic significance of this operation is that, although the Soviet troops retreated 100-150 km under the pressure of superior enemy forces, they caused the enemy heavy losses, they thwarted its plan to encircle our grouping in the Kursk area and took revenge for their defeat at Stalingrad.

The opinion has also been voiced of considering the **Balaton Defensive Operation of 1945**, conducted by the Third Ukrainian Front, as among the strategic. However, in terms of the scope, the forces involved in it and the results achieved, it does not approach this category of operations.

Thus, on the basis of the proposals and comments from the participants in the discussion as well as the results of additionally conducted research, it is advisable to exclude from the list of strategic operations three of them: Odessa-Melitopol Defensive of 1941, Voroshilovgrad-Rostov and Rzhev-Vyazma Offensive of 1943 and include too, the Tikhvin and Rostov Offensive Operations of 1941. As a result 51 strategic operations will remain in the list appended here, including 37 offensive and 14 defensive. Here 42 operations were conducted by the forces of groups of fronts, 5 operations by the forces of a single front and the navy and 4 operations by the troops of just one front. According to the proposals made in the course of the discussion, we have also adjusted the names and results of certain operations, their scope and the composition of the actual forces. The adjusted list of strategic operations has been examined at the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces and approved.

In the course of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Armed Forces carried out the main tasks by conducting strategic operations. In this context, the elaborated list

can, in our view, be of great help in studying the history of military art on the staffs, in the troops and at VUZes, as well as in conducting military history research, including in working out a new history of the Great Patriotic War and a second edition of the *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*. At the same time, it would be wrong to consider the proposed list as final. As a result of further research undoubtedly additions and clarifications will be incorporated in it.

As is known, during the years of the war a large number of front and army operations and the operations of the Armed Services was carried out. A number of sources indicates, for example, a number of front operations of around 250. However, as yet there is no complete list of these and this largely limits their study. For this reason, many participants in the discussion were in favor of carrying out the corresponding research so that the second edition of the *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* would give brief information on the front operations of the Great Patriotic War.

The editorial staff of *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal* expresses profound gratitude to the generals and officers who took part in the discussion and, which, undoubtedly, was an important stage in investigating the strategic operations of the Great Patriotic War. We are hopeful that the readers will also take an active part in the discussion which we plan to carry out on the pages of the journal in 1988 for the initial period of the Great Patriotic War.

Footnotes

1. *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No 10, 1985, pp 10-23.
2. *Ibid.*, No 4, 1986, pp 48-52; No 5, pp 48-50; No 7, pp 46-48.
3. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 16-A, inv. 2951, file 237, sheets 33-47, 65-81; file 243, sheets 4-35; file 259, sheets 1-17.
4. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945. Kratkaya istoriya" [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941-1945. Concise History], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 63.
5. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 36, p 292.

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STRATEGIC OPERATIONS OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES
IN THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF 1941-1945

