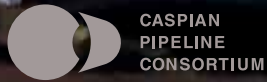


PANORAMA

CASPIAN PIPELINE CONSORTIUM



*We
will
remember*



SPECIAL ISSUE

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DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS!

This year marks an important historical date – the 80th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. Many of us know from childhood from the stories of front-line soldiers, from large-scale reconstruction films by Sergey Bondarchuk, Mikhail Romm, Yuri Ozerov, books and songs that this war was difficult, cruel and bloody.

Over time, much is forgotten and reformed under the influence of changing political paradigms or the deliberate eradication of patriotism, and this also happened during the perestroika and post-perestroika times. In books and films about the war of different historical periods, we saw stupid fascists, and beautiful ones, and those so cruel that ambulance teams were on duty at the exits of movie theaters.

At one point, it was believed that only the political officers won the war, that Raseiniai and Vyazma never existed. Then it became a trend to criticize and mock what had previously been extolled. Then the Internet appeared and in it, thousands of armchair pundits, tacticians, analysts and truth-tellers discussing that War and its consequences. Some modern films and TV series about the Great Patriotic War already include elements of mysticism and fantasy, it turns out, you can do it that way too.

On May 8, 2007 the order of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation No. 181 "On the Declassification of Archival Documents of the Red Army and Navy for the Period of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945". Now these documents can be opened on a computer monitor from specialized search sites and, without going outside, a real, honest

history of the Great Patriotic War can be compiled from regimental combat logs, award sheets, orders, reports, and directives. This requires time and patience. Yes, these are sometimes heavy documents recording executions and brutal murders of civilians, sometimes dry lines with figures on the Red Army's losses or the amount of transported equipment, ammunition, or provisions, and sometimes these are instructions on sabotage behind enemy lines. Just lines in a document, behind which stands the feat of real people.

The CPC press service also tried to write about these stories, traditionally focusing on the technical and fuel and energy components. Let's be honest, our specialists tried not to copy from military historians of the Soviet period or apologists of modern military historiography, but they tried to familiarize themselves with all the most important works of memoirists, dissertations, online lectures, and open documents.

Thousands of multi-page volumes of research are devoted to the history of the Great Patriotic War, among which there are those dedicated to just one day, June 22, 1941, or just one operation, for example, the "Vyazemskaya catastrophe". How the hero city of Novorossiysk fought and the landing in Yuzhnaya Ozereyevka. About how the hero city of Leningrad survived and won, how they built an underwater oil pipeline along the bottom of Lake Ladoga. There are a great number of these stories and the creators of the collection focused on the least known ones.

It is clear that the quoted memoirs of German generals require a skeptical approach, since they were translated



artistically in many ways. And the Wehrmacht "Munchausen" were lying a lot, trying to whitewash their role as honest servants against the background of the general feldgrau. In addition, it has recently become fashionable abroad to say that it was collaborators and SS soldiers, and not the Wehrmacht, who committed monstrous atrocities on Soviet soil. No, the authors prove with documentary evidence that they are all guilty!

By arranging 18 essays in chronological order, the authors of the special issue do not claim to create a complete picture of the terrible, heroic, unforgettable events of 1941-1945. I am sure that this collection has meaning and a certain value – first of all, because it was made for you, colleagues. For those who cherish memory, for those who want to tell these stories to their children. The special issue "We Will Remember" is dedicated to the family members of CPC workers who took part in the Great Patriotic War, selflessly bringing this great day closer at the front and in the rear.

Happy Victory Day!

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BORDER BATTLES

AUTHOR DMITRY KONSTANTINOV

THE FIRST WEEK OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR IS A SEPARATE AND TERRIBLE PAGE IN ITS HISTORY, A PERIOD OF FIERCE BORDER BATTLES, A TEST OF THE STRENGTH OF PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT. THE SACRIFICES OF THE SOVIET SOLDIERS WERE NOT IN VAIN: THE GERMAN BLITZKRIEG LOST ITS SURPRISE AND SWIFTNESS ALREADY IN JULY 1941, WITH THE FIRST SALVOS OF "KATYUSHA" AND THE STABILIZATION OF THE FRONT LINE

The Great Patriotic War began at 4:00 on June 22, 1941, but before proceeding to the historiography of subsequent events, it is important to touch upon a number of political, strategic and tactical decisions that preceded the crossing of the USSR state border by the armed forces of Nazi Germany.

The attack, the perfidy of which was emphasized in the Sovinformburo reports and in the country's leadership's appeals to the Soviet people, violated the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. Some historians believe that Hitler, who unleashed World War II on European territory on September 1, 1939, decided to attack the USSR back in 1940 based on an analysis of the insufficiently high level of training of the rank and file and command staff of the Red Army in the conditions of the Soviet-Finnish "winter" war of 1939-40. Others believe that the Fuhrer was in a hurry to defeat the "ally" until the new Red Army commanders, who replaced those repressed in 1937, had gained the necessary experience. Still others believe that the cause of the blitzkrieg was the political tension that arose between the USSR and Germany by 1940, provoked by the Germans' actions in Romania.

"Soon after Molotov's visit to Berlin (October 1940 — ed. note), my chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Baron von Liebenstein, and the chief of the operational unit, Major Bayerlein,



GERMAN LIGHT TANK PZ.KPFW.38(T) OF CZECHOSLOVAKIAN PRODUCTION WITH A 37 MM SKODA GUN AND 8-25 MM ARMOR PLATES

were summoned to a meeting with the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, where they received the first instructions on the Barbarossa Plan — a plan for war against Russia", noted in his memoirs "Memoirs of a Soldier" the commander of the armored forces of the Reich, Colonel General Heinz Guderian. "When they came to me after this meeting to report and unfolded a map of Russia in front of me, I could not believe my eyes. What I considered impossible was about to become reality? Hitler, who in my presence had sharply criticized the political leadership of Germany

in 1914, which did not understand the danger of waging a war on two fronts, now himself wanted to start a war with Russia without ending the war with England. By this he was bringing upon himself the danger that arose from waging war on two fronts, something that all the old soldiers had persistently warned him against and which he himself often began to call a mistaken step".

PLANS AND FACTS

The objective of the Barbarossa plan, developed by the chief quartermaster of the Wehrmacht General Staff,

Lieutenant General Friedrich Paulus, was to seize the territory of the USSR up to the conditional line Arkhangelsk — Astrakhan within 8-10 weeks. The plan was named in tune with the nickname "red-bearded" of the medieval king of Germany Friedrich I. Dreaming of reviving the empire of Charlemagne, this monarch significantly increased the combat capability of his knightly army, and ended his life in the Third Crusade, falling from his horse and drowning while crossing the Salef River.

According to the final version of the Barbarossa plan (Directive 21 of December 21, 1940), the German offensive forces were divided into three army groups. Army Group North was commanded by Field Marshal Wilhelm von Leeb, and its task was to capture Leningrad. Army Group Center, under the command of Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, was sent to Moscow. This was the direction of the main attack, and instead of one tank group, Center was reinforced with two at once, under the command of Heinz Guderian and Hermann Hoth. Army Group South was commanded by Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, and its goal was to capture Kiev and the Donbass.

Germany entered the war with an enemy that had more advanced weapons in such positions as tanks and small arms. At the same time, the organizational structure of the Wehrmacht troops, logistics, supplies, qualitatively better artillery and shells proved their advantage already in the first days of the war.

Soviet medium tanks T-34 and heavy tanks KV met the Germans already in the first days of the war. In terms of the quality of armor protection and the destructive effect of 76-mm turret guns, they were superior to the best Wehrmacht tanks of that time Pz. Kpfw IV. Germany would begin to produce the actual analogues of the KV and T-34 — Tiger and Panther — only in 1942 and 1943, respectively.

By the beginning of the war, the Red Army infantry had received the SVT-40 self-loading rifle, a weapon with a gas-operated reload that was



BREST FORTRESS MAP



THE GLOOMY GERMAN GENIUS SENT THE INFANTRY TO RUSSIA IN COTTON TROUSERS AND JACKETS MADE OF A WOOL-VISCOSE MIXTURE. THE ROLLED-UP SLEEVES WERE NOT A SHOW OF COURAGE OR AN ATTEMPT AT PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCE — AT 30°C IN JULY 1941, SOLDIERS IN WEHRMACHT UNIFORMS WERE VERY HOT.

ahead of its time (and the Mauser M98k rifles that were in service with the Wehrmacht infantry). The Germans began actively copying the captured SVT-40, and in 1942 the Wehrmacht began to receive similar G-41 Walther carbines. But the Red Army soldiers found the Tokarev rifle complicated before the start of the war, as the weapon needed to be cleaned frequently.

If we compare the composition of the Wehrmacht motorized corps and the mechanized corps of the Red Army, at first glance they are not much different. Tank divisions have infantry brigades, artillery regiments, and engineer

battalions. Theoretically, both sides understood that the effectiveness of a breakthrough or counterattack was possible only if tank groups quickly interacted with artillery and infantry. But in practice, the Soviet infantry went on foot, and the artillery was towed by tractors at about the same speed.

At the same time, German motorized infantry was transported by trucks, and artillery in tank divisions was towed by half-track armored personnel carriers Sd.Kfz.250 with the speed and cross-country ability of the Panzers following in front. As a result, the tanks of the Soviet mechanized corps

usually entered the battle without the support of the lagging infantry and artillery.

It was only in the early 1940s that the blitzkrieg strategy replaced the previously dominant concept of positional warfare in Europe. To protect border areas, it was customary to build defense lines with fortifications, long-term firing points, bunkers, trenches, and minefields. In the early 1930s, a 1,850-km-long defense line, unofficially called the "Stalin Line", was built on the western border of the USSR from the Baltic to the Black Sea. After Western Belarus, Western Ukraine, the Baltic states, and Bessarabia were incorporated to the Soviet Union in 1939–1940, the fortified areas of the Stalin Line were mothballed, and a new Molotov Line was built approximately 300 km to the west.

"The construction of new fortified areas on the western border began in early 1940", recalled Georgy Zhukov. "The project for the construction of fortified areas was approved by I.V. Stalin based on a report by K.E. Voroshilov and B.M. Shaposhnikov. By the beginning of the war, they managed to build about 2,500 reinforced concrete structures, of which 1,000 were armed with fortified artillery, and the remaining 1,500 with machine guns only".

In April 1941, Germany massively transferred soldiers by rail to the Eastern border. Reports from Richard Sorge, the Red Orchestra group, and

other intelligence agents narrowed the estimated date of the invasion to several months in the spring and summer of 1941. In mid-June, commanders of the internal Oryol, North Caucasian, and Volga military districts received orders to advance to the western border of the USSR.

CHRONICLE OF THE INVASION

At midday on June 21, Soviet agent "Kurt" – Gerhard Kegel, an employee of the German embassy in Moscow – reported that the war would begin within 48 hours. At 8:00 p.m., corporal Alfred Liskov of the 15th Wehrmacht Division, who had swum across the Western Bug, reported the start of the invasion on the morning of June 22. Several more defectors confirmed the information. In the evening, a meeting of the country's leadership was convened in the Kremlin, at which Directive No. 1 was adopted on bringing the troops of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa military districts to combat readiness. At the same time, commanders were ordered not to cross the border, succumbing to individual provocations, so as not to provoke a *casus belli* – a pretext for justifying the German invasion by the world community. At half past twelve at night on June 22, the sending of Directive No. 1 to the district headquarters was completed. Soldiers were given ammunition, organized in columns

and sent to occupy fortified areas. Somewhere this was not done in time, and somewhere it was done earlier, at their own risk, like the commander of the 4th Army, Alexander Korobkov.

The ratio of German and Soviet divisions on the border on the night of June 22 was 100 to 40, which was explained by the incomplete deployment of the Red Army troops. This determined the combat superiority of the Wehrmacht forces, and it was given a boost by the massive Luftwaffe raids that began at 4:00 Moscow time. Junkers and Heinkels bombed military airfields, railway junctions, ports and cities. The Soviet I-16s, MiG-3s, DBs and SBs that managed to take off attacked the Messerschmitts. On the first day of the war, the Red Army Air Forces lost 336 aircraft in the air and 800 on the ground. At the same time, 78 German aircraft were shot down and 89 were damaged. The Red Army's air superiority was lost for a long time.

The Luftwaffe pilots relied on aerial photography conducted by the aircraft of Colonel Theodore Rowehl's aerial reconnaissance group, which repeatedly and allegedly accidentally flew into the territory of the USSR in the first months of 1941. Another "auxiliary" special unit, "Brandenburg 800", crossed the border on the night of June 22 in groups of 30 people in the uniform of soldiers and officers of the Red Army and with fake documents. The saboteurs' primary task was to prevent the destruction of strategically important bridges.

BREST FORTRESS

The Brest fortress, located at the crossroads of the Mukhavets and Western Bug rivers, was not considered by the Nazis as a serious fortification and only 8 hours were allotted for its capture. The fortress housed barracks for soldiers and apartments for junior command staff of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions of the 4th army – a total of about 8 thousand people. The number of artillery pieces, light tanks and armored vehicles on

the territory of the fortress did not exceed 50 units.

On June 22, 1941, the artillery preparation for the German offensive began at 4:05. The shelling of the Brest Fortress lasted from 4:15 to 4:45 in the morning. After that, the 45th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht began the assault on the citadel and island forts, and to the north and south, Guderian's tanks began crossing the Western Bug.

When the infantrymen of the 45th Division crossed the river in rubber boats and went to storm the citadel, they were met with sniper fire and fierce resistance. About 70 Nazis who managed to break into the citadel were blocked in the church-club building.

The Germans were able to take the citadel only on June 26. The organized resistance of the garrison, initiated by the regimental commissar Efim Fomin, continued until June 29, when the Eastern Fort fell, where the soldiers under the command of Major Petr Gavrilov fought to the last bullet. The defense did not end there: within the walls and casemates there were still soldiers of the Red Army and NKVD, who fought singly and in groups.

Commissar Fomin, wounded three times, was captured on June 30, identified as a traitor and shot at the Kholm Gate. Major Gavrilov was captured on July 23 and sent to a concentration camp. In 1945 he was reinstated in his army rank, in 1956 he became a Hero of the Soviet Union, he died in 1979.

The head nurse of the surgical department, Praskovya Tkacheva, saved 28 people by dragging them from the flames of the burning hospital to the fortress rampart, being wounded twice in the process. When the Germans occupied the area, they sent Praskovya along with other prisoners of war to a concentration camp. She escaped from there and in 1942 she became a liaison in a partisan detachment. Awarded the medal "For Victory over Germany", Praskovya Tkacheva passed away in 1992.



THE ORYOL PILLBOX OF THE MOLOTOV LINE. GERMAN PHOTO OF 1941



Wikimedia Commons

ALEKSANDR ANDREYEVICH KOROBKOV (JUNE 20, 1897 – JULY 22, 1941) WAS A MAJOR GENERAL AND COMMANDER OF THE 4TH ARMY OF THE WESTERN SPECIAL MILITARY DISTRICT IN JUNE 1941. HE TOOK OVER THE ARMY FROM THE FUTURE MARSHAL CHUIKOV IN JANUARY 1941 AND IN APRIL MOBILIZED 10,000 CIVILIANS TO COMPLETE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BREST FORTIFIED REGION. ON THE NIGHT OF JUNE 22, WHEN THERE WAS NO COMMUNICATION WITH THE DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS FOR SEVERAL HOURS, HE ORDERED THE UNIT COMMANDERS, UNDER HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITY, TO OPEN THE "RED PACKETS" AND WITHDRAW THE DIVISION PERSONNEL FROM THE BREST FORTRESS TO COMBAT DEPLOYMENT POSITIONS. ON JULY 22, 1941, HE WAS SHOT "FOR LOSING CONTROL OF THE TROOPS". IN 1957, HE WAS REHABILITATED "FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE OF A CRIME", AND HIS MILITARY RANK AND RIGHTS TO AWARDS WERE RESTORED.



SOVIET T-26 TANK, A REPLICA OF THE BRITISH VIECKERS MK E. TURRET GUN CALIBER 45 MM, ARMOR 6-15 MM

15-year-old teenager Petr Klypa was a member of a musical platoon commanded by his older brother Nikolai. On the second day of the defense, Petr found an ammunition depot in the ruins, which strengthened the resistance of the fortress defenders. When the water was running low, the teenager crawled under fire to the river, where he filled flasks for everyone. In early July, during an attempt to break through, Petr and several others managed to leave the fortress and reach the forest. Then he was captured, worked as a farm laborer for a German peasant, and was freed by the Americans in 1945.

Returning to his homeland, he was drafted into the Red Army and soon demobilized. His post-war fate was tragic. He died in 1983.

On August 26, 1941, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini visited the Brest Fortress. They entered the citadel via the Terespol Bridge. At the Kholm Gate, the leaders were shown the place where the commissar had been shot. The brick fragment taken by the Fuhrer as a souvenir was found in the Reich Chancellery in May 1945.

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

The Brest Fortress was not the only center of prolonged resistance in the

conditions of border battles. If on the northwestern section of the Molotov Line the pillboxes were the least completed and armed, then in the southwestern direction the fortified areas prepared for the invasion more thoroughly. Thus, the pillboxes of the Vladimir-Volynsky fortified area delayed the 1st tank group of Kleist for 24 hours. In the invasion zone of the "Center" group, the fortified areas also put up fierce resistance. Under the command of Lieutenant Ivan Fedorov, the garrison of the artillery and machine gun pillbox "Orel" near the village of Anusino held out for 12 days. Heavy artillery, poison gas and assault groups consisting of mountain rangers, sappers and flamethrowers were used against the pillboxes of the Molotov Line.

"I remember my pillbox well (located near the village of Orlya – ed. note)", said Junior Lieutenant Alexander Shankov. "It had two caponiers, each with a 76-millimeter cannon paired with a Maxim machine gun. There was a loophole for a light machine gun at both entrance doors. But, unfortunately, we didn't have any light machine guns... Almost the whole April 1941 the personnel were in the pillboxes. The weapons were cleaned of winter grease, ammunition and provisions were brought into the structures... But at the beginning of May, a new order was received, and the garrisons were withdrawn from the pillboxes... Food, ammunition, and

shells were returned to the warehouse... When the Nazis attacked, we had to occupy the pillboxes under fire. This caused heavy losses. Of the 18 soldiers and sergeants in my platoon, only 5 made it into the pillbox, then three more border guards ran in. I was the ninth. For shells, ammunition and food the soldiers crawled to the company storehouse already during the battle... From the very beginning of the war, the company's positions were surrounded.»

All four fortified areas of the Northwestern Front – Alytus, Kaunas, Shauliai, Telshyai – had no combat-ready facilities and garrisons as of June 22. Fortifications were partially occupied by soldiers of the 5th, 10th, 33rd and 188th Infantry divisions, but their defenses were breached by the Germans on the first day of the war.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WAR

On the morning of June 22, Directive No. 2 of the People's Defense Committee was sent to the troops. It was ordered to destroy the enemy with all forces and means in places where the border was violated, to conduct aerial reconnaissance of enemy force concentrations, not to cross the border until further notice, to bomb Königsberg and Memel, and not to carry out raids on Finland and Romania.

By this time, the North Group, with the forces of General Reinhardt's 41st Motorized Corps, had occupied

the Lithuanian city of Taurage after a 6-hour battle with units of the 128th Division. The 56th Motorized Corps of General of Infantry von Manstein had covered 60 km and reached the Dubissa River (a tributary of the Neman), capturing a bridge. The 291st Infantry Division was advancing in the direction of the port of Liepaja, which had been subjected to bombardment and shelling. Colonel General F. I. Kuznetsov, commander of the Northwestern Front, sent the 12th and 3rd Mechanized Corps under the combined command of Colonel Pavel Poluboyarov against the "Tilsit group" that had broken through to the Baltics.

The units of Hermann Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group, advancing from the Suwalki Salient, reached the Neman River by midday on June 22. All three bridges in the city of Alytus were cleared of mines by order of the Western District headquarters. It is possible that the "order" was conveyed to the bridge guards by saboteurs. At the northern bridge, the tanks of von Funck's 7th Division (among which the light Czech Pz. Kpfw 38 were numerically in the lead) met with the tanks of Colonel Fedorov's 5th Division, among which light BTs also predominated, but there were also fifty brand new T-34-76s. The armor of these Soviet medium tanks could not be penetrated by 37-millimeter turret guns, and the Nazis were able to win the two-day battle near Alytus only with the help of anti-tank artillery and the arrival of reinforcements in the form of tanks from Stumpff's 20th Division by the evening of June 22. In the official report of the headquarters of the Hoth group, the battle near Alytus was called "the largest tank battle of this war" – they could not have known that the Battle of Kursk was ahead of them.

In fact, the first "real" tank battle near Alytus revealed the shortcomings of light tanks on both sides: vulnerable armor, low destructive power of guns. The battle showed that the Wehrmacht's armor-piercing shells were qualitatively superior to their

Soviet counterparts, which, moreover, the Red Army did not have enough. The Wehrmacht's fuel and ammunition logistics were also beyond competition.

At noon on June 22, by order of Admiral Tributs, all ships, vessels and submarines not participating in the defense left the Liepaja harbor. Most of the population was evacuated on them.

At the same time, the 29th Division of Colonel Studnev, part of the 11th Mechanized Corps and stationed near Grodno, entered into battle with infantry units of the 8th Army Corps of the Center Group. Here, the Germans encountered three heavy KV tanks for the first time.

On the same day, in the southwestern theater, Kleist's tanks broke through the defenses at the junction of the 5th and 6th armies and moved toward Lvov. They were met by General Ryabyshev's 8th Mechanized Corps, which covered 80 km from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m.

On the evening of June 22, the troops received Directive No. 3 of the People's Commissariat of Defense. The armies on the Northern and Southern Fronts were ordered to hold the state border. The armies of the Northwestern, Western and Southwestern Fronts (in Directive No. 2 they were also called districts) were ordered to surround and destroy enemy groups advancing from the Suwalkin salient and in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky, Brody by June 24 with concentrated concentric strikes.

"On the central front and in the Baltics, it appears that the Soviet command did not believe that a real war had begun", Colonel Erhard Raus, who commanded a tank brigade in the Hoepner group, noted in his book "Tank Battles on the Eastern Front". "The flexibility demonstrated by army and front commanders was not so noticeable at the lower echelons. The Red Army division commanders, as well as most of the other mid-level (division level) commanders, showed a lack of flexibility and indecisiveness at the beginning of the war, and tried not to take responsibility".



MAP OF BORDER BATTLES FROM JUNE 22 TO MID-JULY 1941

COUNTERATTACKS AND POCKETS

On the morning of June 23, the 2nd Tank Division of the 3rd Mechanized Corps of the Red Army advanced on Raseiniai, captured by the 6th Division of the Reinhard Motorized Corps. At the same time, the 23rd and 28th Tank Divisions of the 12th Mechanized Corps headed for Skaudvile, where the 1st Division of the same 41st Corps was located. But they came under air raid, losing about 50 tanks in total, and entered the battle only in the evening, around 20:00.

On the morning of June 23, the port city of Liepaja was attacked by

units of the 291st Infantry Division and by the afternoon it was completely surrounded. Detachments formed from workers of the ship repair and metallurgical plants, as well as Komsomol leaders from the pioneer camp in Palanga were brought in for the defense.

On June 23, in the Central theater, the infantry divisions of the 9th Army of Colonel General Strauss and the 4th Army of Field Marshal von Kluge continued to methodically build a pocket for the 3rd Army of Lieutenant General Kuznetsov and the 10th Army of Major General Golubev, concentrated on the Belostok salient.



GERMAN SELF-PROPELLED SIEGE MORTAR GERAT 041 "KARL" 600 MM CALIBER, WHICH TOOK PART IN THE STORMING OF THE BREST FORTRESS

In fierce battles, the Soviet divisions melted away or dispersed; under the threat of encirclement, Kuznetsov was forced to leave Grodno. On the same day, Marshals Shaposhnikov and Kulik flew to the headquarters of the Western Front commander Pavlov in Minsk. The goal was to discuss the details of a counterattack on the Suwalki group, the result was a decision to carry it out in the Grodno area using the forces of a cavalry-mechanized group under the command of Pavlov's deputy, Lieutenant General Boldin.

The 6th Mechanized Corps of Major General Khatskilevich, which was part of the cavalry-mechanized group, had over a thousand tanks (including 93 KV-1, 21 KV-2 and 322 T-34). The 6th Cossack Cavalry Corps of Major General Nikitin had about 10 thousand sabres, about 200 light tanks, artillery, combat and draft horses.

On the southwestern front, at 11:00 on June 23, Ryabyshev's corps reached Lvov. The tank divisions were placed at the disposal of the commander of the 6th Army, Muzychenko, and he sent them to Yavorov. By midnight, the 8th Mechanized Corps reached its target, having "wound up" about 200 km.

On June 24, Finland occupies the Åland Islands. Beyond the Arctic Circle, the 1st German Mountain Corps occupies the nickel-rich Petsamo (Pechenga) region. "Only a number remains of the 56th Rifle Division", 3rd Army Commander Kuznetsov reports to Western Front Commander Pavlov. The defenders of Liepaja counterattack, but ultimately return to their original positions.

On the same day, Hoth, who had "temporarily joined" the North group, captured Vilnius. The 2nd Tank Division of Major General Solyankin, which had approached Raseiniai from the march, gave battle to the "Senckendorff" group of the 6th Division, which had occupied a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Dubysa. The clash with fifty KVs, which did not react at all to direct hits from the 37-millimeter turret guns of the light Czech Pz.Kpfw 35 (t) tanks and 50-millimeter anti-tank

guns, was a strong sensation for the Germans.

