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MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

Combating Enemy Operational Reserves in Offensive Operations of Great Patriotic War
00010035a Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 4, Apr 88 (signed to press 23 Mar 88) pp 23-29

[Article, published under the heading "Soviet Military Art," by Lt Gen (Ret) A.A. Sokolov, candidate of historical sciences: "Combating Enemy Operational Reserves in Offensive Operations of Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] The experience of the Great Patriotic War shows that achieving the goals of offensive operations depended largely upon the successful countering of enemy operational reserves. The skillfully executed defeat of the later deprived the enemy of the opportunity to parry our blows, to build up effort on threatened axes and organize resistance on intermediate lines. At the same time, the underestimation of the possible actions by enemy reserves and the insufficiently effective combating of them led to setbacks, as was the case in the Soviet troop offensive in the area of Kharkov, Lozovaya in February-March 1943, when they suffered significant losses in personnel and combat equipment and were forced to retreat to the Severskiy Donets.

The Nazi Command established operational reserves in the armies and army groups consisting, respectively, of one or two infantry or panzer divisions and 3-7 infantry and panzer divisions. These were positioned in the operational defensive zone at a depth of up to 80 km and more.(1) The operational reserves were employed, as a rule, in conducting counterattacks and counterstrikes as well as in reinforcing the defenses on threatened axes.

The time and depth of committing the enemy operational reserves to battle varied (see the Table). As can be seen from the table, the encountering of the enemy operational reserves more often occurred on the second-fifth day of the operation at a depth up to 120 km from the former forward defensive edge. There were also exceptions. For example, in the Zhitomir-Berdichev Operation, the Nazi Command committed the strategic reserves (XLVI Panzer Corps) and the reserves of the army group (XIII Army Corps) to battle on the 18th day in the Vinnitsa area at a depth of 140 km from the former forward defensive edge. As a result of the counterstrike launched by them against our formations of the 1st Tank Army (commander, Lt Gen Tank Trps M.Ye. Katukov) and the 38th Army (commander, Col Gen K.S. Moskalenko) of the First Ukrainian Front, our troops retreated some 15-20 km.

From what has been said, it can be concluded that organizing the countering of enemy reserves was one of the important aspects in the activities of the commanders and staffs while determining the method for defeating them was part of the overall concept and plan of the offensive operation. The defeat of the reserves was carried out in close relation to executing the other operational tasks being carried out by the front's troops in the course of conducting the operation. The deep configuration of the troops of the front and armies, the presence of strong second echelons, mobile groups and various types of reserves increased the capability of the troops to build up the effort and maneuver and this was a prerequisite for defeating the enemy reserves. Since in turn the enemy, by committing fresh forces to battle intended to force the course of battle in its favor, the combating of them required the organizing and executing of continuous reconnaissance, the defeating of the enemy reserves when they took up their concentration area, checking the advance to the front line, deploying and launching counterstrikes as well as taking up intermediate lines.

Time and Depth of Committing Enemy Reserves to Battle During the Great Patriotic War

Periods of war	Military campaigns	Times of committing reserves in process of operation, days	Depth of commitment from former enemy forward edge, km
Second	Winter 1943	2-4	10-25
	Summer-autumn 1943	4-9	40-110
Third	Winter 1944	1-3	15-50
	Summer-autumn 1944	5-6	50-120
	Concluding 1945	1-2	5-20

The last war confirmed the necessity of sufficient reconnaissance of the enemy reserves directed at promptly discovering the enemy's intentions and determining the composition of the troops, the axis and time of action. Due to well organized reconnaissance, in a majority of instances, the commands of the fronts and armies succeeded in guessing the enemy's intention to use the reserves and take effective measures to eliminate them.

The destruction of the enemy operational reserves in the concentration area was largely determined by their distance from the front line. Here an active role was played by aviation. Its actions commenced by sealing off the area of the forthcoming operation from the arrival of fresh forces, disrupting the lines of communications and the routes for maneuvering the reserves. Thus, in the Vistula-Oder Operation, in the area of the First Ukrai-

nian Front, our aviation destroyed a majority of the bridges and crossings in the enemy rear and road traffic was paralyzed by strikes against the most important junctions. In it in the zone of the First Belorussian Front, when the Nazi defenses on the eastern bank of the Vistula had been breached and the mobile troops were rushing into the breach, aviation had the task of launching massed strikes against the crossings, railroad junctions and troops in order to prevent an organized retreat of the main enemy forces which had been beaten on the line of the Vistula as well as the approach of its operational reserves. The retreating enemy units suffered enormous losses from the actions of the Soviet aviation and mobile formations and were frequently restricted in maneuvering while the arriving reserves did not succeed in promptly taking up the prepared lines and organize defenses. Regardless of the fact that the Nazi Command, from 15 January through 8 February 1945, moved up 35 divisions, 2 brigades and other units into the zone of the First Belorussian and First Ukrainian Fronts, it did not succeed not only in organizing a defense on intermediate lines, but even pull its forces back to the other side of the Oder from under the strikes of the fronts.(2)

The best for launching attacks against the reserves was a moment when the enemy had taken up the concentration area but had not yet been able to provide shelters for the personnel and combat equipment as well as organize an air defense. Thus, in the Orel Operation in July 1943, well organized reconnaissance discovered the concentration of three enemy divisions some 40 km from the front line. Aviation attacked the reserves and as a result of this the enemy, without having completed its concentration, began to move the divisions up into the area of the 11th Guards Army (commander, Lt Gen I.Kh. Bagramyan). Here these formations were defeated by the front's advancing troops.(3) In the Lwow-Sandomierz Operation, the 2d Air Army (commander, Col Gen Avn S.A. Krasovskiy) made several massed strikes against the enemy reserves, having completed 1,848 aircraft sorties by the second half of 15 July 1944. As a result of this, the Nazi grouping was disorganized and its counterstrike against the flank of the 38th Army was, in essence, aborted.(4)

The countering of enemy reserves moving up to the front line was carried out by various means and methods: by air and artillery strikes; by a rapid offensive by the front's formations, particularly the mobile troops; by establishing barricade lines on the reserves' routes of advance. The fire strikes and the maneuvering of troops comprised a single process. For example, in the aim of checking the approach to the front line by an enemy panzer grouping which had been shifted in the summer of 1943 from the Donbass to the Kharkov area and to delay its commitment to battle, initially massed raids were made by the aviation of the 17th, 2d and 5th Air Armies. As a result of this, the planned moving up of the enemy troops was disrupted. The defeat of the groupings was completed in the course of the meeting engagement of the Voronezh Front at Bogodukhov and Akhtyrka.

Soviet aviation in the same manner checked the Kotelnikovo grouping in the Stalingrad Operation in December 1942 and the 12th Nazi Army in the Berlin Operation of April 1945.