No.	Name of Operation and Dates	Field Forces Involved in Operation	Opposing Enemy Forces	Scope of Operation		Results of Operation
				Along Front, km	In Depth, km	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
First Period of War (22 June 1941-18 November 1942)						
1	Defensive operation in Baltic (22 Jun-9 Jul 41)	NW Front, Baltic Fleet	Army Group North, part of 3d Panzer Group & 9th Army of Army Group Center, 1st Air Fleet, German and Finnish Navies on Baltic Sea	350-450	400-450	Enemy plan thwarted to destroy troops of front in border area. By counterstrikes of III and XII Mechanized Corps and by defense on intermediate lines, great damage caused to advancing enemy grouping, its strike force weakened and rate of advance declined. This allowed our troops to prepare defensive lines in depth and bring up fresh reserves.
2	Defensive operation in Belorussia (22 Jun-9 Jul 41)	Western Front, Pinsk Naval Flotilla	Army Group Center, 2d Air Fleet	450-800	450-600	By resistance on frontier and intermediate lines, by counterstrikes of mechanized corps and rifle formations great damage caused to main Wehrmacht grouping, its rate of advance slowed down. This provided opportunity to deploy troops of second strategic echelon on line of Western Dvina and Dnieper from Kraslava to Loyev.
3	Defensive operation in Western Ukraine (22 Jun-6 Jul 41)	SW and Southern Fronts, part of Black Sea Fleet	Army Group South, VIII Hungarian Corps, 4th Air Fleet	600-700	300-350	By resistance on frontier and intermediate defensive lines, by counterstrikes of mechanized corps in areas of Dubno, Lutsk and Rovno, great damage caused to enemy, the offensive of its main grouping checked and this made it possible to withdraw troops for taking up fortified areas on old frontier on line of Korosten, Novograd-Volynskiy, Shepetovka, Starokonstantinov, Proskurov.
4	Defensive operation in Arctic and Karelia (29 Jun-10 Oct 41)	Part of Northern Front (from 23 Aug 41, Karelian Front), Northern Fleet, White Sea Naval Flotilla	German Army Norway, III Finnish Army Corps, Finnish Army Karelia, part of 5th Air Fleet and Finnish Air Forces, operations group of German Navy	800	50-150	In stubborn defensive battles Soviet troops halted enemy offensive, defeated it and thwarted plan to capture Murmansk and Murmansk Railroad.
5	Kiev Defensive Operation (7 Jul-26 Sep 41)	SW Front, part of Bryansk and Southern Fronts, Dnieper detachment of Pinsk Naval Flotilla	Army Group South, part of Army Group Center, 4th Air Fleet	300	600	During more than 2 months of defensive battles great damage caused to enemy and forced German Command to achieve its aims on this axis to use a portion of Army Group Center (2d Army and 2d Panzer Group) thereby checking enemy advance on main (Moscow) axis.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Leningrad Defensive Operation (10 Jul-30 Sep 41)	Northern (from 23 Aug 41, Leningrad), NW Fronts, Baltic Fleet, Ladoga Naval Flotilla	Army Group North, SE Army of Finns, part of Finnish Air Force and Navy	450	70-300	In stubborn fighting enemy was defeated, its advance halted, and plan to capture Leningrad without a halt checked.
7	Smolensk Engagement (Smolensk Defensive Operation) (10 Jul-10 Sep 41)	Western, Central, Bryansk and Reserve Fronts	Army Group Center, part of 16th Army of Army Group North, 2d Air Fleet	600-650	200-250	Major defeat to enemy, its advance checked on main axis for 2 months and this played important role in thwarting the plan for a "blitzkrieg" against USSR.
8	Donbass-Rostov Defensive Operation (29 Sep-16 Nov 41)	Southern Front and portion of SW Front, Azov Naval Flotilla	Army Group South, 4th Air Fleet	400-670	150-300	Enemy plan thwarted to surround and destroy Southern Front and continue offensive to Caucasus. Enemy suffered heavy losses and its offensive halted.
9	Moscow Defensive Operation (30 Sep-5 Dec 41)	Western, Kalinin, Reserve and Bryansk Fronts	Army Group Center, part of 16th Army of Army Group North, 2d Air Fleet	700-1100	300-350	Major defeat dealt to main enemy grouping and its offensive halted. Conditions created for going over to counteroffensive and defeating enemy at Moscow.
10	Tikhvin Offensive Operation (10 Nov-30 Dec 41)	5th Army of Leningrad Front, 4th and 52d Separate Armies (from 17 Dec 41 combined into Volkhov Front), Novgorod Army Group of NW Front	16th Army, part of 18th Army of Army Group North, part of 1st Air Fleet	300-350	100-120	Major damage done to 10 enemy divisions, significant territory liberated, and enemy plan thwarted to completely isolate Leningrad from nation and starve it out. Operation helped establish conditions for going over by Soviet troops to counteroffensive at Moscow.
11	Rostov Offensive Operation (17 Nov-2 Dec 41)	Southern Front, 56th Separate Army (from 23 Nov 41 part of Southern Front)	Part of Army Group South, 4th Air Fleet	170	80	Major defeat to enemy 1st Panzer Army, its troops pushed back 80 km from Rostov and enemy breakthrough to Caucasus prevented. Operation helped establish conditions for going over of our troops to counteroffensive at Moscow.
12	Moscow Offensive Operation (5 Dec 41-7 Jan 42)	Western and Kalinin Fronts, part of SW Front, Bryansk Front (from 21 Dec 41)	Army Group Center, Operations Group of Air Forces Ost	1000	100-250	Soviet troops defeated enemy assault groupings, routed 38 enemy divisions, including 15 panzer and motorized, advanced 100-250 km to west, liberated over 11,000 population points, including cities of Volokolamsk, Kalinin, Kaluga, Klin and so forth. Direct threat to Moscow eliminated.
13	Kerch-Feodosiya Landing Operation (25 Dec 41-2 Jan 42)	Transcaucasus (from 30 Dec 41, Caucasian) Front, Black Sea Fleet, Azov Naval Flotilla	Part of 11th Army of Army Group South and part of 4th Air Fleet	250	100-110	Amphibious force landed on Kerch Peninsula, consisting of 2 combined arms armies which advanced 100-110 km and captured important bridgehead, where Crimean Front was deployed. This forced enemy to break off offensive against Sevastopol and shift part of forces to fight Crimean Front.

[continuation of Strategic Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	Rzhev-Vyazma Offensive Operation (8 Jan-20 Apr 42)	Kalinin and Western Fronts	Army Group Center, Air Force Operations Group Ost	650	80-250	Soviet troops dealt major defeat to enemy, completely liberated Moscow and Tula Oblasts, many rayons of Kalinin and Smolensk Oblasts. In course of operation, enemy lost 330,000 men. Flanks of Army Group Center were deeply enveloped by our troops.
15	Voronezh-Voroshilovgrad Defensive Operation (28 Jun-24 Jul 42)	Bryansk, Voronezh (from 7 Jul 42), SW and Southern Fronts	Army Group South, from 9 Jul 42, Army Groups A and B, 4th Air Fleet	900	150-400	In course of stubborn fighting, enemy plans thwarted to defeat main forces of Soviet troops on southwestern sector. Its assault grouping suffered heavy losses.
16	Stalingrad Defensive Operation (17 Jul-18 Nov 42)	Stalingrad (Don), SE (Stalingrad) Fronts, Volga Naval Flotilla	Army Group B, part of 4th Air Fleet	250-500	150	Enemy defeated, its offensive stopped and conditions created for going over of our troops to counteroffensive.
17	Northern Caucasus Defensive Operation (25 Jul-31 Dec 42)	Southern (until 28 Jul 42), Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasian Fronts, Black Sea Fleet, Azov Naval Flotilla	Army Group A, part of 4th Air Fleet, German and Romanian Navies on Black Sea	320-1000	400-800	As a result of operation, enemy offensive halted, enemy suffered great losses, and its plans to capture oil fields of Caucasus and bring Turkey into war against USSR were thwarted.
Second Period of War (19 November 1942-31 December 1943)						
18	Stalingrad Offensive Operation (19 Nov 42-2 Feb 43)	SW, Don and Stalingrad Fronts, Volga Naval Flotilla	Army Group B (from 22 Nov 42, Army Group Don), 4th Air Fleet	850	150-200	Main forces of German 6th and 4th Panzer Armies surrounded and destroyed, 3d and 4th Romanian Armies and 8th Italian Army defeated. Enemy losses were over 800,000 men, up to 2,000 tanks and assault guns, over 10,000 guns and mortars, around 3,000 aircraft. Soviet Army firmly took strategic initiative.
19	Northern Caucasus Offensive Operation (1 Jan-4 Feb 43)	Transcaucasian, Northern Caucasus Fronts, part of Southern Front, Black Sea Fleet	Army Group A, part of Army Group Don and 4th Air Fleet, German, Romanian and Italian Navies on Black Sea	840	300-600	Army Group A defeated, its troops pushed 300-600 km to west, and threat to Caucasus oil fields lifted.
20	Operation to break Leningrad blockade (12 Jan-30 Jan 43)	Part of Leningrad, Volkhov Fronts and Baltic Fleet	18th Army of Army Group North, part of 1st Air Fleet	45	60	In course of offensive, enemy blockade broken and overland communications of Leningrad with rest of country restored. Enemy plan thwarted to starve out millions of people in city.
21	Voronezh-Kharkov Offensive Operation (13 Jan-3 Mar 43)	Voronezh Front, part of Bryansk and SW Fronts	Army Group B, part of 4th Air Fleet	250-400	360-520	Soviet troops dealt major defeat to Army Group B. The 2d Hungarian Army and 8th Italian Army which were part of it were almost completely destroyed. Significant territory and a number of major industrial and administrative centers such as Voronezh, Kursk, Belgorod and Kharkov were liberated from occupiers.