"Colonel von Senckendorff still hoped to hold the western bank, but the huge tanks easily crossed the river and began to climb the slope", writes Erhard Raus. "Even the concentrated fire of our artillery and all the heavy weapons the soldiers had could not stop the steel monsters... About 100 tanks of Colonel Richard Koll's 11th Panzer Regiment, a third of which were Pz.Kpfw IVs, gathered for a counterattack. Some of them encountered the Russian mastodons head-on, but the bulk of our tanks attacked from the flanks. Their shells hit the steel giants from three sides, but did not cause them any harm. But our tanks soon began to suffer losses".

At 13:00 one of the KVs was hit in Raseiniai at point-blank range with a 150mm howitzer. It then became clear that Russian heavy tanks could also penetrate 8.8 cm FlaK 18/36/37 anti-aircraft guns.

"A new type of Russian heavy tank has appeared on the front of Army Groups South and North, which apparently has a gun of 80 mm caliber (according to the report of Army Group North headquarters – even 150 mm, which, however, is unlikely)", wrote General Halder, Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht, in his diary on June 24. The headquarters of North were not mistaken: both KV-1 and KV-2 with 152-mm guns were in action near Raseiniai.

On June 24, the 47th Motorized Corps of Guderian's Panzer Group passes 170 km from the border, but in Slonim the panzers are blocked for a day by three divisions of the second echelon of the Western Front. On June 24, Erich von Manstein leads his 56th Motorized Corps onto the highway leading to Daugavpils. From the moment of crossing the border, this unit has also passed 170 km.

"Now it has become clear that the Russians are not thinking about retreating, but, on the contrary, are throwing everything they have at their disposal to meet the German troops", Franz Halder analyzes the

counterattack of Boldin's cavalry-mechanized group on Grodno on June 24. "At the same time, the enemy's high command, apparently, does not participate at all in the management of the troop operations. The reasons for such actions by the enemy are unclear. The complete absence of large operational reserves completely deprives the enemy command of the opportunity to effectively influence the course of military operations".

Near Raseiniai, the rear supply of the Raus group is interrupted at noon on June 24 by a KV tank. It appears on the road leading from Raseiniai to the bridge over the Dubysa. It sets fire to 12 trucks, tears up telephone wires and stops in the middle of the road. The crew destroys four 50-mm guns from the turret gun, then from a distance of 500 m – the Acht-Komma-Acht anti-aircraft gun. Until dark, the KV fires back from a machine gun, at night, sappers mine the stationary tank, but the explosions only disable the track. On the morning of June 25, a diversionary maneuver is undertaken by light tanks, during which two more anti-aircraft guns take up positions, firing 7 shots. Only two of them penetrate the armor, a hand grenade is pushed through one of these holes and only after that the fascists are able to penetrate the tank.

"Inside lay the bodies of the brave crew, who had only been wounded before. Deeply shocked by this heroism, we buried them with full military honors", writes Raus.

By the end of the day, the Senckendorff group, driven out of the bridgehead, requests assistance from the division headquarters. All remaining tanks of the 41st corps are transferred to Raseiniai and fight with Egor Solyankin's division until the evening of June 26. On this day, the major general dies in battle, and out of 213 tanks of the 2nd division, only one BT remains in service.

On the same day, Manstein's corps crosses the Western Dvina and captures Daugavpils. Leningrad is just over 500 km away.

On June 25, the counterattack force of Boldin's cavalry-mechanized group begins to wane under Luftwaffe bombs and the fire of 88-mm anti-aircraft guns deployed at the front. At 20:00, Boldin orders an end to the attacks and a retreat. At the same time, the 3rd and 10th armies receive orders to retreat under the threat of encirclement in the Belostok pocket.

On June 25, 700 tanks of the 39th Motorized Corps of the Hoth Group, "moving in the operational void", come to the outskirts of Minsk. A briefcase of a German officer killed near Slonim with a map of the planned attacks is delivered to Pavlov's front headquarters there.

General of the Army Dmitry Pavlov reads this map and understands that the counterattack in the direction of Grodno was a mistake, fraught with the loss of not only Minsk (which the People's Commissar ordered to hold at any cost), but also all units of the Western Front. The Suwalki 3rd Panzer Group of Hoth, which was ordered to be destroyed in Directive No. 3, did not even take part in the battles on the Belostok salient, and is now coming from the rear. Instead of the expected tank division, two motorized corps are advancing from the west to Minsk, closing the "pincers".

The order from the Wehrmacht High Command to take Minsk was received simultaneously by both Hoth and Guderian. The first retreated from Vilnius in a disciplined manner, while the latter brought the 47th Motorized Corps to Minsk from the south on June 26, and led the remaining forces of his tank group around to Smolensk. "The 2nd tank group did not fulfill its task of completing the encirclement by joining up with the 3rd tank group", Hermann Hoth wrote in his report. Thanks to this, the remnants of the 13th Army managed to escape from the Minsk pocket.

At this time, a tank battle was raging on the Southwestern Front, which would later be surpassed in scale only by the Battle of Kursk. On June 25, the front commander, Colonel General Mikhail Kirponos, and his staff decided



SOVIET TANK T-35



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DMITRY GRIGORIEVICH PAVLOV (OCTOBER 23 [NOVEMBER 4], 1897 – JULY 22, 1941) – COMMANDER OF THE WESTERN FRONT IN THE SUMMER OF 1941, ARMY GENERAL, HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION (1937). PARTICIPANT OF WORLD WAR I, SPENT TWO YEARS IN GERMAN CAPTIVITY. PARTICIPANT OF THE CIVIL WAR. HEAD OF THE ARMORED DIRECTORATE OF THE RED ARMY, INITIATOR OF THE CREATION OF KV TANKS, DEVELOPER OF THE TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE T-34. COMMANDER OF A TANK BRIGADE DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR UNDER THE PSEUDONYM "GENERAL PABLO". ON JULY 22, 1941, HE WAS CONVICTED AND EXECUTED "FOR COWARDICE, UNAUTHORIZED ABANDONMENT OF STRATEGIC POINTS WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE HIGH COMMAND, THE COLLAPSE OF TROOP COMMAND, INACTION OF THE AUTHORITIES". IN 1957, HE WAS REHABILITATED AND REINSTATED IN HIS MILITARY RANK.

to encircle Kleist's tank group with all available forces. 2,800 tanks of all types, including three-turreted T-35s, were sent against 800 Panzers.

The pillboxes of the Stalin Line held the defense near Minsk from June 26 to 29, they disabled 210 tanks, that is, an entire division. The Germans entered Minsk on June 28, but the fighting in the city continued until June 30.

On June 26, in the southwest, Kleist's tankmen had a record harvest – 9 KV tanks destroyed in one day. Five Soviet mechanized corps, including the 4th General Vlasov (that very one), did not cooperate well enough. They

failed to close the encirclement of the 1st tank group, but they managed to delay its advance until July 1. The Red Army lost 2,648 tanks in the Dubno-Brody battle, and the Wehrmacht lost 285 tanks.

On June 27, Il-2 attack aircraft make their first combat sortie, and in Voronezh, the first Katyushas on the chassis of Moscow three-axle ZIS-5 trucks are ready for battle. They will deliver their first strike at the railway junction in Orsha captured by the Germans on July 14.

On June 29, the Germans completely occupy Liepaja. The heroic defense of the port is considered the "second



THE MESSERSCHMITT BF 109 FIGHTER, THE MOST MASS-PRODUCED AIRCRAFT OF THE LUFTWAFFE. DAIMLER-BENZ DB 601 V 12 PETROL PISTON ENGINE, 2 7.92 MM FORWARD MACHINE GUNS, 2 20 MM CANNONS IN THE WINGS, 58 MM ARMORED COCKPIT GLASS



TANKMEN OF THE RAUS GROUP INSPECT THE "RASEINIAI KV". JUNE 25, 1941

Brest Fortress", the city will later be awarded the Order of the October Revolution. On July 1, Guderian's tanks reach the Berezina River, and on July 4, the Dnieper. Moscow is just over 500 km away.

As a result of the border battles, the Red Army's losses amounted to 747,870 people as of July 9, 1941, of which 588,598 were irretrievable. About 300 thousand deserted and about the same number were taken prisoner in the pockets near Belostok and Minsk. By July 13, the German army had lost 92,000 people killed, wounded, and missing. In the first 18 days of the war, the Red Army

lost 11,703 tanks and self-propelled guns, 18,794 guns and mortars, and 3,985 combat aircraft. The Reich lost 1,000 aircraft, 350 tanks, and about 4,000 guns and mortars during the same period. Soviet troops retreated from the border by 400-450 km in the Baltics, 450-600 km on the Western Front, and 300-350 km in Ukraine. Yes, the numbers are not in our favor.

By the end of June, the Soviet leadership realized that it was necessary to mobilize all of the country's forces to repel aggression. For this purpose, on June 30, the State Defense Committee (SDC) was created, headed by Stalin. On June 29, the Council of

People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) issued a directive to party and soviet organizations in the front-line regions, which, along with other measures to transform the country into a single military fist to provide nationwide resistance to the enemy, contained instructions on the development of the partisan organizations.

The time gained as a result of the heroic resistance of the Red Army units gave the Soviet command the opportunity to deploy seven armies of the Second Strategic Echelon on the line of the Western Dvina and Dnieper rivers.

The Red Army commanders literally learned the theory and practice of defense during the blitzkrieg, as well as the tactics of subsequent counterattacks, on the fly, since no one had taught them anything like that before, and no one could have taught them anything like that. And, as the further course of the war showed, Georgy Zhukov, Konstantin Rokossovsky, Ivan Chernyakhovsky and other Soviet commanders learned the lessons they had learned quickly and effectively. It cannot be said that the enormous losses and victims of the border battles were in vain – they taught the soldiers and commanders of the Red Army a lot, they "took the shavings off" the armored rams of the North, Center and South groups, although not critically, but noticeably bleeding each of them.

Already in the first week of the war, the Wehrmacht was forced to use its reserves earlier than planned. After the border battles, the actions of the German units became more cautious, losing their lightning speed. It can be said that the Barbarossa plan began to falter already at the crossings of the Dnieper and Dvina, just like the medieval emperor Friedrich I who gave it its name. ●

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THE BATTLE OF SMOLENSK

AUTHOR ILYA ARKHIPOV

THE BATTLE OF SMOLENSK LASTED TWO MONTHS – FROM JULY 10 TO SEPTEMBER 10, 1941. IT WAS ONE OF THE LONGEST AND MOST STUBBORN DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS OF THE RED ARMY IN THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

By July 10, the most threatening situation of all the fronts had developed on the Western Front. Germany had launched its main attack not in Ukraine, as Soviet military leaders had expected, but in Belarus. During the border battles, three armies of the First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army were surrounded. The commander of the Western Front, General of the Army Dmitry Pavlov, was removed and executed along with his staff on charges of criminal negligence.

Smolensk's location has long been considered strategic, the city served as a kind of "gateway to Russia" between the Western Dvina and the Dnieper. Considering how many different conquerors (from the Mongols and Lithuanians to the Swedes and French) stumbled on this fortress, it can rightly be said that Smolensk taught many to avoid even thinking about invading Russia. Hitler, however, thought he had learned from the mistakes of his predecessors.

After the capture of Minsk, the tank groups of Hoth and Guderian aimed to further break through into the USSR and were supposed to join up east of Smolensk. However, they did not immediately succeed in creating a new pocket similar to Minsk. The German motorized corps encountered resistance from armies arriving from the USSR's internal districts.

On July 10, 1941, Group Center launched a powerful attack with two tank wedges. Like the tip of a spear, the tanks immediately broke through the defense, and the infantry played the role of the shaft, supporting and developing the success.



BATTLE OF SMOLENSK. SOVIET TANK FIRES AT THE ENEMY. AUGUST 1941

The 3rd Panzer Group of General Hermann Hoth, which had captured Vitebsk the day before, struck in the center and on the right flank of the Soviet troops. On the left flank, the 2nd Panzer Group of General Heinz Guderian crossed the Dnieper south and north of Mogilev.

Wehrmacht generals Hoth and Guderian were experienced military commanders, who had World War I, the blitzkrieg in Poland and the rapid conquest of France under their belts. Guderian, whom his subordinates nicknamed "Fast Heinz", the author of the axiom "the safety of tank units is determined by the speed of their advance", was one of the initiators of the creation of tank forces in Germany and the developer of the blitzkrieg against the USSR. He considered the capture of Moscow to be the

main objective in the war with the Soviet Union.

On July 12, the German 3rd Panzer Division under the command of Walter Model (he was also called "Hitler's fireman") approached Smolensk from the south and entered the battle. In this direction, near the village of Buinichi, soldiers from the 172nd Rifle Division under the command of Colonel Semyon Kutepov, supported by an artillery regiment, were on the defense.

A heavy 14-hour battle ensued, during which 39 German tanks and armored personnel carriers were destroyed. The enemy retreated. The feat of the Soviet soldiers became known thanks to war correspondent and writer Konstantin Simonov, who came to Buinichi Field the next day with photographer Pavel Troshkin. They saw the destroyed tanks with

their own eyes, and at that time it was, using modern terms, a “gray zone” and a rather dangerous place.

By the night of July 13, the 29th Mechanized Division from Guderian’s group and the 7th Panzer Division from Hoth’s group, which were at the tip of the tank wedges, were rapidly approaching Smolensk from the south and north and were 55 km apart. The German infantry, moving mainly on foot, lagged behind.

In Smolensk itself, by mid-July 1941, there were very modest forces and weapons left – about 6.5 thousand fighters from various units, including mobilized ones. It should be noted that as early as June 1941, the construction of fortifications on the banks of the Dnieper and in other dangerous areas began. Several lines of defense were built around Smolensk and nearby cities. Ditches and ambushes were prepared in tank-hazardous directions. However, they did not have time to block the railway tracks and Guderian’s tanks later broke through along them.

During the defensive battles, four additional lines 1,500 km long were built. More were planned, but due to the enemy’s rapid advance, it was not possible to do everything. Each division had 25-30 km of the defensive strip, which also played a negative role, since the Germans successfully found the joints and hit them.

Despite the weak armament and obvious superiority in numbers of the enemy, the defenders of Smolensk were able to give a decisive first battle for the city. The ferocity of the battle is indicated by documents of the German command. Thus, in the combat journal of the 47th Corps it is stated: “...Already after dark the 71st Infantry Regiment is engaged in extremely fierce battles, suffering heavy losses, since the enemy is firing from windows, basement windows, etc., including from anti-tank guns. Hand-to-hand fights with the use of cold weapons break out”.

In six days, the Germans almost completely captured the city and only the northwestern outskirts remained for the defenders.



MIKHAIL FEDOROVICH LUKIN (1892–1970). PARTICIPANT IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE CIVIL WAR. COMMANDER OF THE 16TH ARMY, WHO LED THE DEFENSE OF SMOLENSK IN 1941. IN OCTOBER 1941, LIEUTENANT GENERAL LUKIN WAS CAPTURED NEAR VYAZMA. ON LUKIN’S PERSONAL FILE, STALIN WROTE: “A DEVOTED MAN. REINSTATE HIS RANK.”

Smolensk was abandoned on July 28, but it was not a rout. The Red Army soldiers fought literally for every inch of land. Lieutenant General Lukin, commander of the 16th Army, recalled: “On July 22 and 23, fierce battles continued in Smolensk. The enemy rained down a lot of mortar and machine gun fire on our attacking units. In addition to artillery fire, his tanks emitted flames up to 60 m long from flamethrowers, and everything that came under this stream of fire burned. German aviation bombed our units incessantly during the day. The battles for the cemetery, for every stone building were intense and often turned into hand-to-hand combat, which almost always ended in success for our troops. The onslaught was so strong that the fascists did not have time to carry away the dead and seriously wounded...”

Lukin had at his disposal units of the 16th Army that had not yet completed their dispersal and were gradually arriving from the rear, which he tried to reinforce with retreating units and simply groups of fighters breaking out of the border pockets. His units

lacked ammunition and artillery, and the mistakes of his neighbors on the front led to the collapse of the defense. As a result, Lukin’s 16th Army and the 20th Army under the command of Lieutenant General Pavel Kurochkin found themselves encircled.

After the capture of Smolensk, the Führer decided that the capture of Moscow could be entrusted to infantry units and sent tank groups that could advance on Moscow to Leningrad and Kiev. The offensive on the Soviet capital was postponed for two whole months, which played a decisive role in the defeat of the Germans near Moscow.

Considering that the forces and resources of the initial group of Nazis were already melting away (a significant number of German divisions by this time were only 50% staffed), Stalin decided to organize a counter-offensive from Gomel, with the aim of tying down the actions of Guderian’s tank group and the infantry of the 2nd Army. At the same time, measures were taken to accumulate the necessary reserves in the rear of the USSR defense.

Some changes in the nature of the fighting occurred only after July 21, when the Red Army received long-awaited reinforcements. A counteroffensive was launched in the direction of Smolensk. Fierce fighting unfolded, and although the enemy was not routed, the German offensive was stopped, and for the first time they had to go on the defensive. On August 1, the encirclement was broken through by the actions of troops under the command of Konstantin Rokossovsky and those who fought in the encirclement. At the Yartsevo line, the Germans were stopped for a long time.

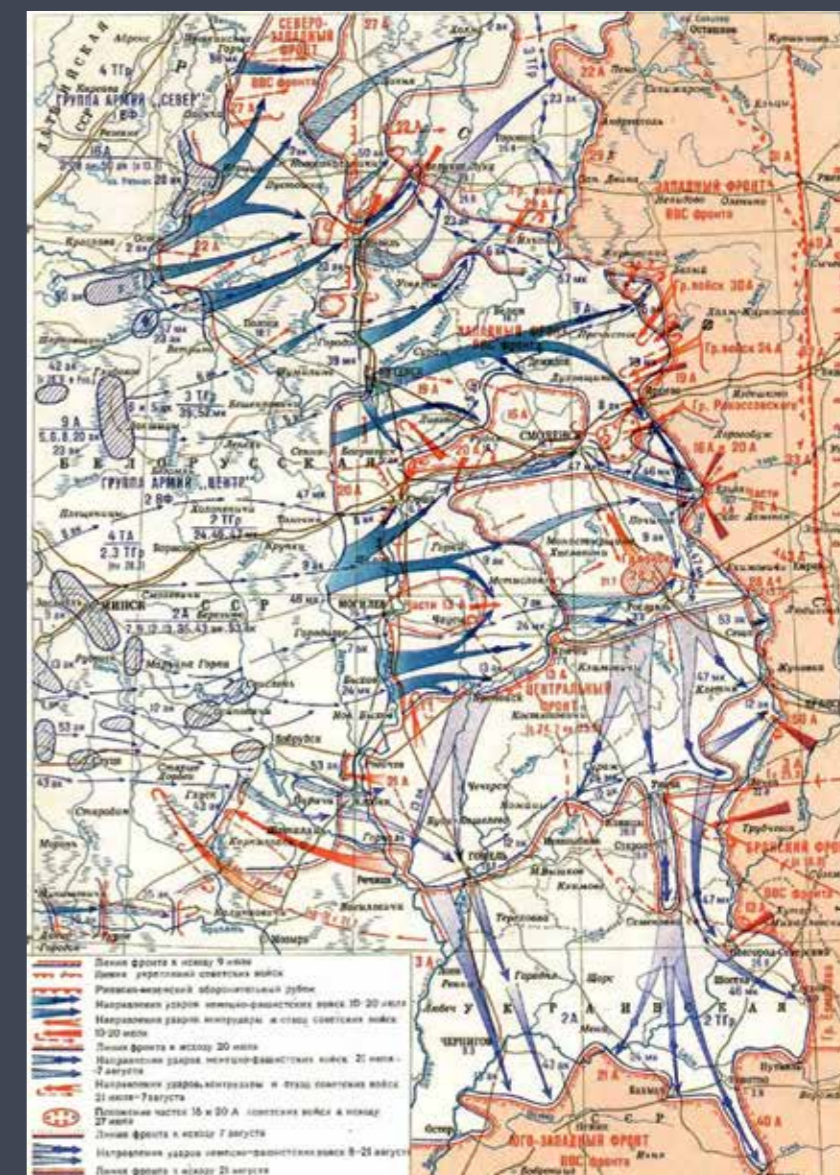
Only on August 8 were the Germans able to resume their offensive in the area of the Central and Bryansk Fronts. Soviet troops made a tactical withdrawal, which was necessary to prepare for a new offensive operation and replenish reserves. On August 17, the Red Army resumed its attacks, as a result of which the Germans suffered significant losses and were thrown back.

The 24th Army of General Konstantin Rakutin from the Reserve Front achieved success. During the offensive on the Yelnya bulge, it managed to liberate the city on September 6 and force units of the German 20th Corps to retreat. This ended the Smolensk strategic defensive operation.

Further battles continued with varying success until September 8. The Germans were losing troops, equipment and, most importantly, their numerical advantage, which had recently been their main trump card. By this time, the advance of the Wehrmacht units had been completely stopped, and Smolensk and the neighboring areas, opening the way to Moscow, were relatively safe.

The stubborn resistance of the Red Army units near Smolensk helped to gain time to form new units in the rear and prepare defenses on other lines. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the Wehrmacht to fulfill the tasks of the Barbarossa plan, to organize pockets and destroy Soviet troops in them. And if in July the Chief of the General Staff of the German army Halder wrote that the blitzkrieg had taken place and all the Russians had already been defeated, then on August 11 he changed his mind: “The general situation shows more and more clearly that the colossus of Russia... was underestimated by us. This statement can be extended to all economic and organizational issues, to means of communication and especially to the purely military capabilities of the Russians”. History shows that Halder was not the only one who was wrong, and not only then...

By the beginning of August 1941, the German command was hit with reports that all rear hospitals were full, like a cold shower: “Crowds of people watch in complete silence at the Berlin train stations the endless stream of sanitary trains delivering the wounded from the overcrowded hospitals...”. However, at that moment, Hitler did not believe in failure and could not realize his colossal mistake – to go to the East. Perhaps, it was already becoming clear to the less fanatical



BATTLE OF SMOLENSK. JULY 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 1941

Hitlerite strategists that an easy walk, like in France, would not work. Instead of a blitzkrieg and a quick distribution of Russian lands to German farmers, a terrible war of attrition began, in which the Third Reich was doomed to defeat, because the fortitude and strength of the Russian people were as irresistible as ever.

During the two-month battle, the Red Army lost more than 700 thousand people, wounded, captured, missing soldiers and commanders. The total losses of the Wehrmacht amounted to more than 100 thousand people. The Soviet Guard was born in the battles near Yelnya. The first to be honored with the title of Guards were the 100th,

107th, 120th and 127th rifle divisions of the 24th Army.

Germany’s ally Japan closely watched the fighting near Smolensk. It is believed that it was precisely the lack of major victories by the Germans there that forced Tokyo to abandon its plan to attack the USSR, Kantokuen, on September 6, 1941.

Smolensk was liberated in late summer – early autumn 1943 during an offensive operation codenamed Suvorov. The name was not chosen by chance: the field marshal himself commanded a regiment stationed in the ancient city in his youth. On May 6, 1985, Smolensk was awarded the honorary title of Hero City.

ORYOL-BRYANSK AND VYAZEMSKAYA OPERATIONS

AUTHOR DMITRY KONSTANTINOV

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER 1941, THE MAIN FORCES OF THE RED ARMY ON THE WESTERN FRONT WERE BLOCKED IN A POCKET NEAR VYAZMA. HOWEVER, NOT ALL SOLDIERS LAID DOWN THEIR ARMS AND SURRENDERED; MANY THOUSANDS OF THEM CONTINUED TO FIGHT, HOLDING BACK THE GERMAN UNITS ADVANCING ON MOSCOW FOR MORE THAN A WEEK

On September 6, 1941, the plan for Operation Typhoon was presented to the Wehrmacht commanders at Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia. It was based on the classic (especially considering the recent Minsk and Kiev pockets) technique of double encirclement of enemy groups by operational maneuvers of tank corps. Having dealt with Timoshenko's army group in this way, the Führer intended to clear the approaches to Moscow from the north and south, encircle and capture the city before winter. Field marshals and generals approved the plan, but noted that the forces necessary for a successful operation could not be assembled before the end of September.

In preparation for Operation Typhoon, the units of Army Group Center under the command of Field Marshal von Bock were thoroughly reshuffled. Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group was given the 48th Panzer Corps, the 34th and 35th Infantry Corps, and the 1st Cavalry Division. Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group received Reinhardt's and Manstein's 56th and 41st Panzer Corps, which left their positions near Leningrad in mid-September, travelled under their own power to Pskov, loaded onto railway platforms there, reached Nevel via Dno Station, and from there also



AIR SUPPORT FOR OPERATION TYPHOON WAS PROVIDED BY BARON WOLFRAM VON RICHTHOFFEN'S JU.87 DIVE BOMBERS

travelled under their own power to their starting positions in Velizh. Hoepner, who had previously commanded these units, received the 40th, 46th, and 57th Motorized Corps, as well as the 12th Army Corps, in return. In total, the Wehrmacht's strike forces numbered about 1.9 million soldiers, 1,700 tanks, 14,000 guns and mortars, and 1,390 aircraft. For the first time, three tank groups were sent to break through in one direction.

They were opposed by the troops of the Western Front under the command of Colonel General Konev, the Bryansk Front under Colonel General Eremenko

and the Reserve Front under the command of First Marshal Budyonny. These units totaled 1.25 million soldiers, 990 tanks, 7,600 guns and mortars, 667 aircraft. The fighting spirit in certain units of the Bryansk Front was such that the commander sent a report to the General Staff with a request to create barrier troops. From September 5, he was allowed to do so by the Directive of the Supreme Command Headquarters No. 001650 signed by Shaposhnikov.