The **mobile troops** played a major role in countering the reserves. Most often they defeated them in moving up to and reaching the deployment line, when the troops of the front fighting on the axis of the counterstrike possessed the required reserves (second echelons) or when the commander of the front had an opportunity to regroup quickly forces from other sectors to the threatened axis or establishing the required superiority. A meeting engagement was the most characteristic form of defeat. Thus, as a result of a meeting encounter in January 1945, the XXIV Panzer Corps in the Kielce area was defeated by the troops of the First Ukrainian Front. Being in the reserve of Army Group A, it had been given the mission on the morning of 13 January, to launch a counterstrike against the flanks of the front's grouping which had broken through, primarily the 4th Tank Army. During the night of 13 January, the enemy began to move up to the deployment line. At the same time, the forward detachments from the corps of the 4th Tank Army (commander, Col Gen D.D. Lelyushenko), hastily crossing the second zone of the enemy defenses, at dawn encountered the forward detachment of the XXIV Panzer Corps. In the meeting engagement which broke out to the south of Kielce and lasted over 2 days, all three divisions of the corps were completely defeated (Diagram 1).(5)

During the war years, also employed as a method for defeating the operational reserves was the **temporary going over a portion of the forces to the defensive** on the axis of the enemy thrust with the subsequent resumption of the offensive here. This was used when the enemy possessed a significant superiority in forces. The troops which had gone over to the offensive were to defeat the counterstrike by firing from a halt, the advancing grouping was to be weakened and ground down as much as possible and then defeated by a decisive thrust. The Nazi troop reserves were defeated in this manner to the south of Stalingrad at the end of 1942 as well as on 18-20 August 1943 in the Akhtyrka area in the final stage of the Belgorod-Kharkov Offensive Operation of the Voronezh Front. In the latter instance they parried a counterthrust by five divisions which on 18 August breached the defenses of the previously weakened 155th and 166 Rifle Divisions of the 27th Army (commander, Lt Gen S.G. Trofimenko) and had pushed in some 24 km. In the middle of the day the grouping which had pushed in was engaged by the forward formations of the 4th Guards Army (commander, Lt Gen G.I. Kulik) which had been moved up from the reserve of Hq SHC [Headquarters Supreme High Command]. By the end of the day the enemy had been halted on a line of Veselyy Gay, Zaporozhets and to the west of Novaya Odessa. On 19 August, the main forces of the 4th Guards Army, in cooperation with formations from the 1st Tank Army and 27th Army, launched an attack against the left flank

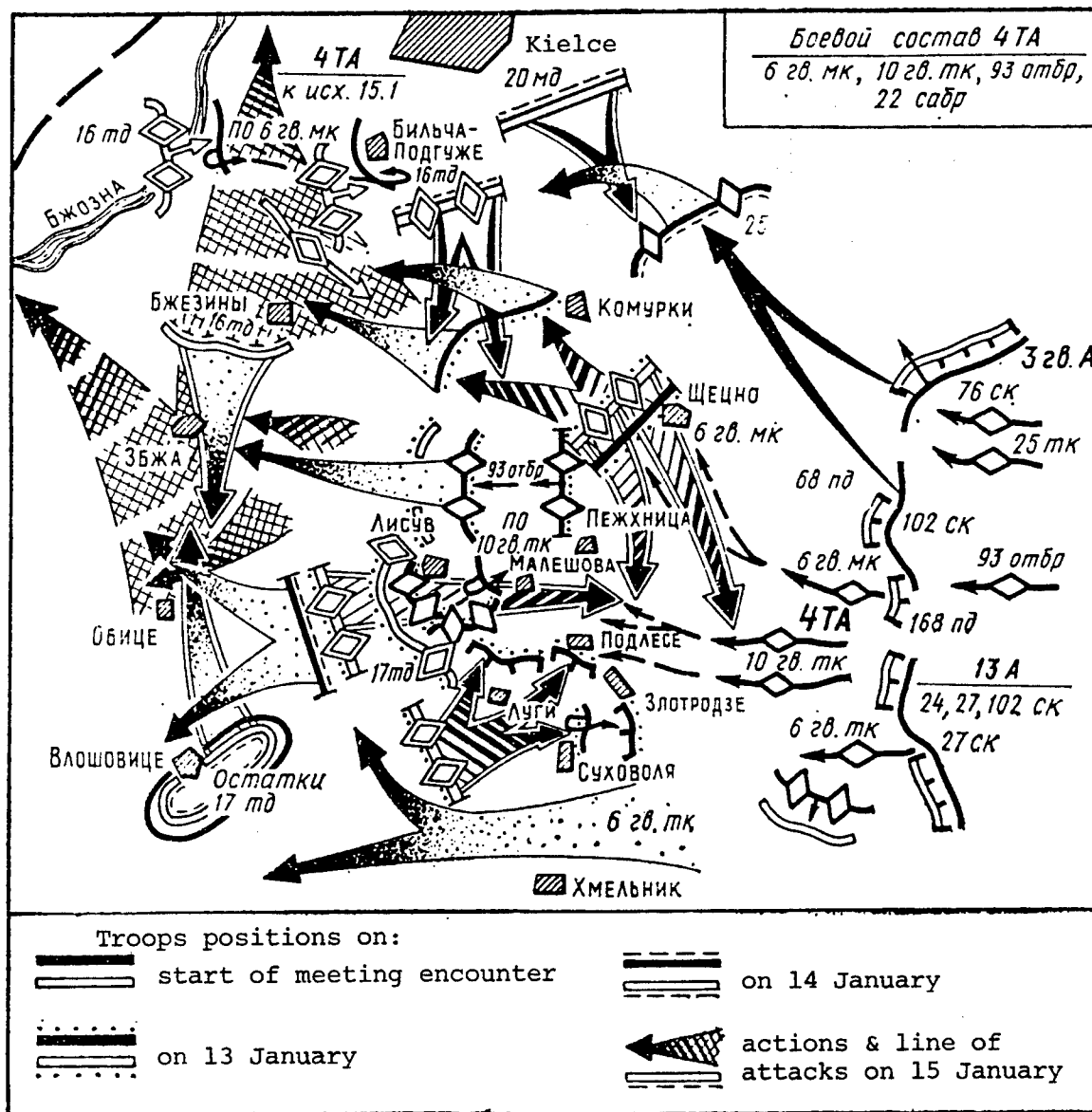


Diagram 1. Defeat of Enemy by 4th Tank Army at Kielce (13-15 January 1945)

of the enemy which had pushed in. In the engagement which developed along a front of over 20 km, the enemy, in suffering heavy casualties and losses in equipment, particularly tanks, broke off active offensive operations and went over to the defensive.(6)

The defeating of counterstrike groupings was of a more intense nature than the combating of enemy reserves being moved up to take up the defensive on intermediate lines. A counterstrike grouping, as the experience of the war was to show, was better organized, aimed at active operations and reinforced in fire terms. It, as a rule, was securely covered from the air, it maneuvered constantly,

shifting efforts from one axis to another, it sought out and frequently found the weakest link in the chain of advancing troops. Only a correct assessment of the situation made it possible to establish whether the advancing grouping intended to launch a counterstrike or would take up an intermediate line as well as where the advancing troops could encounter it. Under present-day conditions, the defeat of enemy reserves which are launching a counterstrike in the course of offensive operations can be achieved by various methods. However, it is essential to endeavor to deal a decisive defeat to the counterstrike grouping before it can start active operations.