[continuation of Strategic Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	Kharkov Defensive Operation (19 Feb-25 Mar 43)	SW and Voronezh Fronts	Army Group South, part of Army Group Center, 4th Air Fleet	300-350	100-150	Enemy suffered heavy losses, its counteroffensive stopped and enemy plan to surround our troops in Kursk area thwarted.
23	Kursk Defensive Operation (5 Jul-23 Jul 43)	Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts	2d and 9th Armies of Army Group Center, 4th Panzer Army and Operations Group Kampf, Army Group South, 4th and 6th Air Fleets	550	10-35	In course of defensive engagements, enemy assault groups were ground down, bled white and halted. Conditions created for going over to counteroffensive by our troops.
24	Orel Offensive Operation (12 Jul-18 Aug 43)	Bryansk, Central Fronts and part of Western Front	2d Panzer and 9th Armies of Army Group Center, 6th Air Fleet	400	150	15 enemy divisions defeated. Soviet troops advance 115 km and liberate significant territory from occupiers. Strongly fortified enemy bridgehead eliminated from which it advanced in Kursk Battle.
25	Belgorod-Kharkov Offensive Operation (3 Aug-23 Aug 43)	Voronezh and Steppe Fronts	4th Panzer Army and Operations Group Kampf of Army Group Center, part of 4th Air Fleet	300-400	140	15 enemy divisions defeated. Our troops advanced 140 km in depth, having widened breach to 400 km, and liberated Kharkov Industrial Area.
26	Smolensk Offensive Operation (7 Aug-2 Oct 43)	Kalinin and Western Fronts	3d Panzer, 4th and 9th Armies of Army Group Center, 6th Air Fleet	400	200-250	Smolensk and part of Kalinin Oblasts liberated, start made to liberation of Belorussia. 17 enemy divisions were defeated and 14 divisions suffered heavy losses.
27	Donbass Offensive Operation (13 Aug-22 Sep 43)	SW and Southern Fronts	1st Panzer and 6th Armies, part of 8th Army of Army Group South and 4th Air Fleet	450	250-300	Soviet troops defeated 13 enemy divisions, liberated Donbass, reached approaches to Dnieper. Major economic area returned to nation.
28	Chernigov-Poltava Offensive Operation (26 Aug-30 Sep 43)	Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts	2d Army of Army Group Center, 4th Panzer and 8th Armies of Army Group South, part of 4th and 6th Air Fleets	600	250-300	Troops of 3 fronts reached Dnieper and captured bridgehead on right bank. In course of operation 17 enemy divisions defeated.
29	Novorossiysk-Taman Offensive Operation (10 Sep-9 Oct 43)	Northern Caucasus Front, Black Sea Fleet, Azov Naval Flotilla	17th Army of Army Group A, portion of 4th Air Fleet	80	150	Liberation of Caucasus completed, important enemy bridgehead eliminated which gave it good conditions for defense of Crimea. Liberation of Novorossiysk and Taman Peninsula significantly improved basing of Black Sea Fleet and created good conditions for attacking the Crimean enemy grouping from the sea and across the Kerch Strait.
30	Lower Dnieper Offensive Operation (26 Sep-20 Dec 43)	Steppe (Second Ukrainian), SW (Third Ukrainian), South, 6th Army of Southern (Fourth Ukrainian) Fronts	1st Panzer and 8th Armies of Army Group Center, 6th Army of Army Group A, 4th Air Fleet	750-800	100-300	Troops of 3 fronts complete liberation of Left-Bank Ukraine in lower courses of Dnieper, blockade from land the Crimean enemy troop grouping and capture bridgehead on western bank of Dnieper up to 400 km along front and 100 km in depth.