Having had the difficult experience of clashing with the Wehrmacht motorized corps, Konev, like Shaposhnikov's

deputy Vasilevsky, believed that the tanks would advance along the Minsk highway for speed. The best army on the Western Front, Konstantin Rokossovsky's 16th Army, was deployed to meet them on the 340-kilometer Ostashkov-Yelnya defensive line. Here, on a 20-kilometer section of the front, the highest concentration of Soviet tanks and artillery was observed (including by Luftwaffe air reconnaissance), including naval 130-mm guns and Katyushas. At the same time, other armies of the Western Front received significantly longer defensive sections on the Ostashkov-Yelnya line, were worse equipped, or had no tanks at all, like General Khomenko's 30th Army. This unit covered 50 km of the front north of the Minsk highway with 170 guns of various calibers, which even with their uniform distribution would have given 300 m of front per three-inch gun, anti-aircraft gun or forty-five. Preparation of the defense line began on September 10 and took place under combat conditions. Every day, dozens of killed and wounded were recorded in the combat logs of the Red Army units.

"On September 20, I visited the 46th Panzer Corps", Heinz Guderian wrote in his memoirs. "General Vietinghoff reported to me on the difficulties that had occurred during the last few days in conducting military operations south of Glukhov. The cadets of the Kharkov Military School fought especially bravely on the side of the Russians under the command of their teachers".

On September 14, Richard Sorge sent information to Moscow about Japan's decision not to enter the war with the USSR until the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942. This situation saved the Red Army from a war on two fronts. Sorge's report was heeded: Headquarters was given the opportunity to remove fresh divisions from the country's eastern borders and send them by rail to the Western Front. Why the Siberians appeared there only in November will be discussed below. A happy exception was the 32nd Far Eastern Rifle Division of Colonel



SHORTWAVE MILITARY FIELD RADIO STATION OF THE RED ARMY 13-RA



IVAN STEPANOVICH KONEV (DECEMBER 16 [28], 1897, LODEYNO, VOLOGDA GOVERNORATE, – MAY 21, 1973, MOSCOW) – COMMANDER OF THE WESTERN FRONT IN 1941, MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION (1944), TWICE HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION (1944, 1945)

Polosukhin and the 316th Rifle Division of General Panfilov, which arrived at the Leningrad Front in August-September and were transferred to Moscow by the Oktyabrskaya Railway in early October.

On September 15, the pincers of Guderian and Kleist's tank groups closed near Lohvitsa, encircling half a million soldiers of the 5th, 21st, 26th and 37th armies in the Kiev pocket. On September 19, the Germans captured Kiev. By Directive No. 002373 of the Supreme Command Headquarters of September 27, the troops of the Western Front were ordered to switch

to a tough, stubborn defense, intensify ground and air reconnaissance, dig full-profile trenches, and pay special attention to protecting the directions to Rzhev, Vyazma and the junctions with neighboring fronts.

Rightly believing that the tactics of the motorized corps offensive would no longer come as a surprise to the Russians, the Hitlerite tank generals participating in Operation Typhoon started to play tricks. The Leningrad motorized corps, before setting off on a two-week march to Roslavl, left a radio operator at their previous location, who simulated the presence



Oleg Khorring/RIA Novosti

ERHARD RAUS WRITES ABOUT THE USE OF MINER DOGS BY THE RUSSIANS NEAR VYAZMA. THE KENNEL OF ANTI-TANK DOGS (ATD) OPERATED IN THE RED ARMY FROM 1935, AND ITS FIRST GERMAN TANK WAS BLOWN UP ON JULY 27, 1941 BY THE MONGREL IRMA

of units in the city of Pushkin. Hoth and Hoepner decided this time to advance not along the highway, but off-road, taking advantage of favorable weather conditions — in the directions where aerial reconnaissance had discovered the junctions of armies and the lowest concentration of troops. And Guderian, without waiting for the others, rushed to Moscow on September 30.

“On September 24, I flew to Smolensk to the headquarters of Army Group Center for a final conference on the question of conducting a new offensive”, writes Heinz. “The meeting was also attended by the Commander-in-Chief of ground forces and the Chief of the General Staff. It was decided that the army group would begin the offensive on October 2, and the 2nd Panzer Group, which would operate on the right flank, would go over to the offensive earlier, on September 30. This difference in the time of the beginning of the offensive was established at my request, since the 2nd Panzer Group did not have a single paved road in the area of its upcoming offensive. I wanted to take advantage of the remaining short period of good weather in order to at least reach a good road near Oryol before the onset of rainy weather and secure the Oryol -Bryansk road for myself, thereby ensuring a reliable supply

route. In addition, I believed that only if I launched my offensive two days earlier than the other armies of Army Group Center would I be assured of strong air support”.

On September 30, Guderian’s 2nd Panzer Group began an offensive from Shostka in three directions. On the left flank, the 47th Motorized Corps bypassed the 3rd and 13th Armies of the Bryansk Front with tanks to close the pincers, linking up with General Weisenberger’s 53rd Army Corps. The 18th Panzer Division went north, encircling the 50th Army of the Red Army while linking up with units of Colonel General Heinrici’s 43rd Army Corps. In the center, the 24th Motorized Corps moved in the direction of Oryol. On the right flank, the 48th Motorized Corps advanced on Fatezh. Guderian did not fully appreciate the “strong air support”: for some reason, the Ju. 87 Stuka dive bombers somehow failed to take off at the right moment.

On October 1, Guderian’s troops broke through the Bryansk Front and occupied Sevsk. The next day, the 4th Panzer Division took Kromy and reached the highway leading to Oryol.

Early in the morning of October 2, a massive offensive by the Hoth and Hoepner groups began. One tank group

moved from the city of Dukhovshchina and struck at the junction of the 19th and 30th armies. Another advanced from Roslavl, striking the 43rd Army of the Western Front.

“At 7:30, after a powerful 30-minute artillery and mortar preparation and aerial bombardment, the enemy went on the attack with a force of up to two infantry divisions, two tank divisions and one motorized division, striking the main blow on the front of the 162nd Rifle Division”, this entry in the combat journal of the 30th Army is dated October 2. “Units of the army fought fiercely. By 8:30, the enemy managed to break through the front ... The 897th Rifle Regiment continued to fight in encirclement until the end of the day ... Units of the 162nd Division, crushed by enemy tanks, rolled back in disarray. Individual units displayed miracles of heroism. Communication with the division was lost almost immediately”.

“We were included in the LVI Panzer Corps of General of the Panzer Troops Ferdinand Schaal, who led the German offensive”, writes Erhard Raus, then acting commander of the 6th Panzer Division. “On the first day (October 2), we advanced more than 30 kilometers, reached the upper reaches of the Dnieper, and captured two bridges in the direction of the main attack. As a result, all Russian forces located west of the river were cut off, and the 3rd Panzer Group was able to develop the offensive to the east”.

“While at the observation post, we saw how almost simultaneously with the opening of artillery and mortar fire, German tanks moved, and the infantry rose up after them”, Rokossovsky describes the events of October 2 on the bridgehead of the 16th Army. “But then all the guns intended for counter-artillery preparation responded. Anti-tank batteries fired direct fire. The Katyushas, a whole regiment, had already rained down their salvos on the enemy soldiers who had climbed out of the trenches.

Our infantry did not waver. It met the dense lines of attacking it with dignity. In some areas it came to

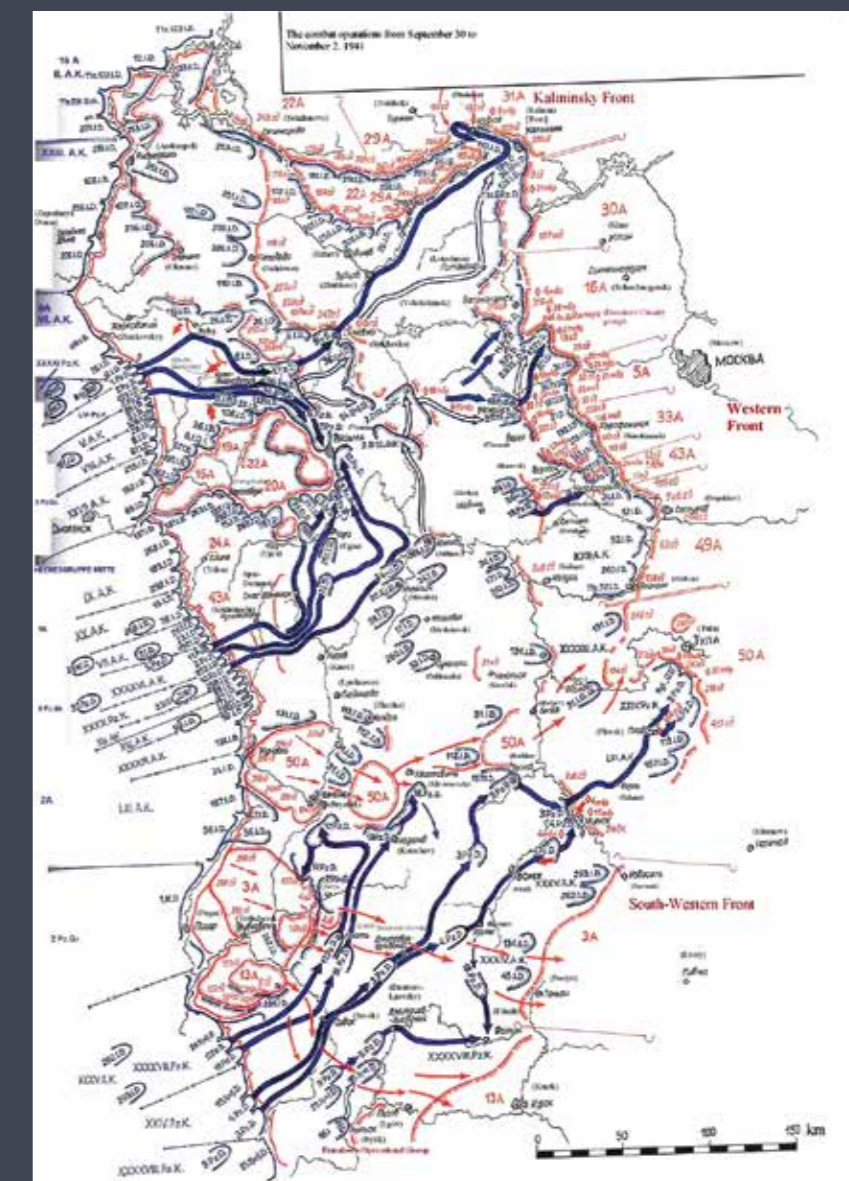
hand-to-hand combat. The battle lasted until 12 o’clock in the afternoon. The enemy, having suffered heavy losses in men and equipment, did not achieve success. The 16th Army defended its positions”.

On October 3, Guderian’s tanks captured Oryol. General Lelyushenko, who had been ordered to stop the 2nd tank group in Moscow two days earlier (and first to form a rifle corps for this purpose from scratch), did not have time to gather forces for the defense of Oryol, but made and agreed on the decision to give the Germans battle near Mtsensk.

“The capture of the city happened so unexpectedly for the enemy that when our tanks entered Oryol, trams were still running in the city”, recalls Heinz. “The evacuation of industrial enterprises, which was usually carefully prepared by the Russians, could not be carried out. From the factories and plants to the railway station itself, machines and boxes with factory equipment and raw materials were lying everywhere on the streets”.

On the same day, a counterattack is launched against the units of Hoth’s group that had broken through 50 km into the Western Front in the area of the village of Kholm-Zhirkovsky. The operational group, consisting of four tank brigades and two rifle divisions, is led by General Ivan Boldin, who had previously led the counterattack on Grodno, who on August 11 emerged from the Minsk pocket with a combined division of about 1,600 men and was set as an example to other commanders by Stalin. On the same day, a counterattack is launched against the left flank of Guderian’s group by the commander of the Bryansk Front, Eremenko.

“The Russians tried to parry the German offensive by launching a tank attack from the flank”, Raus comments on the counterattack of Boldin’s group. “About 100 tanks came out from the south to the fork in the road near Kholm. Most of them were medium tanks, against which I sent a battalion of our PzKw-35t and the 6th company (armored personnel carriers) of the 114th motorized regiment. This



BRYANSK – ORYOL AND VYAZMA OPERATIONS, SEPTEMBER

weak unit managed to contain the dangerous threat to our flank until our anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank guns deployed on the line between Kholm and the southern bank of the Dnieper.

The Russian tanks in the forest were scattered into small groups, and therefore the enemy was unable to launch a massive tank attack. The lead units were destroyed piecemeal when they approached the anti-tank defense front. As a result, the Soviet commander began to act even more timidly and scattered his vehicles across the entire width and depth of the battlefield. After that, the tanks

could only attack in small groups and separately, our anti-tank guns easily repelled all attacks. Kholm, the bridge over the Dnieper, the road connecting them (which the Russians fired at with tank guns) remained in our hands. After about 80 Russian tanks were knocked out, the main forces of the division managed to break through the last line of strong fortifications on the eastern bank of the Dnieper, which was occupied by Soviet reserves. We were able to continue the offensive to the East, no longer fearing the remaining Russian tanks. As a result, a flank attack by 100 Soviet tanks

near Kholm managed to delay the 6th Panzer Division for only a few hours”.

On October 4, the 4th Tank Brigade of Colonel Katukov arrived at the Mtsensk line in support of the 1st Rifle Corps of General Lelyushenko: 7 Chelyabinsk KVs, 20 T-34s and 10 BTs from Stalingrad. From the very first battle on October 5, Katukov's brigade used the tank ambush method, which unpleasantly surprised Guderian, who had already recorded the first manifestation of partisan activity in the rear of his panzer group the day before. The Bryansk forest rustled harshly.

“South of Mtsensk, the 4th Panzer Division was attacked by Russian tanks, and it had to endure a difficult moment”, writes Guderian. “For the first time, the superiority of the Russian T-34 tanks became apparent in a sharp form. The division suffered significant losses. The planned rapid offensive on Tula had to be postponed for now. ... The reports we received about the actions of the Russian tanks, and most importantly, about their new tactics, were especially disappointing ... The Russian infantry was attacking from the front, and the tanks were delivering massive blows to our flanks. They had already learned something”.

On October 4, Western Front Commander Konev proposed to the Supreme Command Headquarters to withdraw troops to the Mozhaisk Defense Line due to the threat of encirclement. Shaposhnikov supported him, but Stalin did not allow it. That same day, in Berlin's Sport Palace, Hitler said that the new large-scale offensive operation, which had already been underway for 48 hours, would lead to the final destruction of the enemy in the East.

On October 5, Soviet aerial reconnaissance records German tanks on the Kaluga Highway approaching Yukhnov. These are about four hundred Panzers of the 10th and 20th Panzer Divisions of the Hoepner Group. They are just over 200 km from Moscow.

On October 5, the State Defense Committee adopted a special decision to defend the capital. The Mozhaisk defense line, which ran from Volokolamsk to Kaluga, was determined to be the main line of resistance. Reserves from the Supreme Command Headquarters, a number of formations and units of the Northwestern and Southwestern Fronts, and the forces and resources of the Moscow Military District were deployed there. An order was given to raise the students of the Lenin Military-Political Academy,

cadets of six military schools in Moscow and Podolsk on combat alert with the task of taking up positions on the Mozhaisk defense line. The 32nd and 33rd armies were subordinated to the commander of the Western Front. In total, 14 rifle divisions, 16 tank brigades, more than 40 artillery regiments and other units arrived at the Western Front within a week.

“On the evening of October 5, I received a telegram from the headquarters of the Western Front”, writes Konstantin Rokossovsky in his memoirs “Soldier's Duty.” “It said: immediately hand over the area with troops to General Yershakov, and I myself, with the headquarters of the 16th Army, should arrive in Vyazma on October 6 and organize a counterattack in the direction of Yukhnov. It was reported that in the Vyazma area we would receive five rifle divisions with reinforcements.

All this was completely incomprehensible. To the north of us, in particular at General Lukin's, the situation was becoming difficult, what events were happening on the left wing of the front and to the south, was unknown... I demanded that the order be repeated in a document personally signed by the front commander. At night the pilot delivered the order signed by I. S. Konev and member of the Military Council N. A. Bulganin.

The receivers from the 20th Army had already arrived. The preparations were short. Our headquarters moved to a new destination, and we all felt that some terrible events had occurred, and at this alarming moment we had neither troops nor confidence that we would find troops where we were being sent. Attempts to contact the front headquarters by radio were unsuccessful. We found ourselves in some kind of emptiness and in a very stupid position”.

Rokossovsky is not yet aware that on the night of October 6, Headquarters decided to withdraw troops from the Western and Reserve Fronts to the Rzhev-Vyazma defensive line. Soviet troops began to retreat, but it was too late. The enemy managed to force the

Dnieper northwest of Vyazma, and to the south of it, capture Spas-Demensk, Kirov and Yukhnov. There are no divisions promised to Rokossovsky in Vyazma, but the approaching enemy tanks are already clearly visible from the city bell tower.

“We had to get out immediately”, Rokossovsky recalls. “There was no one to defend Vyazma at that time. My ZIS-101 turned out to be the most capacious, Lobachev's and Popov's GAZs were smaller. Having taken all our comrades, we left the city. We managed to escape safely. In one place we almost ran into a tank, but we managed to dive into an alley and the enemy was unable to fire at us with aimed fire”.

On October 6, the 17th Panzer Division of Guderian's group entered Bryansk, captured the bridges over the Desna and linked up with units of the 2nd Army of Colonel General von Weichs. The 3rd, 13th and part of the 50th Army of the Red Army were surrounded and the Bryansk Front effectively ceased to exist. On October 7, the forward units of the German 3rd and 4th Panzer Groups closed in the Vyazma pocket with the 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd Armies.

“The final decision I made was to break through to the northeast”, Rokossovsky writes. “There, most likely, the enemy's density is insufficient. There are more opportunities to meet our units breaking out of encirclement. We begin the march on the night of October 8.

An order has been established: all personnel are united into units, commanders have been appointed. Movement in three columns: the right one is led by General Kazakov, the central one by me, and the second echelon, in which all the vehicles are also following, by Colonel Ore. Armored cars and BT-7 tanks follow the central column, being at the commander's disposal in case of meeting the enemy. Guarding on the march and reconnaissance have been organized. Here we were rescued by the NKVD cavalry squadron,



WORKERS IN KAZAKHSTAN RAISED MONEY TO MANUFACTURE THE T-34. THIS PRACTICE WAS WIDESPREAD DURING THE WAR



MIKHAIL EFIMOVICH KATUKOV (SEPTEMBER 4 [17], 1900, BOLSHOE UVAROVO, MOSCOW GOVERNORATE – JUNE 8, 1976, MOSCOW) – BRIGADE COMMANDER IN 1941, MARSHAL OF ARMORED FORCES, TWICE HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION (1944, 1945)



Alexander Ust'mov/RIA Novosti

SOLDIERS OF THE PEOPLE'S MILITIA DIVISION IN WINTER UNIFORM, ARMED WITH SVT-40. AS YOU CAN SEE, NOT ALL THE MILITIAMEN WERE OLD MEN AND NOT ALL FOUGHT IN CIVILIAN COATS, BUDENOVKAS AND WITH THREE-LINE RIFLES

which operated at remote distances. Everyone, except for the vehicle drivers, is on foot”.

The Red Army units surrounded in the Vyazma pocket were ordered to break through to Gzhatsk under the general command of Lieutenant General Lukin. General Boldin once again broke out of the encirclement, preserving a combat-ready detachment, but this time it was 600 people.

“On the way, a fire broke out repeatedly on the left and right between our outposts and small groups of Germans”, Rokossovsky recalled. “This alarmed the people without causing any confusion.

The march was calm. Strict order was observed. In a village – I honestly don't remember the name – we settled down for a short rest. People had to eat. (By the way, in Tumanovo, where the cavalrymen joined us, food trains got stuck at the railway station; we took everything we could on our trucks, and blew up the rest”.

Fourteen divisions of the people's militia took part in the Vyazma defensive operation. The 9th PMD, reformed into the 139th RD, was commanded by 48-year-old Major General Boris Bobrov, head of the general tactics department of the Frunze Military Academy of the Red Army, a veteran of the First World

War and the Civil War, a holder of the Tsarist orders of Vladimir, Anna and Stanislav and the Soviet Order of the Red Star. His weavers, metalworkers and maitre-de-pages from the Kirovsky district of Moscow fought near Yelnya from September 30, and after being surrounded, they received orders to retreat to Volochok. On the night of October 7, Bobrov died after running into German machine gunners on the way to the army command post. His great-great-grandson, who works at the CPC, told about his fate.

On October 10, 1941, in Mozhaik, members of the State Defense Committee commission Molotov, Voroshilov and Vasilevsky, in the presence of Zhukov, who had been urgently recalled from the Leningrad Front, Konev and Rokossovsky, find out the reasons for the encirclement of the troops of the Western and Reserve Fronts in the Vyazma pocket. At 17:00, they receive a directive from the Supreme Command Headquarters signed by Stalin and Shaposhnikov. It is ordered to unite the Western and Reserve Fronts under the command of Zhukov, and to appoint Konev as his deputy. Zhukov, who had effectively saved Konev from execution, sends him to lead the Kalinin Front. Rokossovsky is put in charge of defending the Volokolamsk Highway.

On October 12, the Commander of the Far Eastern Front received Directive No. 002911 from the Supreme

Command Headquarters on sending five divisions by rail (at a rate of 12 trains per day) to Moscow: the 92nd, 78th, and 415th rifle divisions, and the 58th and 60th tank divisions. When comparing the timing of this decision with Sorge's September cipher message, it must be understood that the possibilities of rail communication at that time had to be correlated with the schedule for evacuating Soviet factories to the East.

"On November 17, we received information about the unloading of Siberians at Uzlovaya station, as well as about the unloading of other units in the Ryazan-Kolomna sector", writes Heinz Guderian. "The 112th Infantry Division encountered fresh Siberian units. Considering that the division was simultaneously attacked by Russian tanks from the Dedilovo direction, its weakened units were not able to withstand this onslaught. In assessing their actions, it is necessary to take into account that each regiment had already lost at least 400 men to frostbite by this time, automatic weapons were not working due to the cold, and our 37-mm anti-tank guns were powerless against Russian T-34 tanks. It came to panic, which covered the section of the front up to Bogoroditsk. This panic, which arose for the first time since the beginning of the Russian campaign, was a serious warning, indicating that our infantry had exhausted its fighting capacity

and was no longer capable of major efforts".

The Red Army units trapped in the Vyazma pocket fought stubbornly until October 13, thereby pinning down significant enemy forces – at least 28 German divisions. According to unofficial data, over half a million Soviet soldiers and commanders were killed, including the commander of the 24th Army, Major General Rakutin. About 600,000 people were captured, including the commander of the 19th Army, Lieutenant General Lukin, the commander of the 32nd Army, Major General Vishnevsky, and the commander of the 20th Army, Lieutenant General Ershakov.

Captured Red Army soldiers and militiamen were held in the Dulag-184 concentration camp in Vyazma. The death rate was up to 300 people per day, about 80 thousand of the dead were buried on the camp grounds.

According to unofficial information, the Wehrmacht lost about 70 thousand soldiers and officers and 500 tanks in the Vyazma operation, which is considered to be significant losses.

"Our total losses on the Eastern Front, starting from June 22, 1941, already reached 743,000 people, which was 23% of the total number of our armed forces", Guderian noted on November 30, 1941. On the same day, he received German designers and industrialists at his headquarters in Yasnaya Polyana, where he demonstrated captured T-34s to them with the aim of starting production of an analogue. This is how the German Panther tank was born and appeared in 1943.

The result of the Oryol-Bryansk and Vyazma defensive operations was the delay of the German Typhoon until mid-October 1941, when the autumn thaw began. On our side, only Katukov's tankers felt it; the rest of the army units covering Moscow on the Western Front ceased to exist. The Germans, however, got stuck in the mud formed by the autumn torrential rains, quite thoroughly. Nevertheless, a state of siege was declared in the

capital of the USSR, bridges and the metro were mined, the outermost of the three lines of defense ran along the Boulevard Ring and the bank of the Moscow River. The two-day panic in the capital was extinguished by the execution of provocateurs and Stalin's decision not to leave, unlike some people's commissars and Lenin's body sent to Tyumen.

On November 7, a parade took place on Red Square, it raised the morale of the troops, who were immediately sent to the front. The divisions, redeployed from Leningrad due to the Vyazma catastrophe, concentrated there in the autumn of 1941 for a breakthrough, by their departure extended the blockade of the population of the Northern Venice for several painful months.