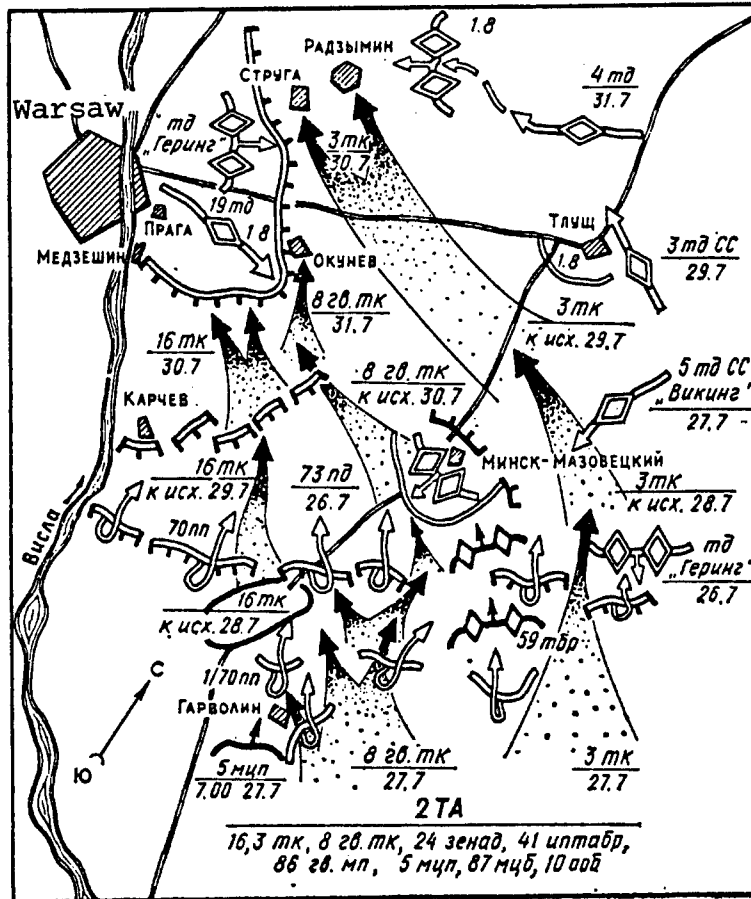


Diagram 2. Actions of 2d Tank Army in Defeating Enemy on Intermediate Line

The defeat of enemy reserves in the taking up of defensive lines in the operational depth was more often carried out by the mobile troops and forward detachments of the combined-arms field forces and formations. The war's experience showed that only a rapid advance of the troops made it possible to anticipate the enemy in reaching the prepared lines preventing their taking up by operational reserves moved up from in depth. When this was not possible, the fighting of the Soviet troops assumed the nature of breaching hurriedly occupied defenses. One of the examples of this was the fighting of the 2d Tank Army (commander, Maj Gen A.I. Radzyevskiy) in the Lublin-Brest Operation of the First Belorussian Front in July 1944. The offensive was advancing on Warsaw in the aim of capturing Praga (a Warsaw suburb) and the crossings over the Vistula. In its zone on the near approaches to Praga, the enemy had hurriedly occupied an intermediate line using the forces of arriving reserves. By concentrated attacks on the three sectors, the army split the enemy grouping, having created conditions for its subsequent defeat piecemeal (Diagram 2).(7)

Under present-day conditions, a most important task for the advancing troops also remains to deprive the enemy

reserves of the opportunity of occupying intermediate lines ahead of time, checking their advance and anticipating them in maneuver. If the enemy reserves still succeed in occupying one or another line, it must be crossed without a pause, as was the case in a number of operations of the Great Patriotic War, particularly in the Vistula-Oder Operation. Presently the capabilities of the advancing troops have increased significantly in carrying out these tasks as new weapons have appeared and their mobility has increased. It is essential to bear in mind that the enemy defenses will also be marked by a heavy saturation of armored equipment, antitank weapons, man-made obstacles as well as by a great depth of configuration and by activeness of the defending troops. For this reason, the capturing of intermediate lines without a pause should be provided for ahead of time and planned.

The forward detachments played a very major role in combating enemy operational reserves which were moving up. In essence, the engagement was initiated by them and only then did the main forces join battle. Strong in size (from a reinforced battalion in a division to a reinforced brigade in a tank and mechanized corps), the

forward detachments possessed sufficient independence in fighting. Under the cover of fire, they moved up to the routes of march of the reserves, they were the first to take the attacks, forcing the enemy troops to deploy and enter battle under unfavorable conditions. The seizing of initiative and ultimately the defeating of the reserves depended upon the decisiveness of the actions by the forward detachments. The success, without fail, had to be promptly followed up by the main forces. Where, for some reason, the latter did not succeed in supporting the forward detachments, the fighting assumed an extended nature and did not undergo the required development. Thus, in the engagement of the 1st Tank Army against the enemy III Panzer Corps on 11 August 1943 near Bogodukhov, the army forward detachments became separated from the main forces by some 20 km, they cut the Kharkov-Poltava railroad, they seized a good line and entered into battle against the superior forces of the approaching SS Totenkopf Division. But, without being supported by the main forces (the enemy had checked them on the Merchik River), they were forced to go over to the defensive and subsequently fight their way back.(8)

Also during the years of the last war, there was experience in employing airborne forces in the aim of checking the approach of the enemy reserves, assisting the mobile troops, disrupting the enemy rear as well as for carrying out other tasks. For example, the airborne forces employed in January 1942 at Vyazma during the concluding stage of the Battle of Moscow were to assist in completing the encirclement of the enemy Vyazma grouping, preventing supply and blocking maneuver along the Smolensk-Vyazma railroad and highway. Airborne forces played a positive role in defeating the Nazi troops at Moscow, although the task set for them was not completely carried out. Even then this experience showed that with proper preparations for the airborne operation and its complete support, the effectiveness of employing airborne forces is indisputable. Under present-day conditions, in the course of an offensive operation, airborne forces can be landed at the most different depths. Modern weapons, equipment and maneuverability make it possible for them to land suddenly in the enemy rear and, coming out on the routes of march of the reserves, launch tangible fire strikes against them, fight from ambushes, attack from the flanks and rear, destroy the most important elements of the march configuration, set up various obstacles and so forth.

The combating of enemy operational reserves was one of the conditions for the successful exploitation of offensive operations. This was carried out on a centralized basis in accord with the operation's plan of the front and army commanders and under their immediate supervision. The front commander, having sufficient air forces at their disposal, could effectively fight the enemy reserves. Great attention was given to the cooperation between the forces involved in the fighting, particularly between aviation and the mobile troops. In all the offensive operations, commencing from the second period of the

war, air representatives were located at the army and formation command posts and they were in contact with the airfields and airborne aviation. In the forward detachments frequently there were guidance officers. All of this told on the results of successfully combating the reserves.

In summing up what has been said, it is essential to point out that successful combating of enemy operational reserves was ensured by the following: by the choice of the most effective and most advantageous methods of conducting the operation and defeating the enemy groupings; by well organized and continuously conducted reconnaissance of the enemy reserves; by carrying out measures for operational camouflage, particularly disinformation in the aim of confusing the enemy on the axis of the concentration of our main efforts; by an offensive at a rapid pace and so forth.

In speaking at a military science conference held in the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany in November-December 1945, MSU G.K. Zhukov said: "Speed is the main, decisive means against all enemy measures, including all enemy regroupings both from the interior and from other sectors of the front. Speed is the basic means for quickly defeating the enemy. It is essential to act so quickly that the enemy is always late."

An analysis of the experience of combating enemy operational reserves during the offensive operations of the Great Patriotic War indicates that success was achieved by the coordinated efforts of all the forces involved in carrying out this task and by a combination of different methods of their action. Here the leading role was played by aviation and the mobile troops. The most effective means for defeating the operational reserves were active, chiefly offensive, actions.

Modern means of combat and the existing long-range and highly effective weapons make it possible to provide a new approach to resolving the question of combating operational reserves. It is possible to defeat the enemy groupings not only successively, as the advancing troops arrive as was the case in the past, but simultaneously to the entire depth of their position. At the same time, the possibility of widely employing airborne troops makes it possible to establish a front of combat in the enemy rear in hitting, tying down and paralyzing the enemy's operational reserves. This will create good conditions for successfully concluding their defeat with the approach of the highly mobile formations advancing from the front.

Footnotes

1. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 12, 1982, p 322.
2. *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No 1, 1965, p 75.
3. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy..., " Vol 7, 1976, p 161.

4. "Sbornik materialov po izucheniyu opyta voyny" [Collection of Materials on Studying the Experience of the War], Moscow, Voenizdat, No 22, 1946, p 46.

5. "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 4, 1959, pp 130, 131.

6. "Belgorodsko-Kharkovskaya nastupatel'naya operatsiya Krasnoy Armii" [The Belgorod-Kharkov Offensive Operation of the Red Army], Moscow, Izd. Voennoy akademii im. M.V. Frunze, 1945, pp 30-31, 36-38.