[continuation of Strategic Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	Kiev Offensive Operation (3 Nov-13 Nov 43)	First Ukrainian Front	2d Army of Army Group Center, 4th Panzer Army, part of 8th Army of Army Group South and 4th Air Fleet	320-500	150	Troops of front liberated capital of Ukraine, Kiev, and formed strategic bridgehead on right bank of Dnieper more than 300 km along front and 150 km in depth playing important role in carrying out operations to liberate Right-Bank Ukraine. In course of operation 15 enemy divisions defeated.
Third Period of War (January 1944-May 1945)						
32	Offensive Operation to liberate Right-Bank Ukraine (24 Dec 43-17 Apr 44)	First, Second, Third and Fourth Ukrainian and Second Belorussian Fronts	Army Groups South and A, 4th Air Fleet, Romanian Air Force	1300-1400	250-450	Soviet troops liberated Right-Bank Ukraine, reach Carpathian foothills and state frontier with Romania, split southern wing of strategic enemy front. In course of operation 10 divisions and 1 brigade were destroyed and over 59 divisions suffered losses from one-half to three-quarters of personnel.
33	Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive Operation (14 Jan-1 Mar 44)	Leningrad, Volkhov and Second Baltic Fronts, Baltic Fleet	Army Group North, 1st Air Fleet, Naval Operations Group on Baltic	600	220-280	Major defeat dealt to Army Group North, 26 divisions routed, including 3 destroyed. Leningrad completely freed from enemy blockade.
34	Crimean Offensive Operation (5 Apr-12 May 44)	Fourth Ukrainian Front, Separate Maritime Army, Black Sea Fleet, Azov Naval Flotilla	17th Army of Army Group Southern Ukraine, part of 4th Air Fleet, Romanian Air Force, German and Romanian Navies on Black Sea	160	200-260	Enemy 17th Army (to 12 divisions) completely routed, Crimea liberated, better conditions for basing and combat of Black Sea Fleet.
35	Vyborg-Petrozovodsk Offensive Operation (10 Jun-9 Aug 44)	Part of Leningrad and Karelian Fronts, Baltic Fleet, Ladoga and Onega Naval Flotillas	Troops of Finnish Operations Groups Mosel, Karelian Isthmus and Olonets, Finnish Air Force	280	110-250	Major defeat to enemy troops defending Karelian Isthmus and Southern Karelia and this created conditions for liberation of Arctic and withdrawal of Finland from war.
36	Belorussian Offensive Operation (23 Jun-29 Aug 44)	First Baltic, Third, Second and First Belorussian Fronts, Dnieper Naval Flotilla, 1st Polish Army	Army Group Center, portion of 16th Army of Army Group North and 4th Panzer Army of Army Group Northern Ukraine, 6th Air Fleet	1100	550-600	Defeat dealt to Army Group Center with 17 divisions and 3 brigades destroyed and 50 divisions losing over one-half of personnel. Belorussia and part of Lithuania liberated, good conditions created for attacking enemy groupings in Baltic, East Prussia and Poland.
37	Lwow-Sandomierz Offensive Operation (13 Jul-29 Aug 44)	First Ukrainian Front	Army Group Northern Ukraine, part of 4th Air Fleet	440	350	Defeat of Army Group Northern Ukraine, western oblasts of Ukraine and southeastern regions of Poland liberated from occupiers. Major bridgehead captured on west bank of Vistula and of great importance for subsequent offensive on Silesian axis.