According to the order of the Supreme Ground Command "On the plan for the capture of Moscow and the treatment of its population" of October 12, 1941, the storming of Moscow and Leningrad was not included in the Wehrmacht's plans:

"The Führer has once again decided that the capitulation of Moscow must not be accepted, even if it is proposed by the enemy. The moral justification for this measure is absolutely clear in the eyes of the whole world. Just as in Kyiv, our troops may be exposed to extreme dangers from time mines. Therefore, it is necessary to reckon to an even greater extent with the similar situation in Moscow and Leningrad. The fact that Leningrad is mined and will be defended to the last fighter has been announced on Russian radio. It is necessary to bear in mind the serious danger of epidemics. Therefore, not a single German soldier should enter these cities. Anyone who tries to leave the city and pass through our positions must be fired upon and driven back. Small unclosed passages, which provide an opportunity for the mass exodus of the population into inner Russia, can only be welcomed. And for other cities the rule must be that before they are captured they must be destroyed by artillery shelling and air raids, and the population put to flight. It would be completely irresponsible



SOVIET LIGHT TANK BT-7. ROKOSSOVSKY'S HEADQUARTERS USED SUCH TANKS TO ESCAPE ENCIRCLEMENT NEAR VYAZMA



KONSTANTIN KONSTANTINOVICH ROKOSSOVSKY (DECEMBER 9 [21], 1896, VELIKIYE LUKI, PSKOV GOVERNORATE – AUGUST 3, 1968, MOSCOW). PARTICIPANT IN WORLD WAR I AND THE CIVIL WAR. REPRESSED IN 1937, REHABILITATED IN 1940. ARMY COMMANDER IN 1941, TWICE HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION (1944, 1945). MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC



GERMAN MEDIUM TANK PZ.KPFW . IV. IN 1941-1942, IT WAS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON OF THE PANZERWAFFE

to risk the lives of German soldiers to save Russian cities from fires or to feed their population at Germany's expense".

The scale of collaboration expected by the Germans from the population of the captured Soviet territories is analyzed by Guderian, who by the end of 1941 proposed to Hitler to replace theorists in the General Staff with practitioners and who was ultimately removed from combat operations for the failure of Operation Typhoon together with the "cavalryman" Hoepner:

"The mood that prevailed among the Russian population could be judged, among other things, by the statements

of an old tsarist general with whom I had occasion to converse in Oryol in those days. He said: "If you had come 20 years ago, we would have greeted you with greater enthusiasm. But now it is too late. We have just begun to revive again, and you have come and thrown us back 20 years, so that we must start all over again. Now we are fighting for Russia, and in this we are all united".

READ THE FULL VERSION ON THE WEBSITE:



“TYPHOON” NEAR MOSCOW

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

AS THE ENGLISH MILITARY THEORIST AND HISTORIAN BASIL HENRY LIDDELL HART WROTE: “THIS VICTORY WAS WON, ABOVE ALL, BY THE COURAGE AND FORTITUDE OF THE RUSSIAN SOLDIER, HIS ABILITY TO ENDURE HARDSHIPS AND CONTINUOUS FIGHTING UNDER CONDITIONS THAT WOULD HAVE FINISHED OFF ANY WESTERN ARMY”. HE CAME TO THIS CONCLUSION AFTER STUDYING ALL THE EVENTS OF THE BATTLE OF MOSCOW

The Nazis hoped to take Moscow in three, maximum four months of war. There was no reason to doubt: in 1940, the Germans needed less than a month of military campaign to defeat the Belgian, Dutch, British expeditionary and the most combat-ready French troops. Therefore, when sending his soldiers to the east, Hitler promised them that in October they would already start coming home.

These plans were disrupted by stubborn defensive battles near Smolensk, on the approaches to Leningrad and in Ukraine. Only in the second half of September was the Wehrmacht command able to begin preparations for the operation to capture Moscow, codenamed Typhoon.

The German Army Group Center was reinforced with troops transferred from Leningrad and Ukraine. It now numbered about 75 divisions, comprising up to 1.8 million men, 1.7 thousand tanks, over 14 thousand guns and mortars, and about 1,390 airplanes. They were opposed by a total of about 1.2 million men, a thousand tanks, 7.6 thousand guns and mortars,



GERMAN MEDIUM TANK PZ.KPFW. III, WHICH FORMED THE BASIS OF THE PANZERWAFFE IN 1941-1943

and 677 airplanes. These forces numbered three fronts: the Western, Reserve, and Bryansk.

In addition to quantity, the Soviet troops were inferior to the Wehrmacht in quality: they were replenished mainly with new recruits who barely had time to complete the training course, the equipment also left much to be desired – the evacuated industry was not yet able to provide the troops with everything they needed. To this should be added

the lack of understanding by the Soviet command of what forces Germany would be able to deploy for Operation Typhoon, as well as what directions the enemy's main attacks would be.

On September 30, the iron fist of Guderian's tank group fell upon the left flank of the Bryansk Front, which marked the beginning of the Battle of Moscow. The battles unfolded over a vast area – 700 km along the front and more than 400 km in depth.

FROM GORKY STREET

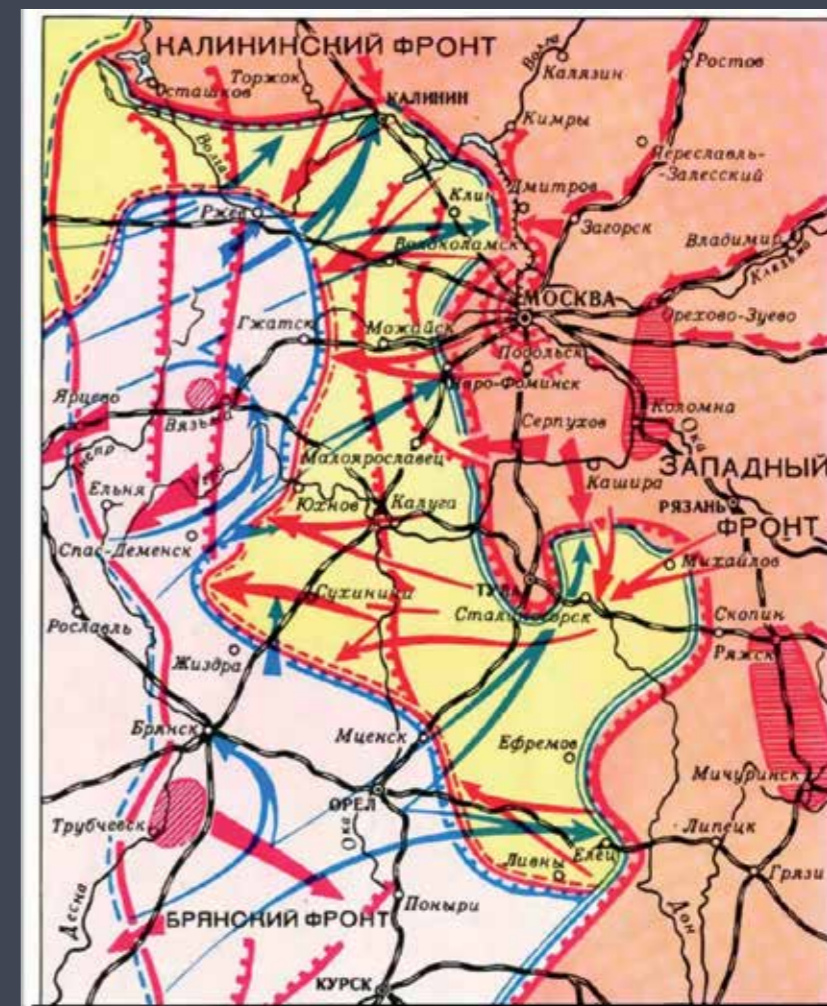
“The concentration of such forces and resources in the western direction required a large amount of fuel. In seven months of 1941, our troops in this direction used up 34% of automobile fuel and 22% of tank fuel from the total fuel consumption on all fronts”, wrote Colonel General V.V. Nikitin in his book “30 Years at the Head of the Fuel Service”.

Automobile, tank, and tractor fuel for the fronts was supplied by oil refineries and oil depots in Saratov, Syzran, Ufa, and Orsk. Aviation fuel came from the Caucasus and from the central warehouses of the People's Commissariat of Defense.

Initially, major difficulties arose with the operation of the Moscow oil refinery – due to a shortage of raw materials, it was on the verge of stopping. The problems were also added by the fact that German aviation managed to destroy part of the reserves of the Moscow and Moscow region bases.

An important role in delivering fuel to the troops was played by the automobile fuel battalions of the Center, which were created by order of Lieutenant General A.V. Khrulev, Chief of the Red Army Logistics, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense. With their help, fuel and lubricants were promptly delivered to the troops in the event of a sharp change or complication of the situation. Columns, each of 50-60 fuel tankers, were formed on Gorky Street between Pushkin and Mayakovsky Squares. On the way to the front, they often had to travel along country roads, in off-road conditions, and then in snowdrifts, since all the main highways were clogged with Soviet military equipment.

On October 10, a decision was made to evacuate industrial enterprises from Moscow. The delivery of factory equipment to railway loading stations also required large volumes of fuel. To solve these problems, on the night of October 16-17, Deputy Chairman of the Council of



BATTLE OF MOSCOW, AUTUMN 1941 – SPRING 1942

People's Commissars of the USSR A.N. Kosygin held a meeting in the Kremlin with representatives of the Moscow City Council, the People's Commissariat of the Oil Industry, and the State Committee for Material Resources. The plan developed by specialists led to the mobilization of all available resources. Although slowly, the volumes of fuel began to accumulate. Ten-day reserves of fuel and lubricants were created in Moscow and the region.

GENERAL FROST

Meanwhile, events at the front were developing alarmingly. On

October 4, Oryol fell, the next day the Germans completed the encirclement of Soviet troops near Bryansk, and two days later they closed the Vyazemsky pocket. This meant that almost half of the most combat-ready and well-equipped defenders of Moscow were lost. On October 13, German tanks broke into the Moscow region. Fierce battles unfolded on the Mozhaisk line. At the end of October, battles were taking place at a distance of 80-100 km from the Soviet capital. Only at the beginning of November, having reached the outskirts of Tula, Serpukhov, having occupied

Naro-Fominsk, Volokolamsk, Kalinin, did the German units temporarily pause.

And on November 15, having received 10 fresh divisions and regrouped their troops, the Nazis launched a second offensive on Moscow. They aimed 51 divisions at the Soviet capital, including 13 tank and four motorized divisions. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Headquarters also strengthened the ranks of the defenders: the Western Front was replenished with a hundred thousand soldiers, three hundred tanks, two thousand guns.

The slogan of those days was "Not one step back!". It is worth emphasizing that the Soviet leadership extended this call for fortitude to itself. When P.S. Stepanov, a member of the Military Council of the Western Front, suggested to I.V. Stalin that the Air Force headquarters be moved to the eastern outskirts of Moscow, Stalin advised the pilots to find themselves shovels. When asked «Why?» he launched into an angry tirade: "Dig yourselves mass graves! There will be no retreat! I am staying in Moscow!"

Despite stubborn resistance and mass heroism, on November 22 the Soviet troops had to abandon Klin, two days later — Istra, and on



VASILY VASILYEVICH NIKITIN (NOVEMBER 12, 1914, PETROGRAD — AUGUST 3, 1994, MOSCOW). FROM AUGUST 1941 — HEAD OF THE 1ST DIVISION OF THE 2ND DEPARTMENT OF THE RED ARMY FUEL SERVICE, FROM 1942 — HEAD OF THE 4TH DIVISION (PROVISION OF FUEL TO GROUND TROOPS). IN THIS POSITION, HE SOLVED THE PROBLEMS OF PROVIDING FUEL TO TROOPS DURING THE PREPARATION AND CONDUCT OF ALMOST ALL MAJOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS.

November 28 the enemy's vanguards reached the Moscow-Volga Canal in the Yakhroma area, crossed the Nara River, and approached Kashira from the south.

In the last days of autumn, German soldiers could already observe Moscow through binoculars. On November 30, Hitler's motorcyclists broke through to Khimki, from where they were only 8 km away from the then borders of Moscow. According to one version, the militia entered the battle with them.

And yet the enemy was already exhausted. The losses were becoming more and more severe — by the beginning of December they had reached 750 thousand people, with up to two thirds of the personnel leaving the forward units. After a conversation with the commander of the 12th Corps, the commander of Army Group Center von Bock wrote in his diary: "Losses, especially in the officer corps, are making themselves felt. Many lieutenants command battalions, one first lieutenant leads a regiment. The strength of some regiments has been reduced to 250 people. The personnel are suffering from the cold and inadequate accommodation conditions".

An interesting fact: in those months, the memoirs of Napoleon's general Armand Augustin de Caulaincourt became the reference book for German officers. Looking into the book, they read: "On December 2nd, the frost was so severe that it was unbearable to remain in the bivouacs. At every step one could meet frostbitten people who were falling from weakness. The road was covered with the corpses of these poor fellows". The Germans, of course, drew parallels with the French invasion and tried with all their might to avoid a repeat of that catastrophe.

Meanwhile, the battle formations of the Nazis advancing on Moscow stretched for a thousand kilometers, in particular, the offensive zone of the 3rd and 4th tank groups was 250 km, the 2nd tank — 300 km. The enemy strike groups advanced forward had vulnerable flanks, which created the conditions for

a successful counteroffensive by Soviet troops.

The German offensive near Moscow ended on December 5 with a last desperate attempt to break through to the outskirts of Moscow through Kryukovo, Krasnaya Polyana and Bely Rast. But here too the enemy was stopped in a fierce battle.

THE END OF THE BLITZKRIEG

For the counteroffensive, which began on December 5, the headquarters transferred three armies from its reserves to the Western Front. This allowed a total of 88 Soviet divisions to be involved in the operation. The fuel suppliers did not fail either. They provided fuel supplies in advance from state reserve warehouses, local oil depots of Glavneftesbyt and People's Commissariat of Defense warehouses located on the territory of the Western Front. Aviation fuel was transported from the Caucasus via the Caspian Sea and the Volga. By the beginning of December, significant fuel reserves had been created at the front locations. Thus, on the Western Front, the amount of reserves ensured 35–40 days of operation for ground vehicles and 10–12 days for aviation. This turned out to be extremely important, since during the offensive all standards were exceeded and were not covered by supplies. 25 thousand tons were delivered to the troops by front-line aviation, and railway routes were used as much as possible.

The first stage of the Red Army's counteroffensive near Moscow began on December 5–6, 1941, without any operational pause, and continued until early January 1942.

The enemy was struck in the most effective way: by attacking the flank and rear of tank units aimed at Moscow and Tula. Marshal M.E. Katukov recalled: "The call 'Not one step back!' was replaced by the battle cry 'Forward! Chase the enemy without respite, not allowing him to gain a foothold in the settlements!'"



Anatoly Garamin/RIA Novosti

TANKS AND INFANTRY COLUMNS PASS ALONG THE SADOVOYE PASS ALONG THE SADOVOYE KOLTSO, HEADING TO THE FRONT. NOVEMBER 1941



Grigory Weil/TASS

GEORGY KONSTANTINOVICH ZHUKOV (NOVEMBER 19 (DECEMBER 1), 1896, STRELKOVKA, KALUGA GOVERNORATE — JUNE 18, 1974, MOSCOW). IN THE AUTUMN OF 1941 HE COMMANDED THE WESTERN FRONT. MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION (1943), FOUR TIMES HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION



THE PARADE ON MOSCOW'S RED SQUARE ON NOVEMBER 7, 1941. PHOTO BY A. USTINOVA, GLAVARCHIV OF MOSCOW

The German Army Group Center was pushed back from the Soviet capital by 100–250 km. The Moscow and Tula regions, the large cities of Kalinin and Kaluga, and a number of territories in other regions were liberated. The war continued, and there were still years of enormous difficulties before victory, but, according to many historians, the outcome of the confrontation was strategically predetermined right at the walls of the capital. That is why Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov said: "When I am asked what I remember most from the past war, I always answer: the

battle of Moscow. It buried the Barbarossa plan".

As a result of the battle for the capital of the USSR, the Wehrmacht lost more than 500 thousand soldiers and officers. For comparison: the Germans lost 44 thousand people in the Polish campaign, 154 thousand in France. After the defeat near Moscow, Hitler removed 185 generals from their senior command positions. The Germans managed to preserve the integrity of the front only thanks to the prompt actions of their transport aviation and the rapid transfer of fresh divisions from Western Europe.

ONE FOR ALL

AUTHOR DMITRY KONSTANTINOV

DURING THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR, THE KAZAKH LAND NURSED WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN HOSPITALS, WELCOMED THE EVACUATED POPULATION, GATHERED FRESH FORCES FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT BATTLES, SUPPLIED ARMIES AND FRONTS WITH FUEL. WE WILL NEVER FORGET THE FEAT OF KAZAKH SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS WHO WENT TO THEIR DEATHS THOUSANDS OF KILOMETERS FROM THEIR NATIVE PLACES BECAUSE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE AND UNTHINKABLE TO DO OTHERWISE

The legendary division of General Panfilov was formed in Alma-Ata and Frunze, in June 1941, Senior Lieutenant Bauyrzhan Momyshuly was appointed as a battalion commander of the 1073rd Talgar Rifle Regiment. Bauyrzhan was born on December 24, 1910 in the village of Kolbastau in the Zhambyl region of Kazakhstan. By the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, he had experience commanding an anti-tank battery in Blucher's Far Eastern Army, battles with the Japanese at Lake Khasan.

On October 5, 1941, the 316th Rifle Division was put on alert and urgently transferred from Leningrad to the Volokolamsk direction, where its first echelons began to arrive on October 10. As part of the 16th Army of the Western Front, the 316th Rifle Division steadfastly held the defense, going down in history under the name of Panfilov's men. Senior Lieutenant Bauyrzhan Momyshuly participated in 27 battles during the defense of Moscow. For the unprecedented and massive heroism of its personnel, by order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR dated November 18, 1941, the division was awarded the Guards title and received the name "8th Guards Rifle Division", and the 1073rd Rifle Regiment, in which Bauyrzhan Momyshuly fought, became the 19th Guards Rifle Regiment.



BAUYRZHAN MOMYSHULY (1910–1982), PANFILOV'S GUARDSMAN, HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION

During the Wehrmacht's second general offensive on Moscow from November 16 to 18, 1941, Senior Lieutenant Bauyrzhan Momyshuly's battalion, separated from the division, fought heroically on the Volokolamsk Highway, near the village of Matrenino. The battalion commander's skillful leadership allowed the Germans to be held at

this line for three days. After that, Senior Lieutenant Momyshuly led the battalion out of encirclement as a combat-ready unit.

The heroic combat path of the battalion under the command of Bauyrzhan Momyshuly is described in the fictional and historical book by Alexander Bek "Volokolamskoye Shosse". At the end of November, the battalion commander Momyshuly was appointed commander of the regiment – personally by the commander of the 16th Army Rokossovsky.

Commanding the 19th Guards Rifle Regiment, from November 26 to 30, 1941, in the area of the village of Sokolovo in the Moscow oblast, Bauyrzhan Momyshuly and his regiment fought stubbornly for four days, successfully repelling enemy attacks. During the battles for the station and the village of Kryukovo, the 19th Guards Rifle Regiment under his command was in the center of the battle formation of the 8th Guards Division and fought stubbornly from November 30 to December 7, 1941. In the battle on December 5, 1941, Bauyrzhan Momyshuly was wounded, but did not leave the battlefield. During the battle in the village of Dubrovka in the Moscow Region, he was wounded again. He continued to command the regiment until December 7.

The monument to Soviet soldiers and officers who died in the Novosokolnichesky District of the Pskov Region in the winter of 1944 during the Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive Operation is located on the southern outskirts of the village of Monakovo. It is about 20 km from Velikiye Luki.

A white obelisk was erected on the site of a mass grave here in 1947, and very soon storks built a nest on its top. During restoration in 1968, the birds were "asked to be cleared" for ideological reasons, but in 2015 the nest was restored as a symbol of peacetime unity, the continuation of life and eternal memory of the heroes. At the same time, the memorial was reconstructed as part of the international patriotic project "Batyrlar Zholymen" ("Road of Glory"), jointly implemented by the search team of the Eurasian Group (ERG) and the administration of the Pskov Region, adding an arch and a brick wall along the perimeter with memorial plaques of the heroes.

Here lie more than 2,500 Soviet soldiers and officers who participated in the breakthrough of the German defensive line "Panther" in January 1944, 4 km deep. Among the fallen are about 730 natives of Kazakhstan. Among them is the sniper of the Panfilov Division, holder of the Order of the Red Banner, Guards Senior Sergeant Tuleugali Abdybekov. The memorial in Monakovo also perpetuates the memory of the Hero of the Soviet Union, sniper of the separate 54th brigade Aliya Moldagulova. How exactly she is buried here is still being investigated, but it does not cancel the memory of the feat of the girl sniper.

Aliya Moldagulova was born on October 25, 1925 in the village of Bulak (Aktobe region, Republic of Kazakhstan), and was orphaned early. In 1935 she moved to Moscow, then to Leningrad. In 1942 she was evacuated from the blockaded city to the Yaroslavl oblast. In December 1942, after a request to volunteer for the front, she was enrolled in



MONUMENT TO SOVIET SOLDIERS AND COMMANDERS IN MONAKOVO, PSKOV OBLAST



ALIYA MOLDAGULOVA (1925–1944), SNIPER, HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION

a sniper school in Veshnyaki near Moscow. In October 1943, upon reaching the age of 18, she took part in combat operations as part of the 54th separate rifle brigade. According to the recollections of her fellow soldiers and command, she not only accurately destroyed the enemy with fire (78 soldiers and officers), but also carried the wounded from the field, and on January 14, 1944, in a battle near the Nasva station, she personally led the fighters into the attack. Wounded in the arm by a mine fragment, she took part in hand-to-hand combat in a German trench, where she was

secondarily and mortally wounded by a German officer. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to Aliya Moldagulova posthumously on June 4, 1944, along with the Order of Lenin.

A mass grave with a stork nest on top of an obelisk – how many more of these are there in the country! Life goes on, children grow up, fields turn green. Cars fly past on the highway (leading from Moscow to the Pushkinskiye Gory), but we get out of them to pay tribute to the heroes. Without them there would be no Victory, no peace, no life for us.

HEROES FROM ATYRAU

AUTHOR ASKAR SHMANOV

PROBABLY, IN KAZAKHSTAN, AS IN ALL THE REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER USSR, THERE IS NOT A SINGLE FAMILY THAT WAS NOT AFFECTED BY THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR. ATYRAU (FORMERLY GURYEV) REGION, WHERE THE CPC OIL PIPELINE BEGINS, WAS NO EXCEPTION. THERE WERE NO BATTLES HERE, BUT THE RESIDENTS OF THE REGION MADE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LONG-AWAITED VICTORY

The geographical location of the region obliged it to become one of the strategically important rear regions. On July 7, 1941, an evacuation point was created in Guryev, through which 35,320 people from different parts of the Soviet Union passed up to November 20, 1941. For example, in the fall of 1941, children from an orphanage and a school for the deaf were evacuated from Voronezh to the Atyrau region. Workers from a mechanical plant arrived in Guryev from the city of Nizhyn in the Chernigov region. The Petrovsky Machine-Tool Plant, which later became the Guryev Machine-Building Plant (today Atyrauneftemash), was evacuated here in full force from Donbass. Each of these enterprises continuously produced products that were in demand at the front. In addition to production facilities, five hospitals operated in the city, where over 9 thousand soldiers and commanders of the Red Army were treated.

In 1942, the infantry school for platoon and company commanders was transferred to Guryev, which trained 2.5 thousand junior officers in two classes. In the spring of 1942, the Guryev seaport opened on Bolshoy Peshnoy Island, which became a transshipment point for sending oil products and other military cargo.

The front was approaching Guryev, and in the summer of 1942, the 471st rifle artillery division arrived in the city to protect the oil storage facilities.

This was a timely measure: with the Nazis reaching the Volga, Guryev found itself within range of enemy aircraft. On September 10, 1942, a Junkers-88 appeared over the city, dropping propaganda leaflets in the area of the fish canning plant and the workers' settlement of Zhumysker. By the end of September, enemy planes appeared five more times, but as soon as our fighters took off, they quickly disappeared. On October 4, 1942, another Junkers tried to approach the oil storage facilities in the settlement of Shirina, but the attack was repelled. There were no more attempts to bomb the city.

In May 1944, in the Zhylyoisky region, the Nazis dropped a landing force of 14 saboteurs, part of the so-called Turkestan Legion. Their main task was to destroy the oil fields of the Guryev region. But thanks to the vigilance of local residents, one part of the landing force was eliminated and the other was taken prisoner.

With the outbreak of war, thousands of residents of the Atyrau region expressed a desire to voluntarily go to the front. In total, more than 42 thousand citizens were drafted, of which more than 13 thousand fighters did not return back.

THEIR FEAT IS REMEMBERED BY THEIR DESCENDANTS
The chronicle of the war years contains many examples of exemplary fulfillment

of military duty, heroism, and selfless service to the Motherland by our fellow countrymen. Nine of them were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union: Kaigali Smagulov, Boran Nysanbaev, Ivan Makhorin, Georgy Kantsev, Filipp Mazurov, Aleksandr Afanasyev, Ivan Berezin, Mukat Musayev, Musa Baimukhanov. Four more returned from the front as full cavaliers of the Order of Glory: Gizat Alipov, Shukir Yerikinov, Evgeny Polynin, Gavriil Shamin.

Hero of the Soviet Union Kaigali Smagulov was raised in the Ural orphanage and worked at the Guryev fish canning plant. At the age of 20, he was drafted into the Red Army. From the first days of the war, Kaigali took part in battles, fought near Rostov-on-Don, near Ordzhonikidze. In September 1943, as part of a detachment of paratroopers, Kaigali Smagulov drove the Nazis out of Novorossiysk for four days. For the bravery and courage shown in the battles on Malaya Zemlya, on November 17, 1943, he was awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. On May 6, 2010, a monument to the hero was erected on Kaigali Smagulov Boulevard in Atyrau.

Full Cavalier of the Order of Glory Evgeny Mikhailovich Polynin was drafted by the Gurevsky military commissariat in July 1941. He took part in bloody battles in the Rzhev-Vyazma direction, and received his first award, the Order of the Red Star,

in battles in the eastern part of the Smolensk region.