7. A.I. Radziyevskiy, "Tankovyy udar" [Tank Attack], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1977, p 147.

8. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 300, inv. 3070, file 85, sheets 13-14.

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Artillery Support in Committing Front Mobile Groups to Engagement (Breakthrough)

00010035b Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 4, Apr 88 pp 30-36

[Article by Lt Gen (Res) V.I. Piratov, candidate of military sciences and professor; Col R.P. Filippov: "Artillery Support in Committing Front Mobile Groups to the Engagement (Breakthrough)"; the article was written from the experience of the Great Patriotic War]

[Text] The problem of exploiting the success during the offensive operations of the Great Patriotic War was largely solved by employing large formations of armored and mechanized troops as mobile groups of the fronts and armies. In a predominant majority of operations, tank armies comprised the mobile group (the follow-up echelon) of a front.

The commitment of the mobile group to the breach for exploiting the success was one of the crucial moments in organizing and conducting a front-level operation. In a majority of instances, the mobile groups were committed to battle on the first day of the operation in the aim of completing the breaching of the enemy's tactical defensive zone. During the third period of the war, in a number of front offensive operations, the mobile groups of the fronts were committed to the breach also after the combined-arms formations had crossed the Nazi tactical defensive zone, that is, into a so-called "clean breakthrough."

The most important conditions for the successful commitment of the mobile groups to battle was its complete support. This was entrusted to the combined-arms armies in the areas where the mobile groups were to be committed and to the frontal [tactical] aviation.(1)

The formations of a combined-arms army, having captured the start line, covered the flanks of the mobile group against enemy counterstrikes and supported the commitment in artillery and engineer terms. The air formations with the start of the commitment were transferred and put under the operational subordination of the command of the mobile group and by air strikes cleared the way for its tank and mechanized formations.

Artillery support for the commitment of the mobile groups to the breach was basically assigned to the artillery groups of the combined-arms formations and field forces. In a number of instances a portion of artillery from the mobile groups was also involved. The main tasks of the artillery here were to neutralize the enemy antitank artillery and centers of resistance ahead of the front of the mobile groups and on the flanks of the commitment zone, to destroy and neutralize the enemy artillery and mortar batteries in the defensive depth, to repulse enemy counterattacks and support the mobile formations by bracketing the fire of the long-range artillery groups according to previously prepared lines and sections to the range of their guns' fire.(2)

The artillery support plan was worked out by the artillery staffs of the mobile group and combined-arms army(3) where the commitment was to be made, considering: the operational tactical situation in the zone of advance of the front; the intelligence data on enemy defenses; the degree of suppressing and destroying enemy weapons in the course of the artillery softening up and support for the assault in the breaching of the defensive zones; the depth of breaching the tactical defensive zone as well as the depth and time of commitment to the breach.

This document usually indicated the zone and axis of actions by the first echelon formations of the combined-arms army and the start line for the mobile group, the strength and tasks of the artillery groups and other artillery weapons involved in supporting the commitment; the questions were shown of organizing artillery fire control and maintaining continuous interaction between the artillery of the combined-arms army and tank (mechanized) formations and so forth. A diagram of the fire and markers as well as a coded topographic map were appended to the plan for artillery support of the mobile group's commitment to the breach.

In organizing cooperation of the mobile group with the artillery of the combined-arms army specially assigned to support the commitment, a cooperation table was drawn up and this defined the amount of artillery to be assigned for supporting the commitment and the areas of its firing positions, the depth and method of the fire support for the forward brigades in committing the mobile group,

the signals for calling in and ceasing fire, the procedure for artillery support of the mobile group's flanks and its anti-aircraft artillery cover, the number of spotter officers to be assigned to the artillery regiments (and to them precisely) for following the forward units of the mobile group with the indicating of their existing communications equipment.(4)

For the prompt readying of the artillery which was to support the commitment of the mobile field forces (formations) to the breach, careful reconnaissance of the targets was important. Here particular attention was given to determining the position of the enemy artillery and mortar batteries. These data were constantly adjusted and analyzed and were used without fail in the final elaboration of the plan for artillery support for the commitment. Thus, for planning fire in the interests of the commitment of the mobile group on the Voronezh Front consisting of the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies in the period of preparations for the Belgorod-Kharkov Offensive Operation, the 60th and 51st Separate Correction-Reconnaissance Squadrons conducted aerial photography of the second defensive zone and other important sectors deep in the enemy defenses. The sound ranging batteries of the 12th Guards, 615th and 621st Separate Artillery Reconnaissance Battalions determined the coordinates of the firing positions of 60 percent of the enemy artillery subunits and 20 percent of the mortar out of those reconnoitered in the zones of the 6th and 5th Guards Armies. The data on the enemy were constantly adjusted by the observation posts.(5) For example, in preparing the Kiev Offensive Operation, the forces of the 60th Separate Correction-Reconnaissance Air Squadron and the 111th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion over the period from 27 October through 3 November 1943, in the zone of the 38th Army, where the 3rd Guards Tank Army was to be committed reconnoitered and confirmed 433 targets, including 52 artillery batteries.

For conducting reconnaissance on the flanks of the zone of the commitment to the breach, they used special artillery reconnaissance groups from the mobile group's artillery. From the experience of the 3rd Guards Tank Army they usually included the commander of a headquarters platoon of one of the artillery batteries, two or three scouts and one or two radio operators with radios. In addition to reconnoitering the enemy, they also surveyed areas of the possible deployment of firing positions and the setting up of observation posts.(6)

The organization and implementation of artillery support for the commitment of the mobile groups to the breach in the course of the offensive operations during the war years were constantly improved. Planning was bettered, the amount of artillery to support the commitment and its density were increased, and the depth of fire support rose. Artillery density in the commitment zones, particularly during the third period of the war, averaged 60-70 guns per km. The depth of fire support from the start line averaged 12-16 km.(7)

Before the commitment of the mobile group, there was usually a brief artillery softening up or short intense shelling.

For the first time in the war years artillery support for the commitment to battle of the mobile group from the Southwestern Front consisting of the XXI and XXIII Tank Corps was planned (albeit in a general form) and carried out in the Kharkov Offensive Operation in May 1942. In accord with the plan, the support for the commitment was assigned to the long-range artillery group of the 6th Army in whose zone the mobile group was to be committed and to the artillery from the first echelon rifle divisions. The artillery group consisting of four artillery regiments, two regiments (minus one battalion) and a separate battalion of field rocket artillery was to neutralize the enemy's strongpoints on the flank of the mobile formations while the artillery troops of the first echelon 41st, 411th and 266th Rifle Divisions of the field forces were to destroy the weapons both on the flanks and ahead of the commitment front.

Regardless of the fact that the tank corps were committed not on the third day of the operation, as had been planned, but only on the sixth and from a different line, due to the previously elaborated plan artillery support was not badly carried out. In the morning of 17 May, the formations of the mobile group entered battle and, shattering the enemy's resistance, by the end of the day had advanced 10-15 km.

A shortcoming of the artillery support for the commitment of this front mobile group was that the actions of the supporting artillery and tank formations were not coordinated directly in the field.

During the second and third periods of the war, artillery support for the commitment of the front mobile groups to the breach was planned and carried out in more detail. In our view, the most instructive in this regard was the experience of the Belgorod-Kharkov, Lwow-Sandomierz and Iasi-Kishinev Operations.