[continuation of Strategic Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38	Iasi-Kishinev Offensive Operation (20 Aug-29 Aug 44)	Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts, Black Sea Fleet and Danube Naval Flotilla	Army Group Southern Ukraine, part of 4th Air Fleet, Romanian Air Force	500	300-320	Army Group Southern Ukraine completely destroyed: 22 German divisions destroyed and virtually all Romanian divisions on the front routed. Moldavia liberated and Romania withdraws from Nazi bloc, declaring war on Germany.
39	Eastern Carpathian Offensive Operation (8 Sep-28 Oct 44)	Fourth Ukrainian Front, portion of First Ukrainian Front, 1 Czechoslovak Army Corps	Army Group Heinrici (German 1st Panzer Army and 1st Hungarian Army), portion of 4th Air Fleet	400	50-110	Defeat of Army Group Heinrici, Ciscarpathian Ukraine liberated. Soviet troops, having crossed Main Carpathian Range enter Czechoslovak territory.
40	Baltic Offensive Operation (14 Sep-24 Nov 44)	First, Second and Third Baltic Fronts, part of Leningrad and Third Belorussian Fronts, Baltic Fleet	Army Group North, part of 3d Panzer Army of Army Group Center, 1st Air Fleet and portion of 6th Air Fleet	1000	300	Liberation of Baltic (except Kurland) completed. Of 79 enemy formations existing at start of operation in Baltic, 29 were defeated and rest sealed off in Kurland.
41	Belgrad Offensive Operation (28 Sep-20 Oct 44)	Third Ukrainian Front, portion of Second Ukrainian Front, troops of Yugoslav PLA, 1st, 2d and 4th Bulgarian Armies, Danube Naval Flotilla	Army Group Serbia of Army Group F, part of Army Group E, Air Force Operations Group Southeast	400-620	200	Army Group Serbia of Army Group F defeated, defeat of Army Group E, eastern regions of Yugoslavia and its capital Belgrad liberated. Enemy forced to hurriedly pull troops out of Greece over Yugoslav mountain roads.
42	Petsamo-Kirkenes Offensive Operation (7 Oct-29 Oct 44)	Karelian Front and Northern Fleet	20th German Mountain Army, 5th Air Fleet, German Navy in Berents Sea	80	150	Soviet troops under harsh Arctic conditions defeat enemy, reach frontier with Norway and liberate a portion of its territory, including city of Kirkenes, from occupiers. In course of operation around 30,000 men destroyed and 156 enemy ships and vessels sunk.
43	Budapest Offensive Operation (29 Oct 44-13 Feb 45)	Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts, Danube Naval Flotilla, 1st and 4th Romanian Armies	Troops of Army Group South, portion of 4th Air Fleet, Hungarian Air Force	420	250-400	Enemy troop liberated central regions of Hungary and its capital Budapest. A 188,000-strong enemy grouping surrounded and destroyed. Hungary out of war, good conditions created for offensive in Czechoslovakia and Austria.
44	Vistula-Oder Offensive Operation (12 Jan-3 Feb 45)	First Belorussian and First Ukrainian Fronts, 1st Polish Army	Troops of Army Group A (from 26 Jan 45, Hungarian Army of Army Group Center), 6th Air Fleet	500	500	Soviet troops liberated larger portion of Polish territory, entered German territory and reached Oder, having captured number of bridgeheads on its western bank. In course of operation 35 enemy divisions were destroyed and 25 routed.
45	Western Carpathian Offensive Operation (12 Jan-18 Feb 45)	Fourth and Second Ukrainian Fronts, 1st and 4th Romanian Armies	1st Panzer Army, part of 17th Army, 1st Hungarian Army of Army Group A (from 26 Jan 45, Army Group Center), 6th and 8th Armies of Army Group South, portion of 4th Air Fleet	440	170-230	In course of operation, Soviet troops defeat enemy, liberate southern regions of Poland, a portion of Czechoslovak territory and cross Western Carpathians.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46	East Prussian Offensive Operation (13 Jan-25 Apr 45)	Second and Third Belorussian Fronts, portion of First Baltic Front and Baltic Fleet	Army Group Center (from 26 Jan 45, Army Group North), portion of 6th Air Fleet, German Navy on Baltic Sea	550	120-200	Soviet troops capture East Prussia. In course of operation 25 enemy divisions destroyed, 12 divisions suffer heavy losses. German Navy deprived of number of major naval bases sharply impeding supply of Kurland enemy grouping.
47	East Pomeranian Operation (10 Feb-4 Apr 45)	First and Second Belorussian Fronts, part of Baltic Fleet	Army Group Vistula, part of 6th Air Fleet, German Navy on Baltic Sea	460	130-150	21 enemy divisions and 8 brigades defeated, threat eliminated of its counterstrike in flank and rear of First Belorussian Front, East Pomerania cleared of Nazi troops. Soviet troops reach Baltic Seacoast and secure flank of main strategic grouping of our troops fighting on Berlin axis.
48	Vienna Offensive Operation (16 Mar-15 Apr 45)	Third Ukrainian Front, part of Second Ukrainian Front, Danube Naval Flotilla, 1st Bulgarian Army	Troops of Army Group South, part of Army Group E, 4th Air Fleet	230	150-250	Liberation of Hungary completed, enemy cleared out of southern regions of Czechoslovakia and Eastern Austria with its capital Vienna. In course of operation Soviet troops defeated 32 enemy divisions.
49	Berlin Offensive Operation (16 Apr-8 May 45)	Troops of First and Second Belorussian Fronts and First Ukrainian Front, part of Baltic Fleet, Dnieper Naval Flotilla, 1st and 2d Polish Armies	Army Group Vistula, 4th Panzer and 17th Armies of Army Group Center, 6th Air Fleet, Air Fleet Reich	300	100-120	In course of operation Soviet troops defeat 70 infantry divisions, 23 panzer and motorized divisions, capture 480,000 men and take capital of Germany, Berlin, linking up with Anglo-American troops on Elbe and forcing Nazi Germany to unconditionally surrender.
50	Prague Offensive Operation (6 May-11 May 45)	First, Second and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts, 2d Polish Army	Army Group Center, 8th Army, portion of 6th Panzer Army SS of Army Group Austria, 4th Air Fleet	1200	160-200	In course of operation, 860,000-strong German troop groupings surrounded and taken prisoner. Czechoslovakia and its capital Prague liberated from Nazi occupation.
Campaign in Far East (August 1945)						
51	Manchurian Offensive Operation (9 Aug-2 Sep 45)	Transbaykal, First and Second Far Eastern Fronts, Pacific Fleet, Amur Naval Flotilla, formations of Mongolian Army	Kwantung Army (1st, 3d, 17th Fronts, 4th Army, 2d and 5th Air Armies), Manchukuo Army, Army of Prince Dewan and Suiyuan Army Group of Inner Mongolia, Sungari Naval Flotilla	2700	200-800	Kwantung Army and puppet armies of Japan in Manchuria and North China defeated. Soviet troops advance 200-800 km, liberate Manchuria, Northeast China, and northern part of Korea. Defeat of Kwantung Army and loss of military-economic base in China and Korea deprive Japan of real forces to continue war.

[continuation of Strategic Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945]

Methods of Defeating Enemy in Strategic Offensive Operations

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21 Sep 87) pp 25-31

[Article by Maj Gen P.T. Kunitskiy: "Methods of Defeating the Enemy in Strategic Offensive Operations"]

[Text] The strategic offensive by the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War was carried out in the form of strategic offensive operations (operations of groups of fronts) and the success of these to a significant degree was determined by the selected methods of defeating the enemy. The most effective of these were: encirclement and destruction of large enemy groupings; splitting its strategic front; crushing the strategic front with the subsequent destruction of the isolated groupings. In many operations these methods were combined.

The encirclement and destruction of large enemy groupings were most frequently employed in those instances when the enemy had a sufficiently strong and compact troop grouping and the configuration of the front line made it possible to attack it in the flank and rear. This method was particularly effective when the flanks of the enemy groupings were weakened, when they did not have natural obstacles and were covered by less battle-worthy troops.

The encirclement of large enemy troop groupings and their destruction represented a difficult problem, particularly in 1941 and the beginning of 1942 when the Soviet troops still did not have mobile field forces as well as the appropriate combat experience. Thus, on 25 February 1942, to the west of Demyansk (the Demyansk Operation), the Northwestern Front closed a ring around the enemy II Army Corps. Six divisions (around 95,000 men) were encircled. But the enemy was not firmly sealed off from the air and this made it possible for it to ferry in reinforcements, ammunition and food to the surrounded troops. Moreover, the forces of the front were distributed evenly along the entire perimeter of encirclement and did not have decisive superiority on any of the axes. Due to the weakness and passivity of the external perimeter of encirclement, the enemy on 23 April was able to break the ring of encirclement and lead the troops out along the Ramushevo (named after the village Ramushevo) corridor which was 6-8 km wide.(1)

As the generalship skills of the military personnel and the technical equipping of the troops rose, and particularly with the appearance in the fronts and the reserve of Hq SHC of tank and mechanized corps, tank and air armies, artillery divisions and breakthrough corps, the operations to encircle and destroy the enemy were carried out with high effectiveness. For example, of the 130 enemy divisions destroyed in 1944, over one-half was destroyed

and taken prisoner in the course of such operations.(2) As a total on the Soviet-German Front, this method was used to rout over 200 enemy formations.(3)

An analysis indicates that the essential conditions for successfully conducting an encirclement operation were: an advantageous position for one's troops to quickly come out in the flanks and rear of the enemy grouping; the capturing by mobile troops of important areas, road junctions in the enemy rear; the conducting of active operations on the inner and outer perimeters of encirclement with the simultaneous sealing off of the enemy which had fallen into the pocket from the air and on maritime axes, from the sea. The encirclement was achieved by launching two thrusts along converging axes; one or two enveloping thrusts with the simultaneous pressing of the cut-off grouping to a natural obstacle such as the sea; by launching several frontal attacks and their continuation in the operational depth coming out in the flank and rear of the opposing grouping in the course of pursuit.