"Comrade Polynin demonstrated courage and heroism during the battle with the German invaders on 11.01.1943 in the Skugorevo area", is reported in the award sheet. "He replaced a wounded gunner, suppressed two machine-gun emplacements, a mortar battery with his gun fire, and destroyed 40 Nazis".

In August 1943, for his participation in breaking through enemy defenses near the village of Shcheki in the Smolensk region, the hero received his second award, the Medal for Courage. He was later awarded the Order of Glory of the 1st and 2nd degree and the Order of the Red Star. But the war did not end for him on Victory Day. From August 9 to September 3, 1945, Evgeny Polynin took part in battles with the Kwantung Army. He returned home in October 1945.

Khiuaz Dospanova is a navigator-sniper with over 300 sorties to her credit. Fragile and small Katya – that's what her combat comrades called her – was a brave pilot, eager to fight despite numerous wounds and injuries. A year before the war, she graduated from school with a gold medal, and thanks to classes at the flying club, she received a reserve pilot's certificate along with her certificate. Then there was Moscow, where she was denied admission to the Zhukovsky Air Force Academy: only men were accepted there. Khiuaz entered the medical institute, and in the summer of 1941, she completed her first year.

Having learned about the formation of a women's aviation regiment under the command of Marina Raskova, Khiuaz applied and soon, together with other girls, went to the college near Saratov. In May 1942, the only women's aviation regiment of light bombers in the history of the USSR came under the command of Senior Lieutenant Evdokia Bershanskaya. The ingenious and elusive pilots were called Nachthexen (Night Witches) by their enemies.

The breaks between sorties were 5–8 minutes, sometimes crews made 6–8 sorties per night in summer, and



MONUMENT TO PILOT KHIUAZ DOSPANOVA AT ATYRAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT NAMED AFTER HER



MONUMENT TO HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION KAIGALI ISMAGULOV IN ATYRAU

up to a dozen on long winter nights. The total flight time of the regiment during the war years amounted to 28,676 hours, that is 1,191 full days.

For her bravery and courage, Khiuaz Dospanova was awarded the Order of the Red Star, the Order of the Patriotic War of the 2nd degree, the Order of the Red Banner and the medals For the Defense of the Caucasus, For the Liberation of Warsaw, For the Victory over Germany. In 2004, by decree of the President of Kazakhstan, Khiuaz Dospanova received the highest award of the republic – the gold star "Halyk Kaharmany". In 2012, the name of Khiuaz Dospanova was given to the Embraer

190 airliner of Air Astana, and on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the Victory, in March 2020, Atyrau International Airport was named after her.

Heroes from Atyrau – most went to the front young, the war crossed out all their plans. Our region is proud of our glorious countrymen, their contribution to the Victory. Their feats live in the memory of generations, becoming a symbol of courage and ardent love for the Motherland.

The memory of these heroes is preserved by obelisks, monuments and the Eternal Flame of the city Victory Park. This place should be visited by everyone who comes to Atyrau. ●

UNCONQUERED LENINGRAD

AUTHORS PAVEL KRETOV, ILYA ARKHIPOV

THE BATTLE OF LENINGRAD BEGAN THREE WEEKS INTO THE WAR, ON JULY 10, 1941, WHEN THE 56TH MOTORIZED CORPS OF THE WEHRMACHT APPROACHED THE THEN BORDERS OF THE LENINGRAD OBLAST. ON SEPTEMBER 8, THE TWO-MILLION CITY WAS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY THE ENEMY. WHAT PRECEDED THIS, HOW LENINGRADERS FOUGHT, SURVIVED, AND WON – WE WILL TRY TO CONNECT THE FRAGMENTS OF THE TRAGEDY WITH A COMMON LOGIC, IN WHICH ABOUT A MILLION CIVILIANS OF THE CITY DIED, INCLUDING MORE THAN 600 THOUSAND FROM HUNGER

General Erich von Manstein, commander of the 56th Motorized Corps, recalled in his book “Lost Victories” that the most important task in the northern direction was to capture bridges across a large water obstacle, the Western Dvina. The Germans counted on psychology: no matter what happened at the front, the Russians would definitely hold the bridges intact for four days. Relying on surprise, speed, numerical superiority, as well as on the help of the Brandenburg sabotage units sent into the Soviet rear in advance, the German advance units covered several hundred kilometers in the first few days. On the 12th day of the war, the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, Franz Halder, wrote in his diary: “We can say that the task of defeating the main forces of the Russian ground army in front of the Western Dvina and the Dnieper has been accomplished. ...Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the campaign against Russia has been won within 14 days”.

The next few days showed that the data on the “victory” over the USSR was somewhat exaggerated. As they advanced eastward, the situation for



DURING THE BLOCKADE OF LENINGRAD, 70 KV TANKS WERE ASSEMBLED AND SENT INTO BATTLE

the Nazis became significantly more complicated. Unlike the Baltic republics, German saboteurs did not feel free in Russia. Soviet aviation operated from undamaged airfields, did not suffer the same damage as those based near the western borders, and kept enemy columns and crossings in constant tension. Unpleasant surprises for Manstein’s motorized corps included encounters with Soviet KV and T-34 tanks.

“We send them the first shell... a hit in the turret, a second shot and

another hit. The lead tank, which I hit, calmly continued its movement... Where is the notorious superiority of our tanks over the Russians?” recalled Gustav Schrodeck, a non-commissioned officer of the 11th Panzer Division.

THE COLLAPSE OF BARBAROSSA
The Luga line became a serious obstacle on the way to Leningrad. The echeloned 300-kilometer defensive system, deployed along the Luga River from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ilmen, began to be built from the first days

of the war. The line was held for a month and a half, including by divisions of the people’s militia formed from residents of Leningrad. And not just held – they launched counterattacks, during which the Wehrmacht suffered significant losses. Thus, near Soltsy – a unique event for 1941 – the 8th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht found itself surrounded. It was saved from defeat by the SS Panzer Division “Dead Head”, hastily moved from the reserve, and by aerial reconnaissance, after which the Germans were able to suppress the Soviet artillery batteries.

After the battles near Soltsy, the 8th Tank Division was withdrawn to the rear for reformation: its losses amounted to more than 50 tanks. The Germans were also upset by secret documents that fell into the hands of the Russians. Some of them were widely announced in the report of the Soviet Information Bureau on July 15: “The German secret documents captured by the Red Army units prove with exhaustive completeness that German fascism is secretly preparing a new monstrous atrocity – the widespread use of poisonous substances”. And the Germans immediately ordered the destruction of copies of the order in all units on the merciless treatment of civilians in the occupied territory, the execution of commissars and Jews. Only the Red Army military learned about other documents captured in the 8th Division. German instructions on how to effectively operate a tank unit served as an “exchange of experience” with Soviet tank crews.

Stuck in the Luga frontier, the Germans had to modify the Barbarossa plan. According to its original version, having quickly broken the resistance in Leningrad, the northern group of German troops was supposed to strengthen the ranks of the group storming Moscow. However, not seeing the desired result near the city on the Neva, Hitler, on the contrary, was forced to transfer aviation and tanks from the central direction. Soviet intelligence was too late to detect the appearance of the 39th Motorized Corps near Leningrad.



SIEGE OF LENINGRAD, 1941-1944

BET ON ARTILLERY

The order to withdraw from the Luga line was received by its defenders with a delay, but their stubborn and organized resistance in the pocket until mid-September 1941 prevented Leningrad from being cut off from Lake Ladoga and the blockade ring from being completely closed.

Another heroic page of the first months of the war was the withdrawal of warships from the Tallinn base to Kronstadt. These ships came in handy when Georgy Zhukov, who arrived in Leningrad on September 13 to lead the defense of the city, placed his main emphasis on artillery – field,

coastal and naval. With their arrival, the number of main caliber guns reached 130. Two battleships, cruisers and destroyers took up positions at the mouth of the Neva and in the harbors of the port.

On September 16, the troops of Army Group North between Strelna and Uritsk broke through to the Gulf of Finland, cutting off units of the 8th Army from the main forces of the Leningrad group. The Oranienbaum bridgehead was formed. The artillery of Fort Krasnaya Gorka (built in 1909) made it possible to successfully hold it. The 12-inch guns (Tsarism legacy) fired at a range of 25 km, the

explosions raised tons of earth and overturned tanks.

By the second half of September, the time allotted by Hitler's headquarters for active operations near Leningrad had expired. The Germans transferred tanks and aircraft to the Moscow direction, where they were needed for Operation Typhoon. The motorized corps did not reach the city border by only 7 km. The fate of Leningrad and its 2.7 million inhabitants, according to the enemy, was to be decided by hunger and cold.

"The Führer wants to raze Moscow and Leningrad to the ground in order to completely get rid of the population of these cities, which otherwise we will be forced to feed during the winter", Halder's diary records. "This will be a national disaster that will deprive not only Bolshevism, but also the Muscovites of their centers".

It should be noted that the decision to evacuate residents was made by the Leningrad authorities on June 29. But people were reluctant to leave: the prevailing opinion was that the war would soon end. It was too late to evacuate at the end of August.

The blockaded city consumed a thousand tons of food per day, while planes managed to deliver five times less. The first reduction in the bread ration took place on September 2. In November, it would drop to 250 g per adult and 125 g per child. The mortality curve began to rise rapidly. If 3.7 thousand people were buried in Leningrad in September 1941, then in November, twice as many died in just one day.

HUNGER AND DUTY

In the most difficult conditions, Leningraders demonstrated genuine heroism. Thus, on February 3, 1942, a baker from the Levashovsky bread factory on the Petrograd side, Daniil Kutinen, died of exhaustion. 28 workers from the Institute of Plant Growing on Isaakievskaya Square, who had access to a selection fund with potato seeds, rice and grain, also died.

Bread rations were issued on ration cards, the loss of which meant death.

The quantity and quality of bread had fallen by November, cake, pine needles, and cellulose were added to flour. Recipes were published in newspapers, belts, leather from sofas, glue, and paper were boiled. Earth was collected from the burnt-out Badayevsky warehouses, cats and dogs disappeared from the streets. Yes, even so.

The first people with exhaustion in hospitals began to appear in November 1941. By the end of November, 11 thousand people had died in the city, and later the total number of deaths per day reached 7,000, in December 1941, 53 thousand people died from hunger and cold.

Along with ordinary citizens, the hardships of the blockade were steadfastly endured by people known throughout the country. Thus, the actress who played the leading role in the film "Cinderella" Yanina Zhejmo, in her spare time from concerts for the soldiers, carried out duty in the fighter battalion, extinguished incendiary bombs.

One of the most recognizable Soviet TV presenters, Valentina Leontyeva, met the blockade as a 17-year-old graduate. Together with her sister, she signed up as a first aid worker, helping the wounded and sick. But Leontyeva was unable to save her own father. The man injured his arm while dismantling furniture for firewood, and died of blood poisoning.

The famous artist, illustrator and decorator Ivan Bilbin, who returned



BLOCKADE BREAD, FOOD RATION CARDS, SCALES MEASURING LIFE – PROBABLY THE MOST BRUTAL STILL LIFE IN HISTORY

from emigration in 1936, was asked to be evacuated from besieged Leningrad. He refused: "You don't run from a besieged fortress, you defend it", and died of exhaustion in the hospital of the Academy of Arts.

Tanya Savicheva's diary has gained wide popularity. Almost the entire family of the Soviet schoolgirl died during the blockade from December 1941 to May 1942. Tanya's diary has nine filled pages, six of which contain the death dates of her close relatives – her mother, grandmother, sister, brother and two uncles.

Tanya made her first entry in the phone book on December 28, 1941, under the letter "Zh", dedicating it to her deceased sister Zhenya. When she was buried, her mother said a phrase that became prophetic for almost the entire family: "We bury Zhenya, but who and how will bury us?"

Tanya made the second entry under the letter "G": her grandmother died. Tanya filled nine pages in total. The last ones were "The Savichevs have died", "They all died", "Only Tanya is left".

The girl could not know that her brother Mikhail and sister Nina were alive. Mikhail fought in a partisan detachment, and Nina was evacuated and her family did not know about her fate. Tanya Savicheva went to her great-aunt Evdokia Arsenyeva, taking with her a Palekh casket in which her mother's wedding veil, wedding candles and six death certificates were kept. Evdokia even arranged guardianship, but due to the fact that she worked one and a half shifts at the factory and could not look after the child, neighbors often saw Tanya sleeping on the stairs in the front door.

Evdokiya later withdrew her guardianship and sent Tanya to evacuation. On July 7, 1942, Tanya arrived in the village of Shatki along with 125 other children. They were placed in orphanage No. 48, but by that time the girl's health had already been fatally undermined. Tanya was the only child from the arrivals who was sick with tuberculosis, because of which she was not allowed to be with other children. The only person who

communicated with Tanya Savicheva was the supervising nurse Nina Serechkina. She did everything to ease the child's suffering, and she succeeded to some extent: after some time, Tanya was able to walk on crutches, and later moved around holding onto the wall with her hands.

Tanya Savicheva died in 1944 in an extremely serious condition: bone tuberculosis, blindness, speech problems. She was buried in the cemetery in the village of Shatki. A mountain pass in the Dzungarian Alatau of the Republic of Kazakhstan is named after Tanya Savicheva, and the singer Edita Piekha dedicated a ballad to her and recalled: "My God, what I felt that day at Tanya's monument! After all, we were almost the same age... And here I wrote the lines "My fellow countrywoman, Savicheva Tanya, forgive me for not coming to you with flowers..." But I promised myself that I would definitely come back here again".

There are many blockade stories, and they leave no one indifferent. The exhibition of the Leningrad Defense Museum (which everyone should visit) is relatively small, but remains in the memory forever.

ROADS OF LIFE

In November 1941, the military highway No. 101 (VAD-101), laid across the ice of Lake Ladoga and better known as the Road of Life, began operating. To protect the city's most important communications, two defensive lines were organized at a distance of 8-12 kilometers from the shore. Food, heating, technical assistance, refueling, and medical assistance points were set up on the ice. Scientists also helped: they discovered that the cause of many sudden ice breaks under trucks was the resonance effect. It turned out that it could be avoided by maintaining a distance of 70 m between vehicles and not exceeding a speed of 35 km/h. Such rules made it possible to move relatively safely across the lake even with ice 10 centimeters thick. During the two winters of the Road of Life's operation, about 2 million tons of food



Rafail Mazelev/TASS

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH, A VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER ON THE ROOF OF THE LENINGRAD CONSERVATORY



Reproduction by TASS



TATYANA SAVICHEVA (1930-1944)

and valuable cargo were delivered to the city, and more than 500 thousand residents were evacuated.

The work of the Road of Life was able to significantly ease the situation only by the end of February 1942. New supply standards were introduced: 500 g for workers, 400 for employees, 300 for children and the unemployed. The range of products on the cards was expanded, and on February 16, a little meat was given out for the first time.

In January 1942, life depended on having a ration card. Situations varied, in the first half of January the unemployed population did not

receive any food products at all on ration cards, despite the already existing Road of Life.

Another "artery" supplied Leningrad for 20 months. About 400 thousand tons of fuel were delivered to the besieged city via a gasoline pipeline laid along the bottom of Lake Ladoga. Unlike the Road of Life, the Germans never learned about this pipeline until the end of the war.

It was civilians, not military experts, who suggested building a strategically important petrol pipeline to besieged Leningrad. The generals, hearing about this idea for the first time, could not resist the irony: "You might as well

have suggested building a bridge over the heads of the Germans!" And yet, at the second discussion in the USSR People's Commissariat of Defence, the idea of Glavneftesnab specialist David Shinberg was taken very seriously.

In order to continue active combat operations of the Leningrad Front troops and the Baltic Fleet ships, it was necessary to create a fuel reserve of about 70 thousand tons. The Red Army Fuel Supply Directorate could not guarantee even half of this volume — there were not enough barges, tank trucks, metal barrels, or pumping units. In such conditions, laying a pipeline along the bottom of Lake Ladoga turned out to be, in fact, the only solution to the problem.

On April 25, 1942, the State Defense Committee signed a decree on the construction of the pipeline. The deadline for the construction of such a facility did not even look "tight", but fantastic — 50 days. At the same time, it was necessary to study the route, develop technical documentation, take into account the delivery times of equipment, construction materials, pipes and everything else in wartime conditions. Steel pipes with a diameter of 101 mm were brought from the Izhora plant. Pumps and tanks were supplied by the Leningrad Oblneftesbyt.

The pipes were assembled and welded in the forest; in open areas, work was carried out only at night. On the western shore of Lake Ladoga, the pipes were first assembled in 200 m sections, then in bundles up to 1.2 km long. The ends of the bundle were placed on pontoon rafts when leading out into the lake. The buoyancy of the fuel main was ensured by a chain of logs fastened together. The pipeline was submerged under water as follows: after welding of the line, a pontoon was pulled out from under it and the ropes connecting the logs to the pipeline were successively cut.

A petrol pipeline almost 30 km long was laid along the bottom of the lake at a depth of up to 35 m. Two pumping stations were installed on the eastern shore — the main and backup, and on the western shore — a tank farm and a loading rack.

The Baltic Fleet Special Expedition for Underwater Works (EPRON) played an important role in the construction. Divers and Red Navy sailors participated in drawing up a longitudinal profile of the bottom, as well as in bottom work.

The legendary Nina Sokolova was responsible for the work of the EPRON divers. She went down to the bottom together with the divers, supervising the construction operations. EPRON

did not have to be specially transferred to Leningrad, it was already here — it was engaged in the restoration of military communication lines, raising sunken trucks. Often this work was carried out so quickly that the vehicles pulled out of the icy water were sent on their mission almost immediately.

In September 1942, Nina Sokolova headed the next most important operation for the city — the construction of a 23-kilometer electric cable. The technology of the work was similar: cable fragments were delivered to the assembly site on a barge and connected to each other with couplings made of lead strips. Each such coupling weighed about 200 kg. The paper used as insulation was the paper on which assignments were printed, so the cable was popularly nicknamed "money". A total of 5 threads were laid. On September 23, 1942, electricity began to flow to the blockaded city.

BATTLES FOR THE CITY

From the very beginning of the blockade, Soviet troops did not stop trying to break it. Already in September 1941, a bridgehead was created on the opposite bank of the Neva from Leningrad, which was called the Nevsky Pyatachok. This small patch of land (1.5 x 2 km) was created to meet the Red Army units that broke the blockade or to withdraw all the troops of the Leningrad Front from the blockade ring in the event of the worst outcome of the Battle of Moscow.

Fortunately, this did not happen, and at the end of 1941, the Soviet command decided to conduct offensive operations to lift the siege of Leningrad. During the Tikhvin operation, the 54th Army under the command of Major General Ivan Fedyuninsky attacked from the Volkhov side. In his memoirs about this period, he wrote: "The hardest time for me was near Pogostye. Four months of exhausting, bloody and unsuccessful battles in a forested and marshy region".

The Tikhvin offensive was followed in January 1942 by the initially more successful Lyuban offensive operation. The 2nd Shock Army of Lieutenant General Nikolai Klykov, which had arrived from the headquarters reserve, was able to break through the German positions on its second attempt and cover 30 km, half the distance needed to join up with the Leningraders. The army's advance through the swamps would stop in February, and the narrow five-kilometer supply corridor would become the cause of death several months later.

In the spring of 1942, Leonid Govorov leads the Leningrad Front group of troops, and in June he becomes the front commander. Of the 900 days of the blockade, the city was defended for 670 days under Govorov's command. Before being transferred to the city on the Neva, he distinguished himself in the defense of Moscow. "Stand firm, like Govorov!" Army General Zhukov cited him as an example to the command staff. The new commander of the Leningrad Front had a special talent: having studied the map, he could accurately predict what the Germans were up to.

Being a professional artilleryman, Leonid Govorov not only improved the previously built lines, but also created new field fortifications. The city was divided into seven sectors, which received everything necessary to independently repel the German offensive. Much attention was paid to organizing the interaction of troops with the Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga Military Flotilla.

LENINGRAD SYMPHONY

Among other things, the effectiveness of Leningrad artillery was demonstrated during the special operation "Squall". After that, not a single shell exploded in the city during the performance of Dmitry Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony on August 9, 1942.

Shostakovich composed the symphony in Leningrad, returning home after duty in the voluntary fire brigade of the Conservatory's faculty. The margins of the musical notations often contain the note "AA" — air alarm.



THE SOVIET HEAVY TANK KV-1, NAMED AFTER THE FIRST MARSHAL KLIMENT VOROSHILOV, WAS PRODUCED IN LENINGRAD AT THE KIROV PLANT AND IN CHELYABINSK AT THE TRACTOR PLANT FROM 1940



LEONID ALEKSANDROVICH GOVOROV (1897–1955). PARTICIPANT IN THE CIVIL WAR. IN 1942, COMMANDER OF THE LENINGRAD FRONT. MARSHAL, HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION



LAYING OF THE KAREJA-BORISOVA GRIVA PIPELINE ALONG THE BOTTOM OF LAKE LADOGA IN THE SPRING OF 1942

In mid-September, when Leningrad was already blockaded, Shostakovich announced on the radio: "Two hours ago I finished the first two parts of the symphonic work. Why am I reporting this? So that the radio listeners who are listening to me now know that the life of our city is going on normally. We are all on combat duty now". The symphony premiered on March 5, 1942, on the stage of the Kuibyshev Opera and Ballet Theater, but the composer dreamed that it would also be performed in the city to whose courage it was dedicated.

On June 2, 1942, pilot Litvinov delivered four music notebooks with the score to besieged Leningrad along with medicines. About 100 musicians were needed to perform the symphony, but there were no more than 15 of them in the Philharmonic, and only eight of them retained the ability to hold instruments. Performers were sought in the rear, at the front, and found with great difficulty.

The first rehearsal lasted only 15 minutes — the musicians did not have the strength for more, and the trumpeter was unable to produce a sound at all. Drummer Zhavdet Aidarov missed one of the rehearsals due to



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MASTER OF THE CITY

FROM THE FIRST DAYS OF THE WAR, THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS OF ENSURING THE ACTIVITIES AND DEFENSE OF LENINGRAD WERE SOLVED BY THE SECOND SECRETARY OF THE CITY AND REGIONAL COMMITTEES, MEMBER OF THE MILITARY COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT AND THE FLEET, ALEKSEY KUZNETSOV. IT WAS HE WHO HAD TO REBUILD INDUSTRY ON A WAR FOOTING, PREPARE THE EVACUATION OF CITIZENS AND FACTORIES, CREATE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION CENTERS IN SCHOOLS FOR CITIZENS WHOSE HOUSING WAS DESTROYED BY BOMBING, AND REMOVE OR CAMOUFLAGE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LUGA DEFENSE LINE, THE RECRUITMENT OF 15 DIVISIONS OF THE PEOPLE'S MILITIA AND EQUIPPING

THEM WITH EVERYTHING NECESSARY – THIS IS ALSO A PARTIAL MERIT OF KUZNETSOV.

AS A MEMBER OF THE MILITARY COUNCIL OF THE LENINGRAD FRONT WITH THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL, KUZNETSOV OFTEN TRAVELED TO THE TROOPS. HE TOOK HIS LITTLE SON VALERY WITH HIM. ONCE, THIS COURAGE ALMOST COST THEM THEIR LIVES: THERE WAS A GERMAN BREAKTHROUGH, AND THE KUZNETSOVS HAD TO LIE LOW IN THE FOREST UNTIL DARK TO RETURN TO THE CITY. BUT SUCH PUBLICITY INSPIRED CONFIDENCE IN BOTH THE DEFENDERS AND THE TOWNSPEOPLE: SINCE THE LEADER WAS ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE WITH HIS SON, THE CITY WOULD NOT BE SURRENDERED.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT KUZNETSOV WAS PRAISED BY STALIN HIMSELF. "ALEXEY, THE MOTHERLAND WILL NOT FORGET YOU!" WROTE THE LEADER, WHO ADDRESSED ONLY HIS CLOSEST PEOPLE AS "YOU". ALONG WITH THE NOTE, STALIN SENT KUZNETSOV A PACK OF HIS CIGARETTES.

KUZNETSOV'S STAR SET AFTER THE WAR, AND IT WAS PRECISELY THE LEADER'S SYMPATHY THAT LET HIM DOWN. IN 1948, STALIN TOLD HIS CLOSEST COMRADES: "I AM ALREADY OLD, IT IS TIME FOR ME TO RETIRE. PEOPLE LIKE KUZNETSOV CAN LEAD THE PARTY AFTER MY DEATH". COMPETITORS STEPPED UP AND KUZNETSOV WAS SHOT ON OCTOBER 1, 1950, ALONG WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE STILL-UNDECLASSIFIED "LENINGRAD CASE".

fighters replaced others. The last two kilometers, when all the tanks of the attackers were knocked out, turned out to be the most difficult, but on January 18 the blockade was broken: the entire southern coast of Lake Ladoga came under the control of the Red Army.

The very next day, January 19, 1943, construction of a new railway began in liberated Shlisselburg, connecting Leningrad with the country. This artery, which was later called the Road of Victory, was laid by the builders in just 17 days, operating in winter conditions and frontline areas. Trains went to Leningrad again.

It should be added that the winter of 1942-1943 became the time of a radical turning point in the war: the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad and the breakthrough of the Leningrad blockade became the reason for the three-day mourning declared in Germany. Wagner's music was heard from loudspeakers throughout the Third Reich.

A year later, the front troops under the command of Leonid Govorov began the final defeat of the Germans near Leningrad. True to himself, the general again relied on a surprise attack at the enemy's most fortified line. On January 27, 1944, a salute was held in the city on the Neva to mark the final lifting of the blockade.