Artillery support for the commitment to battle to complete the breaching of the enemy tactical defensive zone for the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies, the mobile group of the Voronezh Front, in the **Belgorod-Kharkov** Offensive Operation was carried out in accord with the elaborated plan. In truth, according to it, for supporting the commitment they were to employ only the artillery of the combined-arms armies and the artillery attached to the mobile formations. However, the TOE artillery of these formations was also employed in the commitment. In supporting the actions of the tank armies in committing them to battle, they also called in the army artillery group of the 5th Guards Army consisting of the 13th Artillery Breakthrough Division, the army artillery of the 6th Guards Army consisting of the 123rd Heavy Artillery Brigade and the 628th Cannon Artillery Regiment, all the artillery of five rifle divisions and the corps long-range artillery groups.(8) In the artillery support for

the commitment of this mobile group, they used the following reinforcement artillery: in the 1st Tank Army, an antitank brigade and a separate guards mortar [rocket launcher] regiment; in the 5th Guards Tank Army, two antitank regiments, a regiment of rocket artillery and two self-propelled artillery regiments. In committing the tank field forces to the engagement, artillery softening up was not planned and not carried out, as significant damage had been caused to the first zone of enemy defenses during the period of the heavy artillery and air softening up. In depth ahead of the front of movement of their first echelon corps, the artillery according to the plan carried out long-range fire attacks (DON) and conducted concentrated fire while on the flanks there was fixed barrage fire. The TOE and attached artillery of the tank and mechanized corps fired directly ahead of their advancing units, destroying enemy weapons which obstructed the advance. Cooperation of the supporting artillery with the mobile formations was provided with the aid of artillery correctors who were in radio-equipped tanks. The procedure of their work in committing the tank field forces to the breach was set out by the Instructions to the Battery Commander.(9) The radio-equipped tanks moved in the battle formations of the brigades along with the combat vehicles of the commanders of these formations. Due to the fact that the main forces of the tank armies were committed to the engagement at different times, the enemy installations and targets in the second defensive zone were hit by unplanned artillery fire as called in.

In repelling the counterattacks in committing the tank armies, according to the number of first echelon brigades, from the reinforcement artillery they established antitank artillery groups which included one or two antitank brigades, separate self-propelled artillery mounts [SAU] and a company of 82-mm mortars. The antitank artillery groups, with the commitment of the tank armies to the breach, switched to direct support for the tanks and infantry. They moved in the tank columns of the brigade being support and when necessary with their fire, neutralized enemy firing points and personnel. In repelling enemy counterattacks, the artillery troops of the groups destroyed the tanks and assault guns by direct laying.

In the Lwow-Sandomierz Offensive Operation, they planned to employ artillery not only to support the commitment of the 1st and 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies to battle but also for fire support for them until they came out in the operational depth.

The plan of artillery support for the commitment of each tank army to the breach was worked out jointly by the artillery staffs of the combined-arms army where the commitment was to be made and by the artillery staff of the tank field force. This document was approved by the military councils of both armies. It set the start lines, the zones and axes of operations for the first echelon corps of the tank army, the strength and tasks of the artillery groups supporting the offensive, it took up the questions

of organizing fire control and maintaining continuous cooperation between the artillery and tanks (mechanized) corps and gave the number (with a note as to whom they were being sent) of artillery correction officers. Appended to the plan were diagrams of the general markers and fire as well coded maps.(10)

For supporting the commitment of the tank armies to the breach, from the artillery of the combined-arms armies they established special artillery groups (consisting of two or three artillery brigades) according to the number of first echelon tank (mechanized) corps from each tank army. Their task was fire support for the mobile formations being committed to battle to the depth of maximum firing range of the guns from the same firing positions. Moreover, each tank army was reinforced with one antitank brigade and one or two battalions of 122-mm cannons or 152-mm howitzer cannons on mechanized traction.

The fire of the artillery supporting the commitment was planned from the infantry pass lines (20-25 km from the forward edge of the defenses). The dimensions of the fire support zones for the tank (mechanized) corps varied within limits of 14-20 km along the front and 10-15 km in depth. In the support zones there were 4-5 lines on which several areas of massed fire were designated. The latter brought together from three to five divisional areas. For each area, one and more rarely two or three artillery brigades prepared data. Target designation and the calling in of fire were planned by radio sending in the clear. When necessary, the procedure of fire and shell consumption were also given. The brigade and higher commanders were given the right to call in fire in addition to the fire correctors.

The neutralizing of the strongpoints and centers of resistance with artillery support for the commitment of tank armies to the breach was planned using the method of massed fire combined with the fire of the tank army artillery a portion of which was assigned for direct laying.

The commitment of the main forces (VI Guards, VII Guards Tank Corps and IX Mechanized Corps) of the 3rd Guards Tank Army to the engagement in the zone of the 60th Army on the Lwow axis was preceded by the fighting of its forward detachments and the troops of the XV Rifle Corps of the 60th Army fighting with them to complete the breaching of the tactical defensive zone. In the morning of 16 July 1944, the army was committed to the breach through the so-called Kotlov Corridor. By the start of the commitment, the 10th Guards Antitank Brigade and two battalions of cannon artillery were switched to it.

Fire support for the commitment was provided by the artillery of the 60th Army together with the aviation. Unfortunately, the command was able to involve only very limited artillery (eight battalions) in carrying out this task, as the basic mass of army artillery by the

morning of 16 July was located some 15 km and more from the objectives. For this reason, the tank army formations were committed to the breach with insufficient fire damage to the enemy ahead of their front and, in essence, themselves broke the trail to the west. The situation was better on the flanks of the tank field force. For supporting them, the artillery of the first echelon rifle divisions of the XV Rifle Corps were employed. A significant portion of the antitank artillery from these formations was involved in repulsing enemy tank counterattacks while the divisional artillery groups combatted the enemy artillery.

On 17 July 1944, following the 3rd Guards Tank Army on the Lwow sector through the Kotlov Corridor they began committing the X Tank Corps of the 4th Tank Army. The artillery support for the commitment of this formation consisted of suppressing the enemy artillery in the Plugov and Zolochiv areas and repelling the strong enemy tank and infantry counterattacks on both flanks of the corps.(11) The VI Mechanized Corps which was following the X Tank Corps basically succeeded in passing the narrowest sector before the start of the heavy fire, however a significant portion of the TOE and attached artillery fell behind. In having a limited amount of artillery, the formation was forced to fight for 2 days against the counterattacking enemy.

On the Rava-Russka axis the commitment of the 1st Guards Tank Army to battle was planned from the infantry pass line which was 20-25 km from the forward edge. However, the successful actions of the XXIV and XXVII Rifle Corps of the 13th Army in breaching the enemy tactical defensive zone made it possible to carry this out at 1000 hours on 17 July, from a new line closer to the forward edge. Because of this, adjustments had to be made in the previously worked out plan of artillery support. In particular, there were plans to conduct massed fire, particularly on the left route (Byszow, Krystynopol).

The commitment of the 1st Guards Tank Army to the breach was supported by the artillery of the XXIV Rifle Corps and the army artillery group of the 13th Army. The artillery supporting the commitment of the tank army formations to the breach opened fire when called in by the artillery correctors or upon the command of the artillery brigade (group) commander. Target designation and the calling in of fire were carried out by radio sending in the clear.(12)

The artillery support for the commitment of the mobile groups of the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts to battle in the Iasi-Kishinev Operation can be judged from the commitment of the 6th Tank Army and the IV Guards Mechanized Corps.

The 6th Tank Army was committed to battle in the zone of the 27th Army of the Second Ukrainian Front on 20 August 1944 after the breaching of the enemy defenses

from a line located 7 km from the forward edge. According to the plan, artillery support for the commitment was to be provided by four cannon artillery brigades from the 27th Army and by the artillery of the rifle divisions where the tank army formations were being committed. Moreover, in the committing of the tank army to the breach, there were plans to shift to it the 24th Antitank Artillery Brigade of the RVGK [Reserve of the Supreme High Command] from the 27th Army.(13)

For maintaining close cooperation, the artillery staffs of the rifle and tank (mechanized) formations exchanged representatives. For the same purpose the artillery staffs of the 27th and 6th Tank Armies worked out a cooperation diagram map. On it they designated: the lines where the infantry would be passed by the tanks, the lines and signals for the combat vehicles to reach these, and the sectors of artillery fire supporting the arrival of the tanks on each line.