The first, truly classic example of an encirclement operation was the Soviet troop counteroffensive at Stalingrad. In the Stalingrad pocket an inglorious end was met by the main forces of the 6th Army and a portion of the 4th Panzer Army including 22 divisions and over 160 separate units numbering a total of around 330,000 men.

The surrounding of the large enemy troop grouping at Stalingrad and its destruction were carried out almost with an even balance of forces for the sides and in a rapid time. The objectives of encirclement were well equipped troops which had great combat experience. With all the effectiveness of the operation, it was not possible to turn the encirclement, splitting and destruction of the enemy into a single, unbroken process. It was necessary to organize a special operation to eliminate the surrounded enemy grouping and this diverted significant forces for an extended time from actions on the external perimeter.

The organization and conduct of a strategic operation to surround and destroy the enemy were continuously improved. This applied particularly to an optimum distribution of forces for actions on the internal and external perimeters of encirclement, the air blockading of the troops which had fallen into the pocket and the achieving of a high rate of their defeat. Thus, while in the Stalingrad Operation the encirclement was achieved by pincer strikes and the elimination of the isolated grouping was carried out only after the defeat of the enemy counterstrike groupings before the external perimeter and ended on the 71st day of encirclement, in the Korsun-Shevchenkovskiy Operation the destruction of the troops in the created pocket was carried out in the process of encircling and repelling powerful counterstrikes by a tank grouping from outside and was completed in 14 days.

In the Iasi-Kishinev Operation it took the Soviet troops just 4 days to crush the enemy defenses and surround the main forces of the German Army Group Southern Ukraine. This operation was marked by the launching of two powerful thrusts on converging axes at a distance of 200 km apart. A mobile external perimeter also was established simultaneously with the encirclement. By the

time of completing the encirclement in the Kishinev area, this front was 80-100 km from the internal perimeter of encirclement. As a result of this the enemy was deprived of the possibility of breaking out of the pocket. The enemy units and formations which had broken out to the west, without succeeding in escaping from the ring of operational encirclement, fell into a new, tactical encirclement and ultimately were doomed to destruction. The Command of Army Group Southern Ukraine on 5 September stated that the encircled corps and divisions of the 6th Army should be viewed as completely lost and that this defeat was the greatest catastrophe which had ever befallen the army group.(4)

The East Prussian Operation was characterized by the cutting off of the troops of Army Group Center, pressing them to the sea, splitting and destroying them piecemeal. The Second Belorussian Front (commander, MSU K.K. Rokossovskiy) launched a deep enveloping thrust from the lower courses of the Narew River on the Elbing axis while the Third Belorussian Front (commander, Army Gen A.D. Chernyakhovskiy, from 20 February, MSU A.M. Vasilevskiy) to the north of the Masurian Lakes toward Konigsberg.

On 26 January 1945, the Second Belorussian Front reached the Baltic Sea to the north of Elbing and as a result of this cut the route of retreat of the East Prussian enemy grouping. The Third Belorussian Front, having taken the strong defensive center of Insterburg, by 29 January had reached the Baltic Seacoast, outflanking Konigsberg to the north, northwest and southwest. As a result, the main enemy forces (around 32 divisions) were pressed to the sea, split into three isolated groupings and destroyed.

Large enemy groupings were surrounded with great art in the course of the Berlin Operation conducted by the First and Second Belorussian and First Ukrainian Fronts. Its over-all concept was based upon the launching of several splitting thrusts which would crush the unified front of heavily fortified and deeply echeloned enemy defenses, with the subsequent encirclement and destruction of the enemy piecemeal. As a result of these actions, a large Wehrmacht grouping was surrounded in two areas (Berlin and Frankfurt-Guben). The operation is also instructive in the speed of eliminating the surrounded groupings by launching concentric thrusts, by splitting and destroying them piecemeal. While at Stalingrad it required over 2 months to destroy a grouping 230,000 strong, the surrounded Berlin grouping numbering 500,000 soldiers and officers, in being split into two parts, was destroyed in just 7 days.

The Frankfurt-Guben grouping was basically destroyed not in the encirclement area but in the course of thwarting its attempts to break out to the west. The dynamics of the fighting included a early going over to the offensive on the routes the enemy would take out of the encirclement as well as attacks by rifle and tank formations to cut off, encircle and destroy the enemy breaking out of encirclement.

For all the operations to encircle and destroy the enemy, the most characteristic was that an external perimeter of encirclement would be established simultaneously with the internal one. Only with the establishing of solid internal and active external perimeters was the surrounding of the enemy grouping considered complete. The operations, as a rule, began when the strong assault groupings breached the enemy defenses simultaneously on several axes. The following deep drive of the Soviet troops led to the splitting and breaking up of the enemy front into a number of separate sectors. This created conditions for continuing the offensive on converging axes for surrounding the large Nazi troop masses in their tactical and operational depth.