Despite numerous testimonies and documents, the genocide committed by the Germans and Finns in Leningrad and its suburbs was not properly assessed at the Nuremberg Trials. About a million residents did not survive the siege, 600 thousand died of hunger. Foreign historians have calculated that more civilians died in the northern capital than in the five other cities most affected by World War II combined: Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ●

SEE THE FULL VERSION
OF THE ARTICLE WITH A
VIDEO REPORT HERE:



OPERATION "CHILDREN"

AUTHOR ILYA ARKHIPOV

THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF THE RESCUE OF MORE THAN 3,000 CHILDREN FROM THE SMOLENSK REGION OCCUPIED BY GERMAN TROOPS ON THE EVE OF THE NAZI PUNITIVE OPERATION. THE OPERATION BECAME THE LARGEST SINGLE ACTION TO SAVE CHILDREN IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR. PARTISANS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE, BUT ONLY THREE GIRLS ACCOMPANIED THE COLUMN OF CHILDREN

The occupation of the Smolensk region by the Nazis lasted for more than two years. According to Hitler's decree of July 17, 1941, the occupied territories of the USSR were divided into Reichskommissariats, general districts and regions. The Smolensk district, together with Belarus and the Baltics, became part of the Reichskommissariat Ostland.

Having captured Smolensk, the Germans began to exterminate the civilian population from the very first day and did so methodically and cruelly throughout the entire period of occupation. By the time the city was liberated in September 1943, out of 170,000 residents, only

about 20,000 remained alive. In Smolensk itself and its suburbs, 35,000 civilians and more than 100,000 prisoners of war were killed, and about 90,000 people were taken into slavery.

German troops committed atrocities not only in Smolensk, but also throughout the entire region. Numerous acts of local administrations and the State Commission recording these crimes can be found on the Internet. In total, during the period of occupation of the region, the Nazis killed more than 150 thousand peaceful Soviet citizens, drove more than 160 thousand to work in Germany, killed 230 thousand

prisoners of war – such are the data of the State Emergency Commission from 1945.

About 5 thousand Smolensk villages were burned and destroyed by the Germans during the occupation. There are data that about 300 villages were burned together with their inhabitants – this is how the occupiers took revenge for supporting the partisans, each district of the Smolensk region has its own Khatyn.

In March 1943, the Germans drove about 300 residents of neighboring settlements into the village of Chertovka and burned almost all of them. Those who tried to escape were shot with machine guns, only three survived: Matryona Toporovskaya and her son Anatoly, 6 years old, and Semyon Samoilov, 12 years old. In the village of Shily four boys who wanted to leave through the swamps were caught and shot in front of their relatives. In the village of Markovo, two girls were burned alive for cooking potatoes for the partisans. In the village of Burtsevo, all the boys were shot. Concentration camps for civilians and prisoners of war were also created on the territory of the region – old people, women, and children were driven there.

Almost immediately after the Nazi troops occupied Smolensk, underground groups began operating in the city and its suburbs. In total, more than 40 such groups were



M. VOLSKAYA WITH HER PUPILS

created, with a total of about 500 people. With varying degrees of success, the underground fighters worked against Nazi propaganda, helped partisan units, obtained food and weapons, and organized sabotage. In December 1941, an underground center was created in Smolensk, which had links with the regional committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and with the headquarters of partisan units.

The Smolensk region was one of the largest areas of the partisan movement during the Great Patriotic War: over 120 partisan detachments and units fought here. In January-February 1942, three so-called partisan regions were formed: Drogobuzhsky, Vadinsky and North-Western.

By the spring of 1942, the partisans had liberated 25 of the 42 occupied districts of the region from the Nazis. In 1941-1943, the partisans killed about 100,000 German soldiers and officers, blew up 580 bridges, derailed over 1,350 trains, and destroyed 18 railway stations.

After the Red Army's counter-offensive near Moscow, the partisan movement in the Smolensk region noticeably intensified. More than 20 separate detachments in six districts of the region were united into the partisan unit "Batya" (Daddy) under the command of the experienced partisan Nikifor Kolyada. By the summer of 1942, the unit had liberated more than 230 settlements from the Germans over an area of over 3,600 km². In this territory, Soviet power was effectively restored: district Party and Komsomol committees, district executive committees, village councils, and collective farms operated. People were preparing for sowing, children attended schools as much as possible, and Komsomolskaya Pravda was published. The partisan region had access to the Soviet rear through the so-called "Sloboda Gate" in the area of the village of Sloboda (now the village of Przhevalskoye in the Smolenskoye Poozerye Nature



MATRYONA ISAYEVNA VOLSKAYA
(1919-1978)

Wikimedia Commons

Reserve), where there was a gap in the front line.

The partisans effectively "saddled" the main supply lines of the Wehrmacht, with 10-15 sabotage groups sent out on missions every day. The German command was seriously concerned with the problem of fighting the partisans. Punitive operations were carried out in the villages to intimidate the local population and force them to refuse to help the partisans.

"YELLOW ELEPHANT"

Despite all the heroism and fame of the partisan movement, information about it was largely classified in the USSR. The explanation is simple: contrary to popular belief, partisan units did not always consist entirely of local residents.

The partisans were essentially reconnaissance and sabotage units, the basis of which, as a rule, were groups trained by the NKVD in June-July 1941. They trained commanders, political workers, technical specialists, radio operators, sappers, medical instructors, etc. The subsequent task was to include in the detachments fighters from the Red Army units that retreated in the summer of 1941 or escaped from encirclement. The Smolensk partisan detachments were created under the direct leadership of Pavel Sudoplatov (legendary Soviet

intelligence officer and NKVD chief subversive).

Local residents in the occupied territories also joined the ranks of the partisans, but there were no detachments formed exclusively from such volunteers. And it was not safe: traitors were constantly being introduced into the ranks of the partisans. In the documents of the 4th Directorate of the NKGB of the USSR, there is information from May 12, 1943 about work in the Smolensk region: "12 people were identified and exposed as agents of the Gestapo and other German intelligence agencies who had infiltrated partisan detachments and were transferred to the Soviet rear across the front line".

In turn, the NKVD agents introduced into the occupied territory warned the partisans and the command of the regular units in time about the upcoming German operation "Yellow Elephant". Agents "Marat", "Fast" and "Green" found out that the German withdrew the division from the Demidov sector of the front and concentrated it in the city of Rudnya, bringing in equipment, manpower, sapper materials and tools. A broad offensive against the Smolensk partisans began on September 10, 1942.

According to other sources, this punitive operation was called Spätlese (a wine-making term for late harvest) by the German command. There were actually two operations: Spätlese I and Spätlese II.

The objective of Spätlese I was to clear the rear of the 9th Wehrmacht Army of partisans. The operation was carried out by the forces of the SS Cavalry Division "Florian Geyer", which had seven assault guns, tanks and sappers. Operation Spätlese II was carried out in the Slobodskoy direction jointly by two divisions: the 330th Infantry and "Florian Geyer".

Bloody battles lasted 20 days, in which the Nazis lost about 2.5 thousand soldiers and officers, 3 tanks, 2 guns and 35 vehicles. The partisan detachments were partially

defeated, the rest had to return to the "mainland". But already in October, the replenished brigades began to cross the front line.

All these details are necessary for understanding: in September, with the beginning of massive counter-partisan actions, the children of the Smolensk region faced certain death or slavery. Therefore, it was important to think about their fate before it was too late.

MATRYONA AND HER CHILDREN

Two months before the start of the "Yellow Elephant", the commander of the partisan unit "Batya" Nikifor Kolyada made a very correct and timely decision. At the end of June 1942, the partisans began to prepare the children of the Smolensk region for evacuation through the "Sloboda Gate". Most of the 200-kilometer route from the village of Yeliseyevichi to the village of Toropets in the Kalinin region was preliminarily surveyed. Cooperation on the issue of evacuation with the headquarters of the 4th Hit Army was also established, food points, the order of combat security and escort were determined, observation posts were organized near the minefields.

Nikifor Kolyada understood that the immediate head of the operation must combine combat experience with the ability to get along with children, and in large numbers. The choice fell on the primary school teacher of the Basinskaya school, 23-year-old Matryona Volskaya. By this time, she had already been awarded the Order of the Red Banner for the successful completion of sabotage missions. Volskaya was assisted by teacher Varvara Polyakova (24 years old) and nurse Ekaterina Gromova (24 years old).

The village of Yeliseyevichi in the Dukhovshchinsky District of the Smolensk Oblast today, one might say, no longer exists — just a couple of houses, a church and a cemetery. At that time, it was a full-fledged settlement, to which on July 23, 1942, parents and guides



HEADQUARTERS OF THE
"BATYA" PARTISAN UNIT IN
THE VILLAGE OF KOREVO,
SMOLENSK REGION

HERE IN KOREVO, IN
THE SUMMER OF 1942,
КОМСОМОЛЬСКАЯ ПРАВДА
WAS PUBLISHED.

brought 1240 children aged 10 to 17 years. It was initially decided not to take children under 10 years old on this march — they might not make it. The route ran through the "gray zone" of the frontline. Nazi attacks could be expected at any moment, both from the air and on the ground. Here, in the occupied Smolensk region, the infrastructure of the "Center" group included 65 headquarters, 32 warehouses and 10 airfields. The territory was constantly patrolled, and in such conditions, it was not an easy task to lead a large group of children unnoticed.

The feelings of parents sending their children into the unknown, the feelings of children saying goodbye to their loved ones, perhaps forever... The column was divided into detachments of 40-50 people led by senior schoolchildren, liaisons were assigned. The commander of the operation, Volskaya, went in front with the oldest, then Polyakova with the younger children. Nurse Gromova brought up the rear with the youngest. The group included several horse-drawn wagons with provisions.

Already on the first day of the journey, the liaison reported that

there was an ambush in a village ahead, and the road they had to take was mined. This meant that the entire pre-planned route and its support would have to be cancelled. To get around the ambush, they had to make their way through the woods and swamps along an old log road (a forest road paved with fallen tree trunks). This was much more difficult. The hooves of horses and the wheels of carts loaded with things and simple provisions got stuck between half-rotten, crumbling logs. Sometimes the children had to carry the drays on their hands. "In some places the roads were very bad", recalled Lyudmila Petrishchenko, a participant in the crossing. "They had to be repaired by ourselves so that the carts could pass".

The movement was carried out mainly during the day, at night the children rested under the cover of the forest. At this time, Matryona Volskaya went on reconnaissance, each night going 10-25 km forward. She checked the road – whether it was mined, whether there was an ambush ahead. In the morning she returned back to lead the group forward again. It was the toughest test even for a trained special forces soldier, let alone a woman five months pregnant... Volskaya did not tell anyone about this, afraid to let down.

Three days later, the column crossed the front line and reached the village of Sloboda. By this time, the detachment already had 1,500 people: children from neighboring villages joined in. From Sloboda, there was a dirt road, but it was only possible to continue along it at night. It was impossible to go during the day, as the German air force was operating. One day, a German reconnaissance plane spotted the column in the dark, and the next day, leaflets with rhymed horror stories were dropped on the road: "Children, do not hide in the grass. Where are you going? I'll find you there too. Don't run away, children, there will be cutlets made of you". In another case, there were

propaganda appeals: "Children, go back, the German army is bringing you liberation".

On the fifth day of the journey, the provisions were almost finished, but in the summer forest this was not critical. The situation with water was worse: it was dangerous to drink from rivers and wells because of the cadaveric poison – the fascists deliberately dumped the bodies of the dead there. Only forest springs and lakes supported the forces of the "children's army".

Early in the morning of July 28, they came out of the forest onto the bank of the Western Dvina. Disobeying their elders, the children rushed to the long-awaited water, and this was noticed by the pilots of three Messerschmitts. On the first circle of the flight, they looked around, on the second they took a combat course and opened fire on the children.

The children scattered, and only a lone cart with a horse remained standing in the open. It turned out that Zhenya Alekhnovich, who had become very weak, was there – she was wounded. Incredibly, she was the only child injured during the crossing. Soon the girl was able to be handed over to the military. On June 29, another 200 of the weakest



OPERATION "CHILDREN" ROUTE

children were sent to the Soviet rear in four trucks.

On August 3, 1942, the children reached the Toropets railway station, which connected the front with the rear. In Toropets, everyone was counted – 3,240. Along the way, children from the surrounding villages and towns joined those walking – Volskaya did not refuse anyone.

They had to wait for a train for several days, the city was mercilessly bombed. The children were divided into several large groups and placed in a former school, a half-destroyed club and at a military unit, where soldiers shared their rations with the children.

On the night of August 5, the long-awaited boarding took place. Along the 60-car train stretched "Volskaya's army", gradually occupying the cars, on the roofs of which huge letters read "CHILDREN".

Initially, the Smolensk children were planned to be evacuated beyond the Urals. But this journey began to drag on: the railway was constantly bombed by German aircraft and the train had to stand still. In three days, the train traveled only 150 km.

Many children fell ill on the way to Toropets – gastrointestinal disorders, conjunctivitis, bleeding gums. The only food left was 125 "blockade" grams of bread per day. Observing the condition of her charges, Volskaya understood that not all of them would reach Sverdlovsk. They were not hiding in the forest from bombs and German patrols to die of starvation in a peaceful land.

At the stops, Matryona began sending telegrams to the nearest cities along the route – Yaroslavl, Ivanovo, Moscow: "Take in as many children as you can, even one". Finally, a reply came from Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod): they were ready to accept all the children. At the station, the train was met by representatives of the city and regional authorities and doctors. Many children had to be carried out on stretchers, but Volskaya was still able to deliver them alive.

"The children have a terrible appearance, have absolutely no clothes or shoes", was written in the acceptance report. Volskaya signed for 3,225 children. The journey took 23 days, nine of them walked through dense forests and swamps, but the main thing is that they got there and are survived!

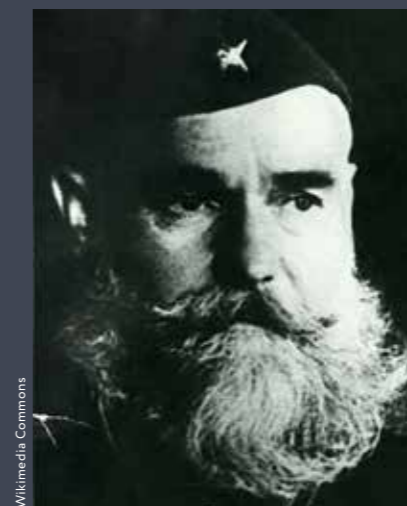
SMOLENSK NIZHNY NOVGOROD RESIDENTS

The children were first distributed among hospitals, then among educational institutions, and soon they began to help the front at factories. Many remained to live in Gorky, Dzerzhinsk, Balakhna, Murom, Vyksa, Bor, Gorodets. Many called themselves "Smolensk Nizhny Novgorod residents".

Volskaya later worked as a teacher in a secondary school in the village of Smolki, Gorodetsky District, Gorky Oblast. She gave birth to a boy, and after the war, Matryona Isayevna's husband, partisan Mikhail Arkhipovich Volsky, moved to Smolki. Matryona Volskaya taught in elementary grades, gave birth to a second son, and didn't tell anyone much about that heroic evacuation of 1942.

Some participants of that crossing were able to see their guide almost 30 years later. Later, journalists and public figures would look for lists confirming the fact of the children's acceptance and transfer, but would not find them in any archive, although this could have provided grounds for awarding the order. Several television programs and a book by L.K. Novikov (a former partisan) and N.M. Drozdova, "Operation 'Children'", described in detail the events of those days, were released. Journalists found 459 people out of those 3,225. Volskaya herself always said the same thing at meetings and in interviews: "I was simply carrying out an assignment and that's it". She died in 1978.

After the liberation of the Smolensk region, Varvara Polyakova returned to the Demidovsky district and worked as a primary school



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"BATYA" OF PARTISANSNIKIFOR KOLYADA WAS BORN IN 1891 IN THE KHARKOV PROVINCE IN THE FAMILY OF A POOR PEASANT. HE FOUGHT IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE CIVIL WAR. FROM 1919 HE COMMANDED PARTISAN DETACHMENTS IN THE PODOLSK PROVINCE AND THE FAR EAST.

IN JULY 1941, HE WAS SENT TO THE SMOLENSK OBLAST TO ORGANIZE PARTISAN WARFARE BEHIND GERMAN LINES. HE CREATED AND LED A PARTISAN UNIT OF SEVERAL DETACHMENTS AND BECAME WIDELY KNOWN IN THE SMOLENSK OBLAST AS "BATYA". IN SEPTEMBER 1942, HE WAS AWARDED THE ORDER OF LENIN. AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN MOSCOW, ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH KING, KOLYADA WAS PRESENTED WITH A PERSONALIZED DIRK.

IN OCTOBER 1942, KOLYADA WAS ARRESTED. THE OFFICIAL REASON FOR HIS ARREST

WAS FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH AN ORDER FROM THE CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT.

THERE IS A VERSION THAT THE REAL REASON FOR KOLYADA'S ARREST WAS HIS CONFLICT WITH THE HEAD OF THE CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT, PANTELEIMON PONOMARENKO, WHO OPPOSED LARGE PARTISAN UNITS, AS WELL AS DISAGREEMENTS WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE SMOLENSK REGIONAL COMMITTEE AND, DURING THE OCCUPATION OF THE TERRITORY BY THE GERMANS – THE HEAD OF THE SMOLENSK HEADQUARTERS OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT, DMITRY POPOV. ACCORDING TO PONOMARENKO, KOLYADA SAID IN HIS PRESENCE: "THE LEAFLETS DISTRIBUTED BY THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE ARE OF NO IMPORTANCE. THE PARTY ORGANS HAVE DISCREDITED THEMSELVES. THE RETREAT, EVACUATION, ETC. HAVE UNDERMINED THE PEOPLE'S FAITH IN THE PARTY ORGAN. NOW WE NEED TO DISTRIBUTE LEAFLETS ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE WON THE RESPECT OF THE PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR STRUGGLE. MY LEAFLETS, SIGNED BY ME, COULD PLAY A BIG ROLE IN THE SMOLENSK OBLAST. I AM KNOWN EVERYWHERE".

ON JULY 14, 1943, KOLYADA WAS SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN A LABOR CAMP. IN 1954, HE WAS RELEASED AND FULLY REHABILITATED. SOON AFTER HIS RELEASE, NIKIFOR KOLYADA DIED OF A HEART ATTACK. HE WAS BURIED AT THE IZMAILOVSKY CEMETERY IN MOSCOW.

teacher in Lekhonov Bor, then in the Demidovskaya seven-year school, and from 1950 to 1973 – in the first school in the city of Demidov. In 1988, she was awarded the Order of the Patriotic War, 2nd degree. On January 20, 2009, Varvara Sergeevna passed away. Participants of that crossing often came to visit her.

Ekaterina Gromova, a nurse responsible for the youngest children, worked as a midwife from August 1942 to October 1943, then as the head of the maternity hospital of the Timiryazev collective farm of the Ereminsky village council

of the Gorodetsky district of the Gorky Oblast. After the liberation of Smolensk, she returned home and until 1972 headed the Petrishchevskiy feldsher-midwife station. She was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, she passed away in 1985.

Operation "Children" is considered one of the largest in the history of the Great Patriotic War in its profile: neither before nor after it was possible to save such a large number of children from occupation at once. In total, the Smolensk partisans managed to save over 13 thousand children and teenagers for the future.

FORTITUDE IN FIRE

AUTHORS SERGEY SINAISKY, ILYA ARKHIPOV

THE BATTLES AROUND THE PERIMETER RZHEV LASTED FOR MOST OF 1942 AND EARLY 1943. THEY ARE OFTEN CALLED THE “RZHEV MEAT GRINDER” OR “RZHEV CAROUSEL” – DUE TO THE HUGE LOSSES ON BOTH SIDES AND THE GRUELING BATTLES FOR THE STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT RZHEV SALIENT, FORMED DURING THE SOVIET COUNTEROFFENSIVE NEAR MOSCOW IN THE WINTER OF 1941–1942

The Rzhev salient was based on the cities of Rzhev, Sychevka, Vyazma and Bely. Cutting deep into the Soviet defense line, it threatened Moscow, which was about 150 km away. In addition, it was an important logistical hub for both sides – two large railways passed through the territory of the Rzhev-Vyazma salient: Velikiye Luki – Rzhev and Orsha – Smolensk – Vyazma. The location of the salient between besieged Leningrad and Moscow allowed the German command to make plans for a breakthrough on this line further to the east, completely cutting off Leningrad and the north of the country from Moscow, and then attacking the Soviet capital again. This is why the Germans called the Rzhev – Vyazma salient “the gateway to Moscow”, which they held on to with all their might and with maximum effort.

The Nazi command concentrated two-thirds of the troops of Army Group “Center” on the Rzhev-Vyazma bridgehead. Their destruction was one of the main tasks of the Red Army. This would not only secure Moscow, but also free up significant forces for an offensive in other directions and improve the overall strategic situation, as well as prevent the Wehrmacht from transferring reinforcements to Stalingrad.

The term “Battle of Rzhev” encompasses defensive and offensive

battles and four operations that took place on the Kalinin and Western Fronts against the German Army Group “Center”: the Rzhev-Vyazma Strategic Offensive Operation (January 8 – April 20, 1942), the First Rzhev-Sychevka (Gzhatsk) Operation (July – August 1942), the Second Rzhev-Sychevka, also known as Operation Mars (November – December 1942), and, finally, the Rzhev-Vyazma Operation (March 2 – March 31, 1943).

In modern historiography, it is not accepted to consider this battle as separate one, it is attributed to the right flank of the Battle of Moscow. Let’s not argue with famous military men and other historians. The fact is that during the Great Patriotic War, fierce battles were fought for Rzhev, the city was almost completely destroyed.

The series of battles along the entire 200-kilometer front line of the Rzhev-Vyazma salient is one of the favorite themes of history revisionists, who support the rhetoric about the senselessness of the offensive actions undertaken by the Soviet command and the losses suffered, generously seasoned with the terrible memories of the front-line soldiers who took part in those battles.

Unlike more famous battles such as Stalingrad or the Kursk Bulge, the Battle of Rzhev was not exactly classified, but remained somewhat in the shadows for a long time. At the

same time, the six-volume History of the Great Patriotic War of 1961 contains both a fairly detailed map of Operation Mars and a full description of it. More than 20 Soviet military leaders, including Georgy Zhukov and Kuzma Galitsky, write about the battles near Rzhev in their published memoirs. Be that as it may, but until recently we had not seen a film about the Battle of Rzhev, except for one film, “Sashka” (Mosfilm, 1981). The film “Rzhev”, shot in 2019, raises subjective questions. The reasons for, let’s say, the lack of clarity are rooted in the number of irretrievable losses of Soviet troops, and in the tactical miscalculations of the command, and also, as it became known relatively recently, in the ambiguous results of the NKVD counterintelligence operation “Monastery”.

Many Soviet soldiers and officers heroically gave their lives for their Motherland, remaining forever in the Rzhev land. Many of them are still being found and reburied by searchers, but we will return to this topic later on.

Now it is becoming increasingly obvious that the battles near Rzhev were important for achieving a turning point on all fronts in favor of the Red Army, and the availability of archives and the work of modern historiographers play a significant role in this. “That mission the enemy could never complete”, as Alexander

Tvardovsky put it in his poem “I was killed near Rzhev”.

“POGOST”: A FIGHT FOR EXHAUSTION

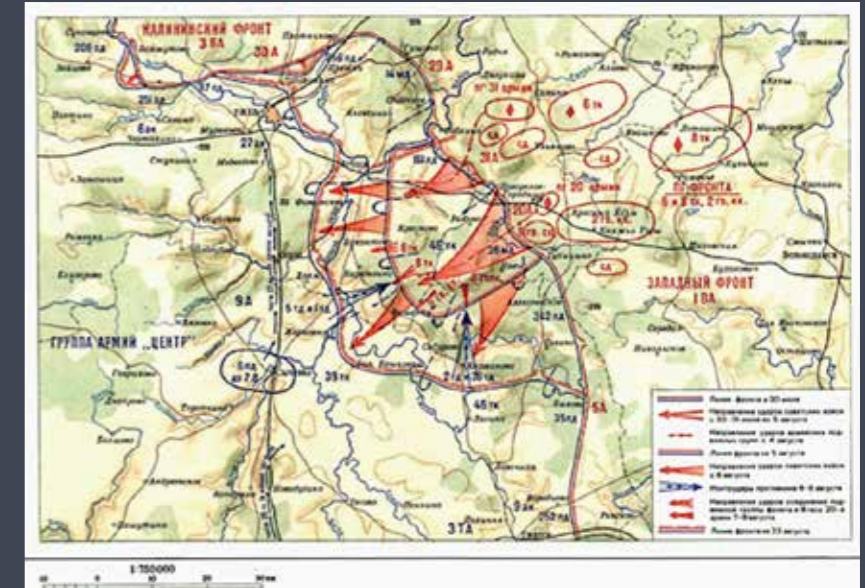
In the summer of 1942, the Soviet command developed a plan for a large-scale offensive to encircle and destroy the German 9th Army, which occupied the Rzhev salient. The operation was codenamed “Pogost” and was later renamed the Rzhev-Sychevka Operation.

The forces concentrated in this section of the front were quite significant. It was planned that the troops of the Kalinin and Western Fronts under the command of Generals I.S. Konev and G.K. Zhukov, respectively, would deliver the main strike in the direction of the strategically important city of Rzhev. This would allow the encirclement and destruction of the main enemy group. Auxiliary strikes were to restrain the German troops and prevent the transfer of reserves.