Artillery support for the commitment was carried out to a depth of 16 km from the start line by the PSO [successive concentration of fire] method against targets ahead of the front and on the flanks of the mobile formations.

Fire control of the artillery supporting the commitment of the tank army to the breach was provided from the observation posts of the artillery chiefs of the rifle regiments and the artillery commanders of the rifle divisions, the commanders of the army artillery groups and the commanders of the cannon artillery brigades. When the tanks and motorized infantry began moving deep into the enemy defenses, artillery fire was controlled by artillery officers sent to the position of the artillery commanders of the tank army corps and stationed in radio-equipped tanks. Their task was to continuously conduct observation of the enemy, detect targets obstructing the advance of the tanks, determine their coordinates and transmit these by radio to the artillery commanders supporting the commitment of the tank army formations to the breach.

Thus, the successful committing of the 6th Tank Army to the breach was a consequence of well organized and excellently executed artillery support for it. The situation with air support was in no way the same. The attack air division which had supported the 27th Army up to this did not have a previously elaborated plan for cooperating with the formations of the 6th Tank Army and could not provide its troops effective aid in being committed to the breach.(14)

For artillery support of the commitment of the IV Guards Mechanized Corps of the Third Ukrainian Front to the breach, from the artillery of the 46th Army they assigned three cannon artillery brigades which were part of the 7th Artillery Breakthrough Division. Moreover, in supporting the corps formations in the commitment they planned to involve the regimental artillery and mortars from the first echelon rifle regiments and the artillery

group of those rifle divisions where they were to be committed. The artillery support for the commitment was to be carried out to a depth of 12 km (from the start line) by the PSO method against two lines upon call-in by artillery observers from radio-equipped tanks. In the aim of neutralizing the enemy weapons, three battalions of the cannon artillery brigades were to be moved up for direct laying. The remaining artillery by the moment of the commitment was to take up positions closest to the start line.

In organizing cooperation of the supporting artillery with the mechanized corps, the artillery staffs of the 46th Army and the IV Guards Mechanized Corps worked out a detailed cooperation diagram map on which they depicted the tasks of the tanks and artillery as well as the questions of artillery fire control.

At 0900 hours on 21 August 1944, after the breaching of the enemy's defenses, the corps entered the breach along three routes. The commitment was preceded by brief intense shelling from the supporting artillery against the enemy strongpoints and batteries. Fire support for its formations was provided by the cannon artillery brigades of the 7th Artillery Breakthrough Division. Fire was called in by spotters from radio-equipped tanks.

It should be pointed out that the support of the corps by artillery fire was not carried as planned since the enemy soon sharply weakened its resistance in the commitment zone.(15)

Thus, the experience of artillery support for the commitment of front mobile groups to the breach showed that an important component part in organizing this is careful, complete planning of actions for the supporting artillery of the combined-arms armies where the commitment is to be made. At the same time, combat practice confirmed that the carrying out of the set plan for artillery support depended largely upon the amount of artillery weapons assigned for this, upon the organizing of close artillery cooperation with the formations of the tank army to be committed to battle (a tank or mechanized corps), as well as upon flexible control over the artillery of the combined-arms army and the mobile group.

The skillful use of frontline experience can help to improve the quality of the operational and combat training of officer personnel in the Armed Forces under present-day conditions.

Footnotes

1. "Istoriya voyennogo iskusstva" [History of Military Art], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 390.
2. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 232, inv. 598, file 7, sheet 17.
3. Ibid., folio 203, inv. 51354, file 10, sheet 10.

4. A.I. Radziyevskiy, "Tankovyy udar" [Tank Attack], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1977, p 86.

5. TsAMO, folio 236, inv. 42994, file 1, sheets 1-36.

6. Ibid., folio 315, inv. 4455, file 118, sheet 181; file 121, sheet 47.

7. A.I. Radziyevskiy, Op. cit., p 126.

8. TsAMO, folio 332, inv. 4978, file 2, sheet 56.

9. Ibid., folio 300, inv. 313193, file 1, sheet 50.

10. "Artilleriya v nastupatelnykh operatsiyakh Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Artillery in the Offensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, Book II, 1965, p 457.

11. "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Soviet Artillery in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1960, p 482.

12. G.Ye. Peredelskiy, A.I. Tokmakov, G.T. Khoroshilov, "Artilleriya v boyu i operatsii" [Artillery in Battle and an Operation], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1980, p 66.

13. "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol III, 1958, p 453.

14. Ibid., Vol III, pp 473-474.

15. "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy....," p 505.

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Fortified Areas in Civil War

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[Article by Lt Col (Ret) V.V. Kulikovskiy, RSFSR honored cultural worker: "Fortified Areas in the Civil War"]

[Text] For a long time, great importance in wars has been given to fortifying the field (fortification). This has been done differently. During World War I (1914-1918), they began using a new form of fortification, the fortified area (FA) representing sectors or zones of terrain which have been engineer organized and readied for protracted and stubborn defense by specially assigned troop formations independently or in cooperation with the field troops.

At the start of the Civil War, the Red Army basically established zones, areas and defensive centers which were poorly organized in engineer terms. They were

defended by field troops. In the second half of 1918, the Red Army High Command in a report to V.I. Lenin established the necessity of organizing fortified areas (FA) on certain operational sectors (fronts)(1) and from the spring of 1919, began their planned organization. As a total during the war, some 45 fortified areas were established and these, as a rule, were named after the cities in which their main bases were located. These included: Petrograd, Velikiye Luki, Gomel, Dvinsk (Western Front); Vyatka, Simbirsk, Samara, Kazan, Orenburg, Uralsk (Eastern Front); the Kursk, Voronezh, Tambov, Tula, Kozlovsk, Kamyshin, Yelets (Southern Front) and others.(2)

The fortified areas were organized by a decision of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (RVSR) and more rarely by the RVS [revolutionary military council] of the fronts and armies. The most important of these in operational-strategic terms were established by a decree of the Worker and Peasant Defense Council headed by V.I. Lenin. Vladimir Ilich was constantly concerned for recruiting leading personnel for the fortified areas, with the manning of them, the supply of weapons, military equipment, and supervised their combat activities. At council sessions prominent party and state figures gave information on the questions concerning the fortified areas. In particular, at one of these held on 15 August 1919, F.E. Dzerzhinskiy made a proposal to turn over 50 percent of the special auxiliary troop formations to the FAs.(3)

Up to mid 1919, the fortified areas were directly under the Red Army Inspector of Engineers and the chiefs of the engineers of the fronts and armies. The FA departments organized in the same year under the RVSR Field Staff and the front and army staffs played a substantial role in improving leadership of their combat activities.(4) The staff of the Eastern Front and then the other fronts worked out proposals on the administration of the FA in peacetime, wartime and in a state of siege.(5)

The fortified areas were prepared and occupied by special formations. They were entrusted with various tasks, the main ones being: covering the approaches to the nation's political and industrial centers; holding important lines and cities until the arrival of the field troops; supporting the flanks and rear of the armies (fronts); preparing forming-up lines (areas) for an offensive, including for the field troops. For example, the instructions of the Eastern Front RVS of 17 May 1919 stated that "the overall aim of the Eastern Fronts fortified areas is the establishing of a strong defensive line along the line of Vyatka, Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara, Saratov." Along with this, the personnel of the fortified areas was given the task of working among the local population to explain Soviet policy as well as the nature and goals of the Civil War.(6)

The organization and establishment of the fortified areas were determined by the RVSR Order No 220 of 13 November 1918 and in accord with this these were

usually to be based upon one or two rifle brigades and more rarely a division or regiment. With forces available, the FAs in addition were to include: up to a battalion of heavy artillery, from 6 to 20 light artillery batteries, armored units and subunits (armored trains, armored vehicles and armored maintenance vehicles), from a cavalry squadron to a regiment, one or two air wings, antiaircraft weapons, searchlights, barrage balloons, river combat vessels and so forth.(7) The fortified areas, as a rule, were divided into sectors and then sections. Each sector covered on important axis. Certain FAs were immediately split up into sections. Strongpoints and centers of resistance were established within the sectors and sections.