Of exceptional importance were the successful air operations. Only under the conditions of complete air domination of our aviation were the greatest results achieved in surrounding a large enemy grouping. The aviation established a decisive air blockade of the surrounded grouping. The covering and supporting of the ground troops on the internal and external perimeters of encirclement, the combating of enemy reserves, the conducting of reconnaissance and other air operations ensured the success of the troops on the perimeters in destroying the surrounded groupings.

The method of splitting thrusts(5) was more often employed in those instances when there was a significant superiority in forces and the terrain made it possible to employ large masses of tanks.

The splitting of defenses envisaged the launching of a strong and deep thrust by cooperating fronts (and sometimes by one front) to the entire depth of the opposing grouping's position. As a result of the strong initial thrusts on several axes, large breaches were formed in the enemy defenses, its grouping was split into parts and this facilitated the destruction of the individual enemy troop groupings which were now isolated and had lost effective contact. In addition, the offensive on a wide front along parallel or even diverging axes led to the formation of numerous pockets which were eliminated in the course of the offensive by the approaching troops of the combined-arms armies and by air strikes.

In the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation (3-23 August 1943), a strong splitting thrust was launched by the troops of the adjacent wings of the Voronezh (commander, Army Gen N.F. Vatutin) and Steppe (commander, Col Gen I.S. Konev) Fronts. Their troops went over to a counteroffensive, when the enemy had been ground down and had still not taken up a strong defense. For reducing the time to prepare the operation (to exclude a major regrouping), the main thrusts of the fronts were launched not against a weak point but rather against a strong point in the enemy defenses. The breakthrough was carried out on the narrow sectors of the front with a density of up to 230 guns and mortars and 70 tanks and SAU per kilometer of front. The powerful splitting thrust by the forces of the adjacent flanks of the two fronts led to the splitting of the Nazi grouping defending the Belgorod-Kharkov Salient into two isolated parts. In the course of the operation, 15 enemy divisions were destroyed, including 4 panzer.

In the Lwow-Sandomierz Operation (13 July-29 August 1944) conducted by just one front (First Ukrainian, commander, MSU I.S. Konev), two powerful thrusts were launched simultaneously: at the center from the Ternopol area in the direction of Lwow and on the right wing from the Lutsk area in the direction of Rava-Russkaya. By the offensive of a portion of the forces from the two groupings against Derevyany, the enemy grouping was surrounded and destroyed to the west of Brody. Characteristic of the Vistula-Oder Operation (12 January-3 February 1945) conducted by the First Belorussian (commander, MSU G.K. Zhukov) and First Ukrainian (commander, MSU I.S. Konev) Fronts was the launching of strong splitting thrusts against the strongpoints of the enemy defenses. The First Belorussian Front launched two thrusts from the Vistula bridgeheads (Magnuszew and Pulawy); the First Ukrainian Front one thrust from the Sandomierz bridgehead.

The launching of the main thrusts against the strong sectors of the defenses in the aim of avoiding the crossing of a major water obstacle with the start of the offensive required a decisive massing of men and weapons. Thus, on the breakthrough sector of the First Ukrainian Front which was around 16 percent of its zone of advance, they concentrated 77 percent of the rifle divisions, 89 percent of the artillery and all the tanks. The operational densities on the breakthrough sectors of both fronts were 230-250 guns and mortars, 80-115 tanks and SAU per kilometer of front. The deep operational configuration of the fronts contributed to the launching of the strong splitting thrusts and to building up the effort. Each of these included a strong echelon and a mobile group, a second echelon, an air army and reserves.

The launching of a series of powerful thrusts led in the first stage of the operation to the splitting of the enemy defensive front. In the course of developing the operation, these thrusts merged into a single deep frontal splitting thrust of two cooperating fronts. Over the 23 days of the operation, the enemy suffered enormous losses. Twenty-five divisions were crushed and 35 completely destroyed. The enemy lost 147,500 men as prisoners alone. Some 14,000 guns and around 1,400 tanks were captured.

The method of splitting the strategic front of the enemy defenses was continuously improved, it was employed evermore effectively and decisively, the attack was launched against ever-larger groupings and the spatial scope of the attack increased. For example, in the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation the depth of the splitting thrust was 140 km, in the operation on the Right Bank Ukraine, it was 250 km, and over 500 km in the Vistula-Oder Operation.

As in the encirclement operations, a major role in splitting the enemy defensive front and defeating it was played by the massed employment of large formations of armored and mechanized troops in cooperation with the aviation and combined-arms armies.

The method of **crushing thrusts** also produced high results. This was employed most often when the enemy held a strong defense along a wide front, the configuration of the front line did not make it possible to carry out flanking attacks and the balance of forces and terrain conditions did not support the launching of strong splitting thrusts. Under such conditions, a series of powerful thrusts was launched on a wide front and on several axes with their continuation in depth along parallel and even divergent axes. As a result, the enemy front was initially broken up into parts and this brought about its crushing and the establishing of favorable conditions for a further offensive and for widening the individual wedges toward the flanks until they merged into a general breakthrough. The use of this method, in the first place, made it possible to conduct preparations for the operation more covertly and secondly prevented the Nazi Command from detecting the over-all plan of the operation.

The Battle of the Dnieper of 1943 is a series of offensive operations conducted in August-December in the aim of liberating the Left-Bank Ukraine, the Donbass and crossing the Dnieper. The offensive was carried out in a zone of over 1,000 km by the troops of five fronts: Central, Voronezh, Steppe, Southwestern and Southern (from 20 October 1943, respectively, the Belorussian and First, Second, Third and Fourth Ukrainian).