The operation began on July 30, 1942. The first days of the offensive were extremely difficult for the Soviet troops. The Germans had created a serious, deeply echeloned defense, and also had an advantage in equipment and firepower. Tanks and other armored vehicles supported the infantry, radio communications helped coordinate actions. Aviation adjusted the work of artillery. Fire on Soviet positions was dense and practically continuous.

The ratio of German and Soviet forces was roughly equal. However, the key negative factor for the Red Army was that it had much less artillery ammunition, especially heavy ones. For every Soviet shell fired, two or three German ones flew in. This was a consequence of the recent evacuation of industry. For example, in 1942, the USSR produced almost half as much gunpowder as Germany.

Nevertheless, according to the reports of the Main Artillery Directorate of the Red Army, in particular, during the Rzhev-Zubtsov Operation, the Kalinin and Western



FIRST RZHEV-SYCHEVKA (GZHATSK) OPERATION. JULY 30 – OCTOBER 1, 1942



GERMAN SOLDIERS JUMP OFF A PZ. KPFW. 38 (T) TANK ON A FOREST ROAD NEAR RZHEV. SUMMER OF 1942

Fronts were allocated about 48% of all resources for the main calibers. For the first time, a density of 120 artillery barrels per kilometer was achieved, which indicates that the Soviet command understood the importance of the battles on the salient. However, this was not enough against the Germans, who fired 1,000 tons of ammunition per day.

It was here that Soviet 203.2 mm howitzers, nicknamed “Stalin’s sledgehammers” since the Finnish War, were secretly delivered to break through the German defenses in July 1942. Near Rzhev, Soviet artillerymen used a super-heavy weapon for the

first time since the beginning of the Great Patriotic War - a 305 mm howitzer with a projectile weight of 377 kg.

The Germans were hit not only by the famous BM-13 rocket launchers, popularly nicknamed “Katyusha”, but also by the new M-30 launchers with powerful 300-mm shells weighing 72 kg, possessing great destructive power. The firing range was from 1600 to 2500 m. Such a launcher on a vehicle chassis (BM-31-12), by analogy with the “Katyusha”, was nicknamed “Andryusha” in the troops.

Summing up the first three days of the offensive, Colonel General

I.S. Konev noted in his report to Supreme Commander-in-Chief I.V. Stalin:

"The front edge of the enemy's defensive zone and its depth in the breakthrough area represent a firmly equipped line, filled with structures and field-type obstacles... In front of the firing points there are wire obstacles in 2-3 rows... The areas threatened by tanks were mined. The fighting took place in extremely difficult weather conditions. Heavy rains, which did not allow the full use of aircraft and tanks, also disrupted the supply of ammunition... As a result, the pace of the offensive sharply slowed, which allowed the enemy to strengthen the second defensive line... Our losses: 17 tanks and 6 guns were destroyed and burned, 7,200 people were killed and wounded..."

The Soviet troops advanced extremely slowly, suffering heavy losses. German aviation supported its troops from the air, striking at the advancing columns. The Red Army tank units put into action to break through the German defense, were destroyed by anti-tank artillery or perished in minefields.

By mid-August the offensive had practically petered out. However, stubborn, fierce, albeit strategically unproductive, battles continued until the very end.

"I will not forget Rzhev. For weeks there were battles for five or six broken trees, for the wall of a destroyed house and a tiny hillock", wrote Ilya Ehrenburg. He was a war correspondent and the author of the first use of the phrase "Victory Day" in Soviet literature — it appeared on December 12, 1941, at the beginning of the counteroffensive near Moscow, in the article "The Fate of Victory", published by the writer in the newspaper "Moskovsky Zheleznodorozhnik".

During August and September 1942, the Soviet made several new offensive attempts. They managed to advance 40–45 km to the west, but by the beginning of October Rzhev was still under Wehrmacht control.



MAXIM ALEKSEEVICH PURKAYEV (1894–1953) FROM AUGUST 26, 1942 TO APRIL 25, 1943 – COMMANDER OF THE KALININ FRONT. ARMY GENERAL.

At the end of September, a difficult decision was made: to suspend active offensive actions and switch to positional warfare. The Rzhev-Sychevka operation ended without achieving its main objectives.

It is also worth mentioning a fact that was kept silent for many years. Army Group "Center" resisted desperately, and in the winter of 1941–1942, the Wehrmacht carried out an operation codenamed "Seydlitz" against the units of the Kalinin Front. As a result of the operation, part of the forces of Konev's front were surrounded and broke out of the cauldron with great difficulty.

Army Group Center was the largest of the German army groups. It was its well-equipped troops, which were not "diluted" by Allied units, that were deployed to the Moscow direction. Tank and motorized corps could quickly move between the centers of breakthroughs in the front line by Soviet troops and eliminate them.

However, it is unlikely that the German command suspected at the very beginning that it would be precisely here that they would have to wage positional, trench warfare. The Germans were forced to move from the concept of defense at strong points to the construction of a continuous line of defense.

"It was no longer a war of machine guns and submachine guns, hand grenades and pistols, as in winter", — one of its participants, the battalion commander of the German 6th Infantry Division Hoke, commented on the summer battle near Rzhev. "It was Materialschlacht, a battle of equipment of the First World War, a battle in which the attacker tried to destroy the enemy with steel, a shower of steel flying in the air and rushing on tracks, when man intervened only at the last moment to destroy in this lunar landscape what still survived the meat grinder".

THE ORDER TO ATTACK

The Pogorelo-Gorodishchenskaya operation was a rare success for the Red Army in 1942. Despite the generally rather gloomy situation on the fronts that summer, the Red Army advanced and liberated populated areas.

The operation began on August 4, 1942. As part of the First Rzhev-Sychevka Operation, it was carried out by the 20th Army under the command of Lieutenant General M.A. Reiter. The army's strength on August 1 was 113,090 people, including 464 women. There were also 12,166 horses, 126 cars, 3,126 trucks and 421 special vehicles, 374 tractors, 255 tanks and 15 armored vehicles, 559 field, 210 anti-tank and 135 anti-aircraft guns, 923 mortars.

The army's task was to break through the German defense on the Dezha River and reach the line of the Vazuza and Gzhat Rivers, then, together with the 31st Army, defeat the Zubtsevo-Karmanovskaya enemy group for a further offensive on Gzhatsk, Sychevka and Rzhev. The overall goal of the joint operation of the Western and Kalinin Fronts was to capture Rzhev and Sychevka, and eliminate the entire Rzhev salient.

The preparations for the operation on the Western Front were carried out in such a way that it became a model for subsequent periods. Careful operational camouflage was carried out, the dense forests contributed to this. A new tactical move was

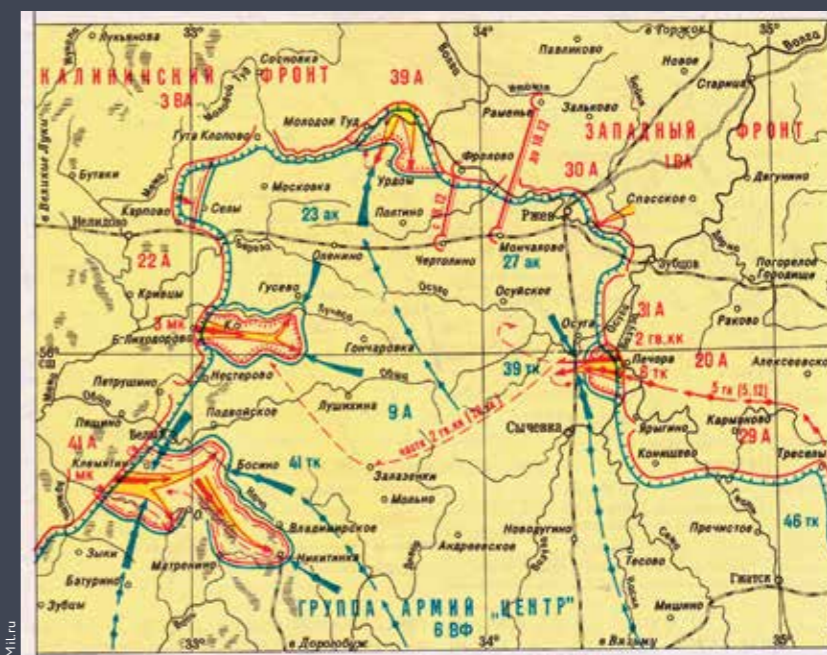
used, consisting in the fact that one division was kept at the front, and those troops that were supposed to form the shock fist were unloaded on a wide front. Then they were led by night marches to waiting areas and carefully camouflaged. It was decided not to use large-caliber artillery for sighting in, so as not to unmask it prematurely. The shots were fired with an ordinary divisional howitzer, so that the trajectories and strikes of larger calibers could be mathematically calculated later.

The task was further complicated by the fact that the offensive had to begin with forcing the river. For this purpose, seven bridges were secretly built.

According to Soviet data, the ratio of forces in people, artillery, and tanks was more than 6:1. Moreover, according to some data, our intelligence overestimated the number of German troops by at least one and a half times. The Germans had a well-prepared defense and very uncomfortable terrain for the offensive, especially in the bad weather that set in those days.

On August 4, the offensive was preceded by a 10-minute artillery strike on German communication centers, artillery positions, and observation posts identified by reconnaissance. After this, the Wehrmacht's forward defense line was shelled for 45 minutes. Then, a false shift of fire inland and smoke screens were set up to simulate the start of the offensive. Then, a salvo was fired by all available rocket artillery divisions. The artillery preparation lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. At the same time, bomber aircraft attacked airfields and the forward line, making 430 sorties.

On the very first day, we managed to break through the German defenses in some areas, most often where we had reinforcements with tanks or armored trains. In the following days, the right flank of the army launched an offensive, while the left flank carried out tasks of restraining the Germans. On August 6, reserves entered the battle, and already on



OPERATION "MARS". NOVEMBER 25 – DECEMBER 20, 1942



RED ARMY SOLDIERS NEAR A CAPTURED GERMAN 150MM HEAVY FIELD HOWITZER, CAPTURED IN BATTLES NEAR RZHEV. AUGUST 1942

August 7, the advanced units reached the Gzhat River and forced it.

By this time, the German command had pulled up reserves consisting of three tank divisions. The Soviet offensive stopped, and they were drawn into protracted battles on the line of the Vazuza and Gzhat rivers. By August 20, the offensive capabilities of the Soviet troops were exhausted, a respite was needed.

The halt in the offensive did not mean the end of military operations in this section of the front. These operations continued and were very active. The assigned task was partially accomplished — the 20th

Army reached the line of the Gzhat and Vazuza rivers, Zubtsovo was liberated. Sychevka could not be liberated, as well as Rzhev.

This operation is the subject of a book published in 1960. Its author the former Chief of Staff of the 20th Army, General Sandalov. The book was called "Pogorelo-Gorodishchenskaya Operation" with the subtitle "Offensive Operation of the 20th Army of the Western Front in August 1942". After this, it is somehow impossible to discuss the fact that nothing was written or said in the USSR about the Battle of Rzhev. The book itself was compiled on the

basis of a document called "Pogorelo-Gorodishchenskaya Operation 20 A" (Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence, collection 423, inventory 6631, file 54), which any user can read on the website "Memory of the People".

Any offensive action is a multiple of the defensive losses. Even now, to take a company stronghold, it is necessary to concentrate a battalion, and a motorized rifle battalion at that.

The first two days of fighting cost the Red Army 200 killed and 1,000 wounded, and eight tanks were lost. But then the numbers were even more tragic. During the offensive from August 4 to 20, the 20th Army lost 43,910 people. And from August 4 to 31, the losses were already 54,410 people.

According to Soviet documents, German losses from August 4 to 20 are estimated at 22,969 killed and wounded, 323 captured. 90 tanks were captured, 113 were destroyed.

Its results – and this was already the Gzhatsk offensive operation – were not very impressive, including in terms of losses of Soviet troops.

The events of the Pogorelo-Gorodishchenskaya operation were widely covered in the Soviet press in 1942. This was important, it really raised the morale of Soviet soldiers and civilians. It became clear: they can be defeated, we beat the Germans

well and we will beat them until Victory!

"MARS": A DISTRACTIONAL MANEUVER

In November 1942, a new offensive operation was developed, codenamed "Mars". The goal remained the encirclement and destruction of the German 9th Army. The Soviet command also hoped that success in the Rzhev direction would divert German reserves from Stalingrad and facilitate the encirclement of Paulus's 6th Army.

The Red Army planned to launch the main attack in the area of the city of Bely with the forces of the Kalinin Front under the command of General M.A. Purkaev. The Western Front under the command of General I.S. Konev was to launch an auxiliary attack in the area of Rzhev, constraining the German troops and preventing the transfer of reserves.

The offensive began on November 25, 1942, and again encountered the same difficulties as during the First Rzhev-Sychevka Operation. Our soldiers managed to partially break through the enemy's defenses, but by and large all attempts at an offensive remained without significant territorial gains.

Ilya Ehrenburg recalled that the battle was literally for every square meter: "Our troops occupied the

airfield, and the military town was in the hands of the Germans... In the headquarters there were maps with squares of the city, but sometimes there was no trace of the streets... Several times I heard German songs, individual words – the enemies were swarming in the similar trenches...".

On December 20, 1942, the Second Rzhev-Sychevka Operation was completed. Its result was the liberation of a territory of about 11 km along the front and 6 km in depth. With these seemingly modest results, the operation accomplished its main task – it provided invaluable assistance to the Soviet troops in the Stalingrad direction.

As for Operation "Mars", unfortunately, the 9th German Army had very good intelligence, which managed to uncover the preparations for the Soviet offensive in advance and bring in ammunition. On the contrary, Soviet intelligence did not discover the German reserves near Smolensk, which were located deep and well hidden from observation. This is one of the main answers to the question about the reasons for the high casualties. When a defending German corps shoots a thousand tons of ammunition per day, of course, the losses of the offensive will be huge. Therefore, for historians, the reasons for the failure of the first two attempts of the Soviet command to "cut off" the Rzhev salient do not seem like some kind of mystery, everything is obvious there.

"MONASTERY" FOR THE GERMANS

It is believed that German intelligence was able to learn about the Red Army's plans for Operation Mars and prepare to repel it. And this is indeed true! At the same time, obviously, one should not underestimate the Soviet high command.

In his memoirs, the Soviet intelligence officer P.A. Sudoplatov cites a document from which it is clear that the enemy was informed about the Red Army's offensive in

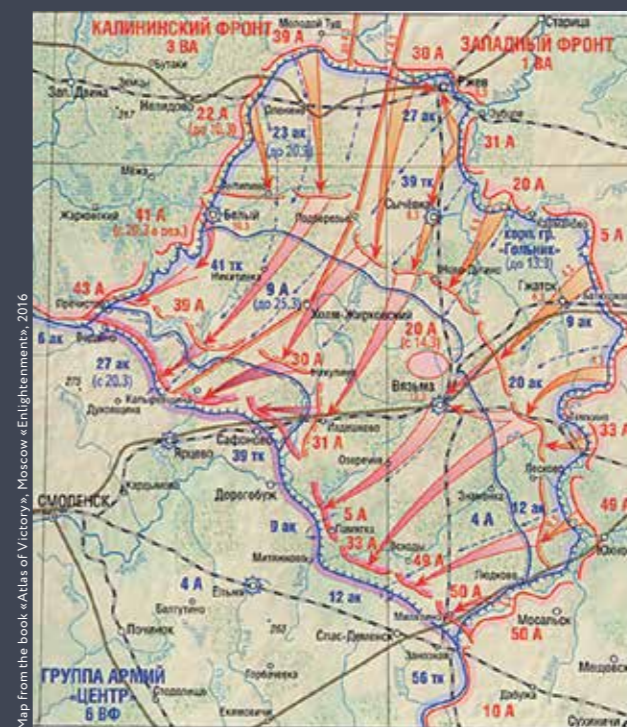
the western direction through foreign intelligence with the sanction of Stalin himself. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief did not even tell Zhukov about this, whom he had placed on this very difficult section of the front. The goal of such extreme measures was to prevent the Germans from breaking through to the Caucasus, to Stalingrad, to hold Leningrad and to preserve Moscow.

"... Zhukov paid a high price – thousands and thousands of our soldiers under his command perished in the offensive near Rzhev", writes Pavel Sudoplatov in his book "Special Operations. Lubyanka and the Kremlin. 1930–1950". – In his memoirs, he admits that the outcome of this offensive operation was unsatisfactory. But he never learned that the Germans were warned about our offensive in the Rzhev direction, which is why they sent so many troops there".

The Germans were warned about the offensive through the NKVD agent Alexander Demyanov (alias "Heine"), who was successfully sent across the front line to the Germans in February 1942. This happened as part of a unique operation of the Soviet special services called "Monastery". Having got to the territory captured by the fascists, Demyanov gained their trust and in March 1942 landed by parachute in the Yaroslavl region already as an agent of German intelligence with the pseudonym "Max".

From the materials of the special archive: "Reference on the agent of the 2nd department of the NKVD of the USSR Alexander Petrovich Demyanov, alias "Heine". On January 16, 1942, he was prepared for work in Moscow in case of its capture by the Germans. Agrees to go to the rear of the enemy to carry out a special assignment on the intelligence case "Monastery". Knows subversion, is well acquainted with electrical and radio engineering".

In the autumn of 1942, Demyanov sent radiograms to the Germans several times about the transfer



RZHEV-VYAZMA OFFENSIVE OPERATION (MARCH 2 – MARCH 31, 1943)

MACHINE GUNNERS OF THE KALININ FRONT IN RZHEV LIBERATED FROM THE INVADERS. MARCH 1943



POGORELOYE-GORODISHCHE, LIBERATION BY SOVIET TROOPS

of large forces of the Red Army to the Rzhev region. The goal was to create the impression of a large-scale offensive in this direction. From Max's radiograms, the Germans also learned about the start date of the offensive – November 25, as well as about the appointment of G.K. Zhukov as commander of the troops.

Zhukov's authority certainly played its role, since the Nazis knew about his brilliant military leadership talent and deep strategic thinking. They believed that the Red Army was betting on this battle, and regrouped their forces.

The offensive did indeed begin on the date indicated by "Max". But in November 1942, the Red Army also launched its main attack near Stalingrad. All these details were revealed in an interview by writer, historian, vice-president of the Union of Criminalists and Criminologists of the Russian Federation, and Deputy Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation from 2000 to 2016, Alexander Zvyagintsev.

LIBERATION OF RZHEV

After the defeat at Stalingrad, the Germans no longer had the opportunity to hold the Rzhev salient. In February

1943, under threat of encirclement, taking into account the experience of the Stalingrad pocket, they began a systematic retreat, leveling the front line. Soviet troops again went on an active offensive to disrupt the retreat of the enemy group and defeat it. This was the Rzhev – Vyazma offensive operation.

On March 3, 1943, the troops of the 30th Army of Lieutenant General V. Ya. Kolpakchi managed to liberate Rzhev, which was almost completely empty of population. A characteristic moment of those days: before leaving the city, the fascists locked 248 people in the mined Pokrovskaya Church, intending to blow it up for the last time, but their plans were thwarted at the last moment by a Soviet assault squad. The people were saved. And after the liberation of Rzhev, Soviet troops continued their offensive to the southwest, pursuing the retreating enemy.

The elimination of the Rzhev – Vyazma salient allowed the front line to be moved 130–160 km away from Moscow. The cities of Rzhev, Gzhatsk, Sychevka, Bely, and Vyazma were liberated from fascist occupation.



WHILE RETREATING, THE NAZIS EXTERMINATED THE LOCAL POPULATION. MEMORIAL IN THE VILLAGE OF KSTY (TVER OBLAST). HERE, NOT EVEN THE EINSATZGRUPPEN OR SS PUNITIVE FORCES, BUT ORDINARY WEHRMACHT SOLDIERS KILLED 78 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 30 CHILDREN

RESULTS OF THE BATTLE OF RZHEV

The human losses on both sides during the Battle of Rzhev were colossal. Their true number is still a subject of debate. According to most historians, about 1.3 million Red Army soldiers were killed, wounded or went missing near Rzhev. Every year new names appear on memorial gravestones, capturing for centuries the feat of a simple Soviet soldier.

It should be noted that, when assessing the scale of the losses suffered by the Red Army, one should not forget that in the first and second periods of the Great Patriotic War, up to and including the Battle of Kursk, the ratio of losses on the Soviet-German front was generally not in favor of the Soviet troops. Germany's surprise attack on the USSR put the Red Army in extremely unfavorable conditions. In 1941–1942, Soviet troops fought the toughest defensive battles, retreated, and were often surrounded. The offensive operations carried out during this period had to be carried out with a shortage of weapons, equipment, and ammunition. The total losses of the Red Army in the first six months of the war amounted to about 4.5 million people killed, missing, captured, and wounded. The losses in 1942 were no less: 7.35 million people. Therefore, attempts to present the battles near Rzhev as exceptionally bloody, in which Soviet troops allegedly suffered unprecedented losses, are groundless.

According to the latest data, the losses of Soviet troops in the battles directly for the Rzhev-Vyazma salient (the conventional dividing line in this case is the Smolensk-Vyazma-Moscow highway) amounted to 1 million 160 thousand people, of which 392 thousand people were irretrievably lost (that is, killed, missing in action, and captured).

The events near Rzhev were of great importance for the entire course of the Great Patriotic War. Firstly, the Soviet troops gained

valuable combat experience, which was used in subsequent battles: they learned to overcome well-prepared German defenses, and worked out the tactics of assault groups. Secondly, the Red Army managed to exterminate the infantry divisions of the 9th German Army.

In order to eliminate the holes in its solid defense, the Wehrmacht even brought in units of the rear services, which had tragic consequences. Heinrich Haape, a military doctor of the 6th Infantry Division, testified: "We received reinforcements from the construction and railway companies of the regimental rear. All the remnants and scraps were sent here. Many did not know how to use weapons at all. Cannon fodder was thrown into the fight. While we, having fired, changed our position, the new arrivals fired from one point. A burst from a Russian machine gun – and they were dead. Roll call showed that out of 130 people who had arrived to us twelve hours earlier, 104 were lost".

Among our compatriots, and not only, there is an opinion that in the end the Battle of Rzhev as a whole ended in defeat for the Red Army. After all, Walter Model's 9th Army was not actually defeated, but successfully left the salient in the winter of 1943. On March 3, 1943, Soviet troops entered the city abandoned by the enemy. Considering the data provided, we can safely say that Model's army did not leave Rzhev, but fled, because it could no longer hold back the onslaught of Soviet troops.

The most important thing is that significant Wehrmacht forces were diverted from the Stalingrad direction, which affected the course of the battle on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front. As a result, the Germans failed to implement their own plan – Operation Smerch, aimed at crushing the Northwestern and Kalinin Fronts. And the success at Stalingrad ultimately led to a decisive turning point in the course of the entire war.

In conclusion, I would also like to touch on the topic of one of the myths about the Battle of Rzhev. In addition to the monstrous figures of losses, and historical fantasists even go as far as voicing the figure of 8 million (which is strange, since such a mass of troops simply were not concentrated here), so, in addition to the myths about losses, we constantly come across some "memories" that they went into the attack with shovel handles and there was one rifle for three people. Different things happened at the front, it is possible that such situations also happened, for example, when it was necessary to enter the battle right from the train, as happened, for example, with the Pacific Fleet sailors near Rozhdestveno (Istra district).

It is also said that the Red Army soldiers were poorly armed, and the "foolish commanders" drove everyone to the slaughter with the help of barrier troops. But the soldiers in 1942 really did not shoot much. The picture of the consumption of small arms ammunition was such that the commander of the Kalinin Front M.A. Purkayev in his order of September 10, 1942 No. 091 indicated: "Combat experience shows that the consumption of rifle and machine gun ammunition in combat is extremely insignificant. The battle, both defensive and offensive, takes place mainly with artillery fire. The soldier does not fire his weapon, fearing to expose himself to the enemy by shooting, and waits for destructive actions from artillery fire" (Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence, fund 213, inventory 2002, file 102, sheet 144).

Moreover, we have studied the information of search teams working in the fields and forests of the Tver Oblast. They state that when raising the so-called "upper" dead, that is, those who died directly in battle, they in most cases see them fully armed, often with several grenades, always full of ammunition. Thus, it cannot be said that the soldiers



BY DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION VLADIMIR PUTIN ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2007, THE CITY OF RZHEV WAS AWARDED THE HONORARY TITLE OF "CITY OF MILITARY GLORY" FOR THE COURAGE, FORTITUDE AND MASS HEROISM DEMONSTRATED BY THE CITY'S DEFENDERS IN THE FIGHT FOR THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE FATHERLAND.

ON JUNE 30, 2020, THE RZHEV MEMORIAL TO THE SOVIET SOLDIER WAS OPENED. THE 25-METER BRONZE SCULPTURE RISES ON A 10-METER MOUND, IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE M-9 "BALTIA" HIGHWAY, A FEW KILOMETERS FROM THE CITY OF MILITARY GLORY RZHEV. MORE THAN A THOUSAND PEOPLE CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEMORIAL, AND OVER 500 MILLION RUBLES IN DONATIONS WERE COLLECTED. TRANSNEFT PJSC PROVIDED SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEMORIAL.

were poorly armed. A significant number of the dead, as we have already noted, is the result of the work of the "god of war" – artillery. The defense of the 9th Army of the Wehrmacht, dug in on the Rzhev salient, mainly relied on guns.

The commander of the 6th German Infantry Division, Horst Grossmann, wrote in his memoirs: "We were reliably helped by the artillery, which fired as long as its ammunition lasted. It often disrupted the attack of the Russian infantry at the very moment it began. Without it, it would have been impossible to hold the positions".