The fortified areas were headed by military councils consisting of three men, one of whom, the commandant, was appointed by the Red Army Command. The two others were selected by the local authorities and then approved by the RVS of the Republic or fronts. In individual, most important FAs, for example, in the Petrograd, military councils were also found in the sectors. Red Army commanders were usually appointed the commandants of the fortified areas.(8)

The FAs were manned by mobilizing the population of the frontline zone as well as from local patrol teams, detachments of Vsevobuch [Universal Military Training], VChK [All-Russian Extraordinary Commission] teams as well as reserve units of the military districts. Under the conditions of the shortage of time, their core was usually organized around units and formations of field troops. For example, in the summer of 1918, the Samara FA included the 210th Rifle Regiment imeni V.I. Lenin. It supported the defenses on a crucial sector. The battle order stated: "A steadfast unit, the 210th Regiment imeni V.I. Lenin, is to defend the sector of Kamennyy Brod, Dergachi, Berezovyy Gay, Sukhaya Vayzovka."(9)

Having received the task of preparing the defenses, the military council of a fortified area, with active involvement of representatives from the front's (army's) engineer troops, conducted reconnaissance of the field, took a decision, worked out a plan and began to carry out engineer work.

The plan usually set out: the grouping of forces (including the boundaries of the defensive sectors and sections, the areas for establishing strongpoints and centers of resistance), the tasks for the troops, the nature of the engineer organization of the field, the procedure and sequence of engineer work, the organizing of reconnaissance, cooperation, air defense and so forth.

The troop grouping of a fortified area was established proceeding from the received task, the available forces, the possible variations of enemy actions and the terrain conditions. The defensive sector was usually occupied by a brigade (regiment), a section by a regiment (battalion) and a strongpoint by a battalion (company or platoon).

The battle order, as a rule, was formed up in a single echelon with the assigning of reserves (from one-fifth to one-third of the available forces) and reinforced by cavalry and armored subunits. In individual instances reserves were not established in the regiments and companies. For example, in the Voronezh FA these were found only in the brigades and battalions.(10)

The maximum possible densities of forces were established on the decisive axes. However, in a majority of instances these were only 80-110 bayonets and sabers and 0.8 of a gun per kilometer of front. On the secondary axes the densities were 1.5-2 fold less, particularly in terms of artillery.

The nature of the engineer organization of the terrain, the procedure and sequence of engineer work were regulated by the Directive of the Commander-in-Chief of the Republic Armed Forces of 12 July 1919 as well as by the instructions of the front commanders. At the same time, consideration was given to the situational conditions. In some instances, for example, a system of semicircular defensive structures enclosed the defended object and in others surrounded them completely (Eastern Front). Here ordinarily three positions were built: the forward, main and running along the outskirts of towns and population points the defense of which was part of the task of the FA. On the most important axes, strongpoints were established with all-round defenses and centers of resistance and within these permanent stone-earthen and log-earthen defensive structures were built, wire and other obstacles were set up. In the spaces between the strongpoints, field-type structures were erected. Additional defensive positions and lines of trenches were prepared in the sectors and sections. Towns and large population points were adapted for street fighting.(11)

The leadership over the construction of the fortified areas and responsibility for the safekeeping of defensive structures were entrusted to the front and army chiefs of engineers. Engineer work was carried out by the forces of the FA troops and by the local population. Military field construction organizations erected the permanent defensive structures around the most important installations. For example, the Military Field Construction Organization of the Simbirsk FA established a strong defensive zone around the town and this played an important role in defending the approaches to it as well as in defending the railroad bridge over the Volga, the cartridge plant and other facilities.(12) The military field construction organizations Nos 1 and 6 headed by the engineer D.M. Karbyshev also did very effective work.(13)

In planning the defenses, great attention was paid to reconnaissance and this was conducted by different methods, including with the aid of the local population. Each company was to organize reconnaissance directly ahead of its battle position and on the flanks. Reconnaissance parties reinforced with cavalry subunits were sent out longer distances (up to 25-30 km).

Antiaircraft guns, searchlights as well as aircraft were employed for air defense, usually of large cities. For example, in mid 1919, a fighter from the Dvinsk FA engaged three enemy airplanes. He forced two of them to turn back while one landed in the position of our fortified area.(14)

The combat activities of the fortified areas to a greater or lesser degree reflected the questions of organizing anti-tank defenses. For combating enemy tanks on the Southern and Western Fronts, for example, duty guns were assigned. At times, the probable tank approaches to our positions were mined. The White Guard Command, having learned of the preparation of antitank measures by the Soviet troops and particularly the mining of the terrain, often refused further utilization of tanks in the fighting on these axes.(15)

The defensive plans of the FA envisaged measures to organize cooperation between the rifle and artillery units, the air and armored subunits. Nevertheless, these were not fully carried out. For example, the methods of employing the services and combat arms were poorly worked out in the course of repelling an enemy offensive depending upon the various possible versions of enemy actions.

An analysis of the documents shows that not all the fortified areas had to fight. Those FA which participated in fighting can conditionally be divided into two groups. The first was made up of the fortified areas combating the interventionists and White Guards solely on the approaches to their main defensive lines (for example, Samara and Gomel);(16) and the other was those defending every inch of the occupied positions (for example, Petrograd and Kursk).

With the announcing of the state of seige, the FA rifle subunits and units took up the combat sections assigned to them. A portion of the defensive positions was often left for the field troops.

The fighting against the advancing enemy on the distant approaches to the FA was initiated by the reconnaissance parties which at times were able to temporarily hold up the advance of the enemy forces.(17) Then the artillery opened fire. Particular attention was given to hitting the main enemy groupings advancing along roads, on approaches and directly ahead of the forward defensive edge. The main efforts were concentrated on holding the defensive positions. Thus, stubborn fighting went on on the Kursk axes for more than 2 months, from the middle of the summer until the start of the autumn of 1919. This was particularly fierce in the defense of Kursk with the city being held by units of the FA under the command of M.S. Svechnikov together with the field troops. For an entire day, two regiments from the southern sector of this FA drove off continuous attacks by eight White Guard officer regiments from the I Army Corps. Only the arrival of enemy armored vehicles on the flanks of the defenders forced them to retreat behind the Seym

River, where new fighting resumed with the previous intensity.(18) The men of the Voronezh and many other FAs courageously fought the White Guards.