The going over to the offensive on the various axes was not simultaneous. The Donbass Operation of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts began on 13 August. The troops of the Central Front, having commenced the offensive on 26 August, were successful on the Konotop axis. By 31 August, the breakthrough of the enemy defenses had been widened to 100 km along the front and up to 70 km in depth. The Voronezh Front liberated Sumy and was advancing on Romny. The Steppe Front until the end of August was fighting to the west and southwest of Kharkov and, having broken the enemy resistance, at the beginning of September began an offensive against Krasnograd, Verkhnedneprovsk. The offensive by the five fronts broke up the enemy forces and tied down the maneuvering of its reserves. The well-known French historian A. Michel in his work "World War II" has pointed out: "Beginning from the summer of 1943, the Red Army initiated an offensive which spread like a tidal wave, initially with breaks and then non-stop...the Germans were powerless to check this flood..."(6)

Over the period from 22 through 30 September, the armies of the Central, Voronezh, Steppe and Southwestern Fronts reached the Dnieper along a 750-km front from Loyev to Zaporozhye and without a pause crossed the river, having captured a number of bridgeheads.

The launching of crushing thrusts was also characteristic of the Smolensk Offensive Operation conducted on 7 August-2 October 1943. The enemy defenses were breached on five sectors: four in the area of the Western

Front and one in the area of the Kalinin. The Smolensk Operation included four front operations unified by a common over-all plan: Spas-Demensk, Yelnya-Dorogobuzh, Dukhovshchina-Demidov and Smolensk-Roslavl.

The breaking up of the enemy troops and their piecemeal destruction produced high results: 7 divisions were defeated and 14 suffered a major defeat. The enemy was forced to shift 16 divisions from the Orel-Bryansk and other axes to the Smolensk area. As a total the Kalinin and Western Fronts tied down around 55 enemy divisions and this contributed to the successful conclusion of the Soviet troop counteroffensive in the Kursk Battle (12 July-23 August).

The enemy defensive front was crushed with great art in the Baltic Offensive Operation (14 September-24 November 1944) carried out by the Leningrad, Third, Second and First Baltic and the Third Belorussian Fronts as well as forces of the Baltic Fleet. This operation included four operations united by a common over-all plan: Riga, Tallinn, Moonsund Landing and Memel, and in the course of these the Baltic enemy grouping was broken up into parts and this significantly facilitated its defeat. The "iron barrier," as the Nazi generals boastfully called their defenses in the Baltic, had not held up. Some 26 divisions of Army Group North had been defeated and 3 were completely destroyed. Some 20 limping divisions were pushed into the Kurland Peninsula in the area between the towns of Tukums and Libau (Liyepaya). Here they were sealed off until the war's end and surrendered in May 1945.

In certain of the most important operations, the enemy grouping was defeated by a **combination of different methods**. Characteristic in this regard was the Belorussian Operation (23 June-29 August 1944). This was a fine example of not only surrounding a large grouping but a simultaneous breaching of the front on six far-apart sectors and which led to the breaking up of the enemy defenses into parts, to the scattering of its attention and efforts over a wide front and prevented the Nazi Command from organizing and carrying out major countermeasures to thwart the Soviet troop offensive.

The encirclement, breaking up and splitting of the enemy defensive front in this operation merged into a single continuous process. The over-all plan of Hq SHC had been initially to encircle and destroy the flank groupings of Army Group Center (Vitebsk and Bobruysk) in the tactical zone and thereby establish conditions for rapidly exploiting the success of the mobile groups of the fronts and armies along converging axes on Minsk in the area of surrounding and destroying the main forces of the 4th and 9th Nazi Armies in the operational depth.

By defeating the flanking enemy troop groupings in the area of Vitebsk and Bobruysk, they planned to cut through wide "gates" for a rapid advance of the large mobile forces of the Third and First Belorussian Fronts and for exploiting their success along converging axes.

This was a new qualitative shift in the theory and practice of operations to encircle the enemy: the creation of fixed pockets in the tactical zone and a "floating" one in the operational depth with the simultaneous destruction of the surrounded groupings in maximum short times without lowering the rate of advance of the troops on the external perimeter of encirclement.

The Belorussian Operation included ten operations united by a common over-all concept: Vitebsk-Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruysk, Polotsk, Minsk, Shyaulay, Vilnius, Kaunas, Belostok and Lublin-Brest. In the course of these operations the strategic enemy defensive front was broken up, its groupings were split, surrounded and successively destroyed (initially on the flanks of the Belorussian salient and then in the center, to the east of Minsk) under various conditions: in the tactical depth for the Vitebsk grouping (five divisions) and in the operational for the Bobruysk (six divisions) and Minsk groupings. For the first time in the history of military art, the 100,000-strong Minsk enemy grouping was surrounded and destroyed at a great depth (250 km). The splitting and destruction of the surrounded groupings occurred simultaneously with the rapid continuation of the offensive by the troops on the external perimeter. As a result, the time required to eliminate the surrounded groupings was shortened. Thus, to the east of Minsk the "floating" pocket was eliminated in 7 days while the Vitebsk and Bobruysk pockets were finished in 2.

Army Group Center had suffered a crushing defeat. Some 17 divisions and 3 brigades had been completely destroyed while 50 divisions had lost over one-half of their fighting strength. The Nazis lost around a half million men, killed, wounded and captured. In the estimate of the Nazi generals, the defeat of Army Group Center was a catastrophe surpassing the catastrophe at Stalingrad.

In skillfully resolving the problem of choosing a method to defeat the enemy in the strategic offensive operations (operations of groups of fronts), the Soviet Military Command achieved major results. Precisely due to this to a significant degree it was possible in the winter of 1942-1943 to defeat the entire southern wing of the Nazi troops including Army Groups A, B and Don; in the summer and autumn of 1944, Army Groups North, Center, Northern Ukraine and Southern Ukraine; in the winter and spring of 1943, Army Groups Center and Vistula.

Under today's conditions of rapid technical progress and accelerated development of the means of destruction the choice of the methods of defeating the enemy in strategic offensive operations has become more complex. Combat experience which must be employed creatively helps in resolving this problem. V.I. Lenin clearly defined the attitude to past experience. He pointed out that in practical work of today we must employ "not the letter but the spirit, the sense, the lessons of experience." (8)