The fortified areas played a major role in the fighting for Petrograd, Orenburg and Uralsk. Along with active fighting they constituted regular troop units and subunits for the operational army and sent draft of reinforcements to the front. In addition, many fortified areas, particularly the Petrograd, supported the going over of the field troops to the offensive. For example, when in mid October 1919, a portion of the positions on the Gatchina defensive sector ended up in the hands of Yudenich, the 7th Army (commander S.D. Kharlamov), supported by the Petrograd workers, halted the further enemy advance and then, relying on the Petrograd FA and its fortifications, went over to the offensive, defeated the White Guards and pushed them into Estonian territory.(19)

The FA troops had to fight the armed forces of the domestic and foreign counterrevolution under various conditions. They successfully fought in any season, during the day and at night, they stubbornly defended the occupied positions, they fought in an encirclement, they launched counterattacks and counterstrikes and together with the field troops went over to the offensive. There were also serious shortcomings in the fighting by certain fortified areas, particularly on the Southern Front (Tambov and other FAs).(20) The main reason for this was that both the personnel and the engineer structures could not be readied sufficiently in the short period of time for repelling the superior enemy forces. However, as a whole, during the years of the Civil War, the fortified areas made a worth contribution to the victory of the Red Army. With assaults on the FAs, the enemy suffered significantly higher losses in comparison with fighting under ordinary conditions. For this reason, the White Guards, as a rule, did not undertake frontal attacks on the positions of the fortified areas but tried to outflank them.

The best results in the fighting of the FA formations, units and subunits were achieved with well-organized cooperation with the field troops. In the aim of maintaining close cooperation, liaison officers were sent to the army and front staffs. In turn, the very existence of the fortified areas strengthened the morale of the field troop personnel. As a whole, the methods of the combat employment of the fortified areas and the tasks carried out by them in armed combat against the interventionists and White Guards were significantly broader and more diverse than in World War I.

The local party and soviet bodies carried out great work aimed at increasing the battleworthiness of the fortified area troops. Under their leadership, many FAs were turned into unassailable fortresses on which the crack interventionist and White Guard troops foundered.

The experience of the combat employment of the fortified areas in the Civil War served as a basis for improving their organization and methods of combat. This played an important role during the years of the Great Patriotic War in increasing the strength of defenses on a number of sectors of the front. It has not lost its importance today.

Footnotes

1. "Direktivy Glavnogo komandovaniya Krasnoy Armii (1917-1920). Sbornik dokumentov" [Directives of the Red Army High Command (1917-1920). Collection of Documents], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1969, pp 122-124.
2. "Grazhdanskaya voyna i voyennaya interventsia v SSSR: Entsiklopediya" [The Civil War and the Military Intervention in the USSR: an Encyclopedia], Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1983, p 612.
3. Tsentralnyy partiynnyy arkhiv [Central Party Archives], folio 19, inv. 3, file 65.
4. TsGASA [Central State Archives of the Soviet Army], folio 6, inv. 4, file 108(1), sheet 80.
5. Ibid., folio 679, inv. 1, file 47, sheet 44; folio 6, inv. 6, file 155(1), sheet 7; folio 758, inv. 1, file 96, sheet 68.
6. Ibid., folio 802, inv. 1, file 15, sheet 21.
7. Ibid., folio 780, inv. 1, file 69, sheet 5.
8. Ibid., folio 245, inv. 1, file 24, sheets 18, 182; folio 709, inv. 1, file 3, sheets 1, 67; folio 780, inv. 1, file 3, sheet 176.
9. Ibid., folio 780, inv. 1, file 69, sheet 5.
10. Ibid., folio 707, inv. 1, file 11, sheet 51.
11. Ibid., folio 780, inv. 1, file 65, sheets 5, 22, 28.
12. Ibid., folio 185, inv. 3, file 34, sheet 38.
13. Ibid., folio 802, inv. 1, file 9, sheet 32.
14. Ibid., folio 712, inv. 1, file 32, sheet 86.
15. Ibid., folio 758, inv. 1, file 96, sheet 33.
16. Ibid., folio 802, inv. 1, file 12, sheet 5; folio 712, inv. 1, file 27, sheets 23, 103-105.
17. Ibid., folio 758, inv. 1, file 91, sheet 3.
18. Ibid., file 89, sheet 24.
19. "Grazhdanskaya voyna i voyennaya....," p 631.
20. TsGASA, folio 679, inv. 1, file 42, sheets 40-43.

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**Certain Problems of Preparations of Nation,
Armed Forces to Repel Nazi Aggression**
*00010035d Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 4, Apr 88 pp 42-50*

[Article, published under the heading "Debates and Discussions," by Col Yu.G. Perechnev, doctor of historical sciences: "On Certain Problems in the Preparations of the Nation and Armed Forces to Repel Nazi Aggression"]

[Text] [Editorial Introduction] The journal's editors have received many letters in which the readers ask for a more complete and more profound treatment of events in the initial period of the Great Patriotic War as well as voice their own ideas its content, the reasons for the setbacks, the importance of the experience of the first operations of our troops, the sources of mass heroism among the Soviet military as well as on other questions.

In December of last year, the Military History Institute of the USSR Ministry of Defense held a "roundtable" where military historians discussed many questions relating to the initial period of the war. However, according to the unanimous opinion of the "roundtable" participants, this problem requires further study and analysis with the involvement of a broader range of researchers.

In order to continue this important discussion, as well as to meet the requests of our readers, the editors are beginning a series of articles on the prewar and initial periods of the Great Patriotic War with the article by Doctor of Historical Sciences, Col Yu.G. Perechnev and are requesting that the veterans, scientists and military historians as well as all our readers take part in the commenced discussion. [End of Editorial Introduction]

Recently a number of articles has appeared in our press where the authors have endeavored in a new and more complete manner to treat the events of the difficult year for our nation of 1941 and which has remained a sort of "blank spot" in the history of the last war. Particular attention here has been given to the initial period of the war. This is no accident as its results were felt in a negative manner on the entire course of the subsequent military operations during the summer-autumn campaign and brought our people innumerable sufferings and hardships.

The initial period of the Great Patriotic War which lasted until mid July 1941 has kept much that is unclear, unstudied and disputable. All the truth has not yet been

told about the events of those times. The efforts of many researchers will be needed to come as close as possible to it, to analyze this properly and draw lessons for the future.

An analysis of the international and domestic situation of the USSR on the eve and at the outset of the war, an assessment of the state and degree of readiness of the nation and the Armed Forces to repel aggression and a study of the nature and results of the fighting show that the reasons for the failures of the Soviet Army are extremely complicated and diverse. They, it seems to us, rest on a number of political, economic and economic factors of an international and domestic nature and contain elements of an objective and subjective order. From this it follows that the events of those difficult days must be viewed not in isolation but all together, strictly considering both the negative and positive aspects. Particularly dangerous here are emotions and attempts to subjectively assess the activities of the individual political and military leaders.

All these problems require a profound study and thorough analysis. We would like to take up one of these, in our view, the most important, the **problem of the immediate preparation of the nation and the Armed Forces to repel aggression.**

Under the conditions of the growing military threat the Communist Party and the Soviet government were confronted with difficult tasks. The prime ones of these were: the reforming of the economy to ensure expanded production of weapons and equipment; the organizing of the theater of military operations, a significant portion of which had just been incorporated in the USSR; clarifying the plans for strategic deployment due to the change in the Western state frontier and the composition of the coalition of probable enemies; the reorganization and rearming of the army considering the combat experience of the commenced World War II; preparing and carrying out covert mobilization and strategic deployment of the Armed Forces. Significant measures were carried out to increase the size of the Army and Navy, to improve their organization and establishment and combat training. However, by 22 June, many of these tasks had not yet been carried out.

The Armed Forces had increased noticeably in size (from 1.9 million men in 1939 to 5.4 million by 22 June 1941). However, the rapid growth of the new formations occurred without considering the actual capabilities of supplying them with weapons, communications and motor transport. This led to the appearance of understrength formations and units in the Soviet Army and these were manned with personnel but did have the regulation weapons. A study of the archival documents has shown that in the prewar years sufficient attention was not paid to the development of the special troops such as engineer, signals, motor vehicle and so forth or to supplying them with new equipment. In many regards they lagged behind the requirements of a war. Due to the