In this regard, the legends about chained German machine gunners who kill Red Army soldiers by the thousands have nothing to do with reality. Machine gun crews, although certainly a serious target, were not the biggest problem for the attackers. At the same time, artillery, firing from closed positions on the instructions of spotters from the front, could only be suppressed by return artillery fire.

To interpret the battles near Rzhev as a senseless sending of Soviet soldiers to their death seems to us to be a meanness to the memory of them and to their sacrificial feat. ●

“URANUS” IS ALMOST NOT VISIBLE

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

THE TURNING POINT IN THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD, WHERE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE FATE OF THE CAUCASUS AND THE SOVIET OIL PRODUCTION STRUCTURE WAS BEING DECIDED, CAME IN NOVEMBER 1942 WITH THE START OF OPERATION “URANUS”

On the evening of November 8, 1942, Hitler declared victory at Stalingrad in a speech to Nazi veterans at the Bürgerbräukeller beer hall in Munich. It was exactly two weeks away from what the Germans would call a catastrophe.

The defeat suffered near Kharkov in May 1942 significantly weakened the Red Army's defense in the area of the Southern and Southwestern Fronts. In accordance with the strategic plan “Blau”, 80 Nazi divisions rushed to the Volga.

In the summer of 1942, enjoying a more than two-fold advantage in men, tanks and aircraft, the Wehrmacht entered the great bend of the Don, creating a direct threat to Stalingrad and the Caucasus. At the end of July 1942, the enemy pushed the Soviet troops back beyond the Don and was only a few dozen kilometers from Stalingrad. A particularly alarming situation developed on August 23, when the enemy's advanced 14th Tank Corps broke through to the Volga north of Stalingrad, cutting off the 62nd Army from the rest of the forces of the Stalingrad Front.

By this time, the 62nd Army had retained its combat capability, but the personnel of its divisions, battered by the battles in the bend of the Don, had been reduced by almost five times. Realizing that Stalingrad could not be held with such forces against the German divisions lined



SOVIET MEDIUM TANK T-34-76. ASSEMBLED IN KHARKOV, NIZHNY TAGIL, LENINGRAD, CHELYABINSK, KRASNOYE SORMOVO AND STALINGRAD

up in a horseshoe, it was decided to reinforce the 62nd Army with the 13th Guards Division of A. I. Rodimtsev. A new army commander, V. I. Chuikov, arrived at the army's location.

The fuel service of the Stalingrad Front was also in a difficult situation. In July, the supply of fuel from the Caucasus via Rostov-on-Don was stopped, and then along the Salsk-Stalingrad route. During these months, the troops operating north of Stalingrad were supplied from Saratov, Syzran, Yaroslavl, Kazan, Orsk and Perm. Fuel was delivered to Vladimirskaya Pristan, Elton, Kalach, and also to Kamyshin, where a fuel depot was created underground. Some of the fuel was stored on barges anchored in the Volga, to which a welded pipeline was stretched along the bottom.

The supply scheme for the Soviet troops fighting south of Stalingrad was even more complicated. From the Caucasus, it was first transported to Krasnovodsk via the Caspian Sea, then delivered to the fronts by rail via Tashkent. This route was significantly shortened as early as August 1942: a fuel transfer point was put into operation in Guryev, which received fuel arriving via the Caspian Sea from Baku and Makhachkala. In just 12 days, a temporary pier and a railway line were built, and dredging work was carried out. The Guryevsky loading point managed to handle 1-1.2 thousand railway tank cars per day. When it became clear that there were not enough tank cars, they were delivered from the railways of the North Caucasus

and Transcaucasia, towed from the western to the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea directly by water.

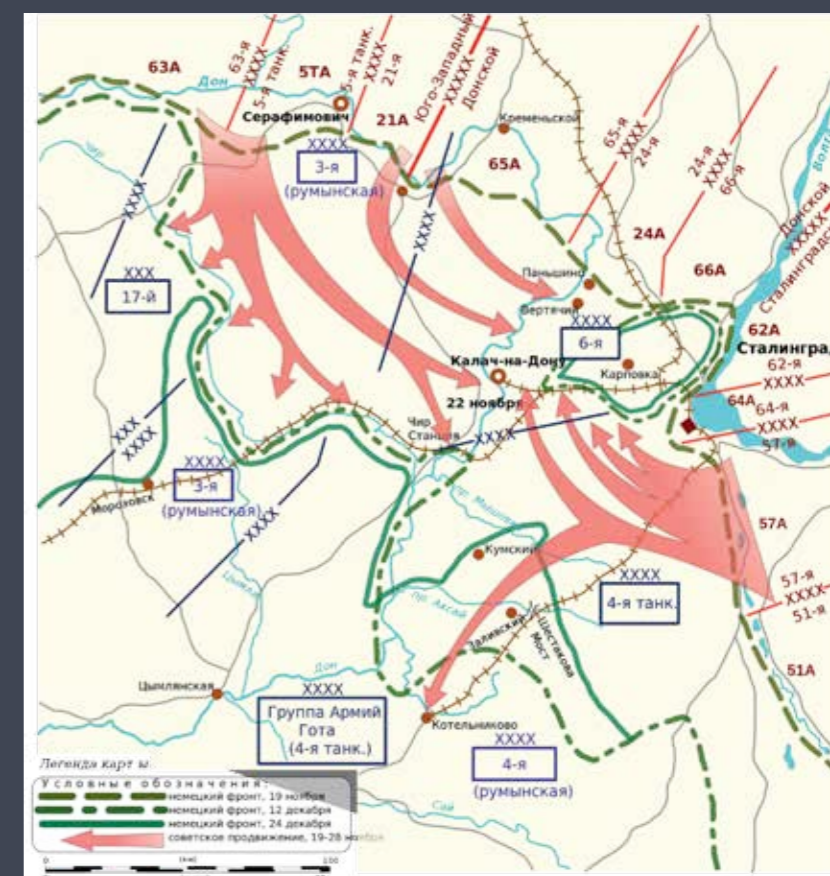
“THERE IS NO LAND BEYOND THE VOLGA”

The enemy continued to advance. On September 14, having dealt powerful blows along the entire front, the Nazis began the first assault on Stalingrad. The Germans quickly found the “weakest link” in the Soviet defense. It turned out to be the 112th Rifle Division, which by that time had only a hundred soldiers left in each regiment. Having broken through its positions to Mamayev Kurgan and being only a few hundred meters from the Volga, the Germans intended to capture the central crossing. If this task had been accomplished, the city would have fallen that same day.

The Germans tried to exploit their success by introducing divisions of Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army into the city streets. With the words “there is no land for us beyond the Volga”, V. I. Chuikov sent his last reserves into battle: several tanks and headquarters guards. In bloody battles, the Nazis managed to capture the southern part of the city and the Stalingrad grain elevator. But reinforcements had already begun to arrive from across the Volga to help the defenders. Their counterattack pushed the Germans back from the central crossing, and on September 19, Mamayev Kurgan was recaptured. On that day, the troops of the Stalingrad Front attempted to join up with the city's defenders; the Nazis repelled the onslaught, but, in turn, were unable to support the attackers with reserves.

At the end of September, the commander of the 6th Army of the Wehrmacht, Friedrich Paulus, led his troops to a second assault. Fierce fighting resumed on the streets of the city.

The buildings that the Germans were diligently destroying also became a serious obstacle for enemy tanks. In addition, the lack of visible landmarks among the ruins made it difficult to guide dive bombers to their targets.



OPERATION “URANUS”

WHILE DEFENDING THE CITY, THE SOVIET COMMAND WAS ALSO THINKING ABOUT A LARGE-SCALE COUNTEROFFENSIVE. IN SEPTEMBER 1942, A PLAN CODENAMED “URANUS” WAS DEVELOPED. IT ENVISAGED DELIVERING POWERFUL STRIKES NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE CITY TO ENCIRCLE THE NAZIS. FUEL WORKERS WERE ALSO TRAINED IN ABSOLUTE SECRECY. FUEL WAS DELIVERED BY RAIL AND ALONG THE VOLGA ONLY AT NIGHT. BY THE START OF THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE, THE FRONTS PARTICIPATING IN IT WERE SUPPLIED WITH HIGH-OCTANE AVIATION GASOLINE – FOR 7 FILLING STATIONS, AUTOMOBILE GASOLINE – FOR 3.3 AND DIESEL FUEL – FOR 8.8 FILLING STATIONS.

V. I. Chuikov ordered his soldiers to reduce the distance from the Germans to 20–30 m during air raids. This forced the Luftwaffe to completely abandon horizontal bombing. Another important decision by V. I. Chuikov was the transfer of heavy artillery of the 62nd Army to the eastern bank of the Volga. There it was easier to protect it from aviation and, more importantly, to supply it with ammunition.

In early October, the Germans again broke into the railway station area, pressing the Red Army units to the Volga. At this critical moment, units of the 37th Guards Rifle Division of V.G. Zholudev arrived to help the

defenders, entrenching themselves in the area of the tractor plant.

In mid-October, the Germans launched their third and most powerful assault on Stalingrad. They captured the tractor plant, broke through to the Volga, cutting the 62nd Army into two parts, and were only 300 m away from V. I. Chuikov's command post. The situation was saved by salvos of Katyusha rocket launchers and new reinforcements – the 138th Rifle Division of Colonel I. I. Lyudnikov. This unit held a 200 m wide patch of land near the Volga for almost a month and a half, which was named “Lyudnikov's Island”.



THE FIRST EVER RAFTING OF RAILWAY TANK CARS ON THE CASPIAN SEA



VASILY IVANOVICH CHUIKOV (JANUARY 31 [FEBRUARY 12], 1900, SEREBRYANYE PRUDY VILLAGE, TULA PROVINCE – MARCH 18, 1982, MOSCOW) – COMMANDER OF THE 62ND ARMY (8TH GUARDS ARMY). MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION (1955). TWICE HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION (1944, 1945)

REAR ON THE FRONT LINE

In such conditions, with enemy aviation dominating the air, supplying fuel to the Soviet troops fighting in Stalingrad was a truly difficult task. Before the Nazis approached, front-line and army depots had to be moved to the left bank of the Volga. On the right bank, a section of the army depot (containers in dugouts) remained 100 m from the water. Supplies for the units fighting in the city were delivered in cans and barrels on motor launches and even on rowboats. As a rear-guard service, the fuelmen operated on the very real front line.

The thunder of artillery preparation on November 19 announced the

beginning of the Stalingrad offensive operation. That day, the Southwestern and Don Fronts went into action, and on November 20, the Stalingrad Front joined them. Already on November 23, the troops of the Southwestern and Stalingrad Fronts met, closing the encirclement around General Paulus's units.

In mid-December, the Wehrmacht launched Operation "Winter Storm", the last attempt to unblock Paulus' encircled group in Stalingrad. Field Marshal Manstein's Army Group Don broke through the positions of the 4th Guards Tank Army at the cost of enormous losses, but was stopped by Malinovsky's 2nd Guards Army,

which had arrived from the reserve (as it advanced, fuel for the tanks was delivered by planes that had taken off from airfields near Moscow). In the morning, a confused Manstein, seeing half a thousand Soviet tanks in front of him, reported to Berlin: "The whole steppe is filled with Russian tanks".

As a result of the successful actions of the Soviet troops in November-December, conditions were created for the liquidation of the encircled enemy group in the Stalingrad region. The Germans' attempt to supply the encircled group with the help of an "air bridge" failed: in two months the Nazis lost almost 500 aircraft, which was felt by them until the very end of the war. In the second half of January, the Nazis began to take out of the cauldron the most valuable personnel necessary for the continuation of the war – generals and colonels.

On January 26, 1943, the 6th Army of the Nazi troops was cut into two parts: the southern part, together with Paulus's entire headquarters, surrendered on January 31, and the northern part, under the command of Colonel General Strecker, laid down its arms on February 2.

To support combat operations at the final stage of the Battle of Stalingrad, the troops were supplied with 11.4 thousand tons of fuel, or 475 tons per day. With a consumption of 556 tons per day, which was not covered by the supply, the previously accumulated reserves came in very handy. The main difficulties in providing fuel for the counteroffensive were in delivering it from the front and army warehouses to the troops. This task, working under great stress, was carried out by motor transport.

The Battle of Stalingrad was a turning point in World War II. In the bloody confrontation, one German army and three of its allies were completely destroyed, and three more German armies suffered heavy losses. An equally important result of the battle was that the Nazis could no longer threaten the USSR's oil fields in the Caucasus. ●

BLITZKRIEG FOR CAUCASIAN OIL

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

IN 1942 THE MAIN EVENTS OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR TOOK PLACE IN THE SOUTHERN DIRECTION. FEROCIOUS BATTLES UNFOLDED FOR POSITIONS, PASSES, MOUNTAIN RANGES, HEIGHTS AND PORTS OF THE CAUCASUS

Having suffered a defeat near Moscow, Hitler refused the second attempt to seize the Soviet capital proposed by his generals. There were several reasons. Firstly, the Fuhrer believed that this move would be predictable for the enemy. Secondly, Germany began to experience a shortage of oil reserves: the Romanian fields were providing less and less crude oil. The Fuhrer saw the only acceptable way to solve the problem in seizing the Caucasian and Baku oil fields. Therefore, the entire offensive power of the German Wehrmacht was deployed in the southern direction. 80 Nazi divisions rushed to the Caucasus and the Volga.

In the summer of 1942, having overcome the stubborn resistance of the Red Army and having captured Rostov-on-Don on July 23, the Nazis managed to reach the great bend of the Don and create a direct threat to Stalingrad and the Caucasus. The German Army Group South was divided into two parts: the southern group A under the command of Field Marshal Wilhelm List headed to the Caucasus to capture the Baku oil region, and the northern army group B launched an offensive on Voronezh and the Volga. The troops of the North Caucasian Front under the command of Marshal



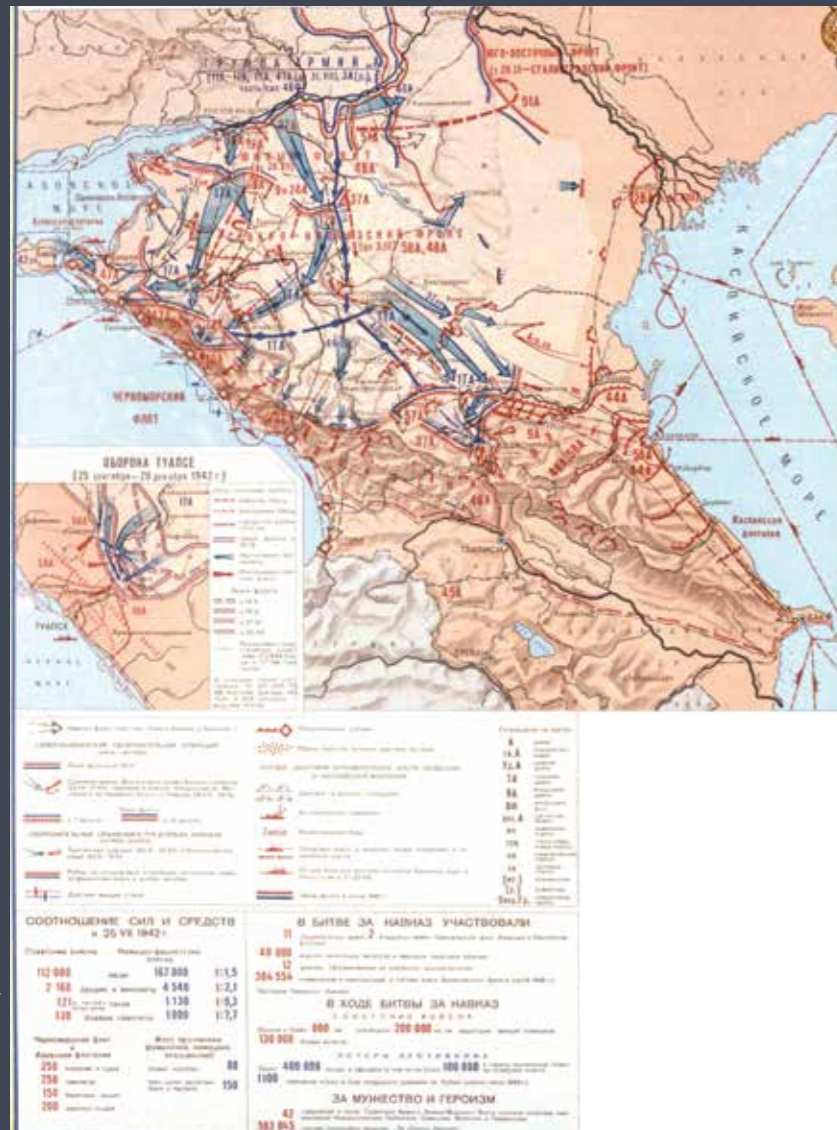
S. M. Budyonny confronted the army group A.

The Fuhrer did not consider the capture of the Caucasus a complex super-task. In approving the Edelweiss plan, Hitler not only went against the opinion of his generals, who believed that active operations in the mountains could not begin until the victory at Stalingrad, but also withdrew seven fully equipped divisions from the Caucasus direction. He was sure that the Soviet armies were already sufficiently weakened and would soon be destroyed between the Don and the Caucasus. And then German and Romanian oil

specialists would come into play, easily and quickly establishing stable fuel supplies for the needs of the Third Reich.

"GULLS" OVER THE CAUCASUS

Indeed, at first it seemed that no force could hold back the advancing Germans. Large motorized infantry units of the Wehrmacht rapidly rolled forward, capturing vast areas to the south and southeast of Rostov-on-Don. The earth shook from the movement of more than 1,100 German tanks, clanking tracks ground the roads into dust, which rose in high and long



Valentin Cheredintsev/TASS

HEROIC DEFENSE OF THE CAUCASUS, JULY – DECEMBER 1942

understand how to best use your forces”.

In mountainous conditions, the seemingly outdated I-153 “Gull” biplanes showed unexpected effectiveness: slow for modern combat, but exceptionally maneuverable for attacking enemy positions. These machines were specially armed with rockets. In the Caucasus, Soviet aviators successfully operated taking into account the specifics of the terrain: unable to destroy scattered German columns on the roads, they struck at the mountain slopes, burying enemy equipment under rubble.

GATEWAY TO TURKEY

On August 3, the Germans captured Stavropol. 800 soldiers, armed only with rifles and mortars, held the defense for a day, but were unable to do more against the tank division. However, the further the Germans advanced, the more difficulties they had with supplying their troops. The motor columns that delivered fuel themselves used up most of the fuel on the way. Often, one or another Nazi tank unit had to stop with dry tanks, and this gave the Red Army time to bring up reserves. On August 10, the Germans entered Maikop, hoping to seize fuel and oil there. They found neither: everything had been taken away or burned, the wells were clogged, the equipment evacuated.

On August 12, the Red Army left Krasnodar, and on August 25, Mozdok. With the German troops reaching the foothills of the Caucasus, the Soviet troops in the Western and Eastern Caucasus were cut to pieces. In the second half of August 1942, the Wehrmacht launched an offensive on Anapa and Novorossiysk. The German generals considered the latter to be the gateway to the coastal road, which, by breaking into, could lead to the Turkish border

via Tuapse, Sochi, Sukhumi, and Batumi.

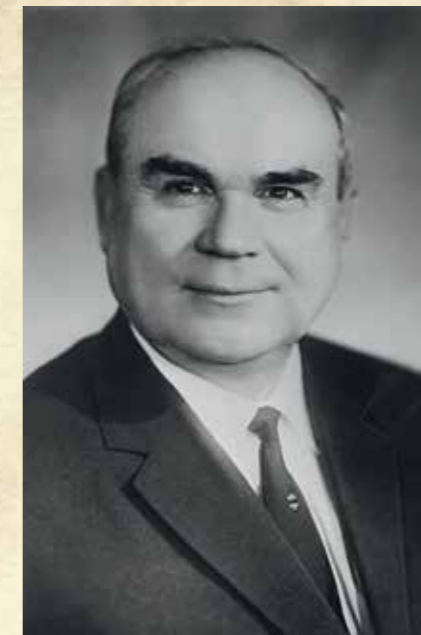
In the Caucasus, the Wehrmacht operated with well-trained tactically and technically mountain units, with special equipment, weapons, and food rations. They were staffed by athletes who had participated in joint Soviet-German expeditions to the USSR during the 1930s. For comparison, the Red Army’s mountain rifle units differed from regular infantry only in having mountain guns and mules to transport them. Before the war, Soviet mountain climbers repeatedly initiated the creation of specialized units, but each time they received the answer: “We are not going to fight in Elbrus!”.

In fact, the enemy’s dreams of breaking through to Asia Minor and joining up with Rommel’s African Corps were dashed by the steadfastness of the Soviet soldiers, who had entrenched themselves in the industrial region on the eastern edge of the Caucasus and stopped the Nazis from advancing any further.

Then the Germans made several attempts to unblock the seaside road by attacking through the mountains to Tuapse. The attack was carried out by General Lanz’s group, which included 14 units and formations of Army Group A and had 150 tanks and 350 aircraft. To repel this threat, the ships of the Black Sea Fleet promptly delivered reserves from Poti. Memories have preserved episodes of participation in attacks on the enemy who had infiltrated through the gorges, even of the wounded and surgeons from the Tuapse hospitals. In stubborn battles, the enemy was stopped here too.

In October 1942, fierce battles broke out in the Grozny area. The city was ablaze, oil tanks were burning, but the enemy failed to capture the large oil region.

The following episode was connected, in particular, with the struggle for oil from the Caucasian



Vladimir Savostyanov, Evgeny Kasin/TASS

NIKOLAY KONSTANTINOVICH BAIBAKOV (MARCH 7, 1911, THE VILLAGE OF SABUNCHI, BAKU GOVERNORATE – MARCH 31, 2008, MOSCOW) – DEPUTY PEOPLE’S COMMISSAR OF THE OIL INDUSTRY DURING THE WAR, CHAIRMAN OF THE USSR STATE PLANNING COMMITTEE, HERO OF SOCIALIST LABOR (1981), LENIN PRIZE LAUREATE (1963)

fields. Back in the summer of 1942, the Deputy People’s Commissar of the Oil Industry of the USSR N.K. Baibakov was summoned to the Kremlin. The task of “not leaving a single ton of oil to the Nazis” was set personally by I.V. Stalin:

– Keep in mind that if the Germans break through and get the oil, we will shoot you. But even if they don’t reach the fields and you destroy them, you will be shot too.

– Comrade Stalin, you leave me no choice at all.

– There is always a choice. And it’s here, in your head.

N.K. Baibakov was appointed as the authorized representative of the State Defense Committee for the destruction of oil wells and oil refineries in the Caucasus region. And the commander of the Southern Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union S.M. Budyonny, was to assist him. N.K. Baibakov organized the work as follows:

when the enemy approached, all valuable equipment was dismantled and taken to the east of the country, low-yield wells were immediately put out of operation, and especially rich ones continued to be used and were destroyed in the most extreme circumstances. As a result, the Germans were unable to use the resources of the Krasnodar oil fields. The Germans highly valued N.K. Baibakov’s activities in their own way: in their leaflets, they offered 180 thousand Reichsmarks and 200 cows for his head.

Simultaneously with the battles in the Caucasian and Grozny directions, fierce battles began on the passes of the Main Caucasian Range, which were attacked by a German mountain rifle corps and two Romanian mountain rifle divisions. In order to strengthen the mountain lines on the Ossetian and Georgian Military Roads, the Red Army carried out work to prepare for the collapse of cliffs, flooding of territories, and built strongholds. The Germans had to operate in mountain conditions with centuries-old forests and dense undergrowth on terrain that was unsuitable not only for tank operations, but often even for the movement of pack transport.

The German offensive reached its highest point on November 2, 1942, near the village of Gizel, a few kilometers from Vladikavkaz. A counteroffensive by Soviet troops in this area a few days later led to the encirclement of units of two German tank divisions. Fighting their way to their own, the Wehrmacht soldiers abandoned more than a hundred tanks and over 2,000 vehicles. And by the end of the month it became clear that after the great “drama of Stalingrad,” as the Germans called it, they were turning from the attacking side to the defending side in the Caucasus. Hitler’s oil campaign failed. ●

AS THE HARMONICA DIDN'T PLAY

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

IN THE FALL OF 1942, THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE REACHED ITS MAXIMUM DEPTH. 8% OF THE SOVIET TERRITORY, WHERE MORE THAN 40% OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION LIVED BEFORE THE WAR, CAME UNDER ENEMY CONTROL

In the summer of 1942, the German Army Group South, under Plan "Blau", launched an offensive in the Caucasus and the Volga. Why Blau? Hitler's headquarters believed that the tradition of distinguishing military campaign plans by color contributed to success. Thus, under Plan "White", Poland was defeated in 1939. The implementation of Plan "Yellow" in 1940 led to victory over Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Under Plan "Red", the French campaign ended that same year.

In the southern direction, Hitler set strict deadlines for achieving the campaign goals before winter set in. Stalingrad was planned to be taken by July 25, Saratov by August 10, Astrakhan by August 5, and Baku by the end of September.

The Battle of Stalingrad began for the Red Army in the worst traditions of 1941. In place of the defeated Southwestern Front, the Stalingrad Front was created in the summer of 1942. The 6th Army of General Paulus, constantly reinforced by reserves, approached the new positions hastily occupied by the Red Army soldiers. The Germans were so confident of a quick victory that, contrary to their own military science, they moved forward not in converging, but in diverging directions. The northern wing of the offensive entered Voronezh and continued advancing

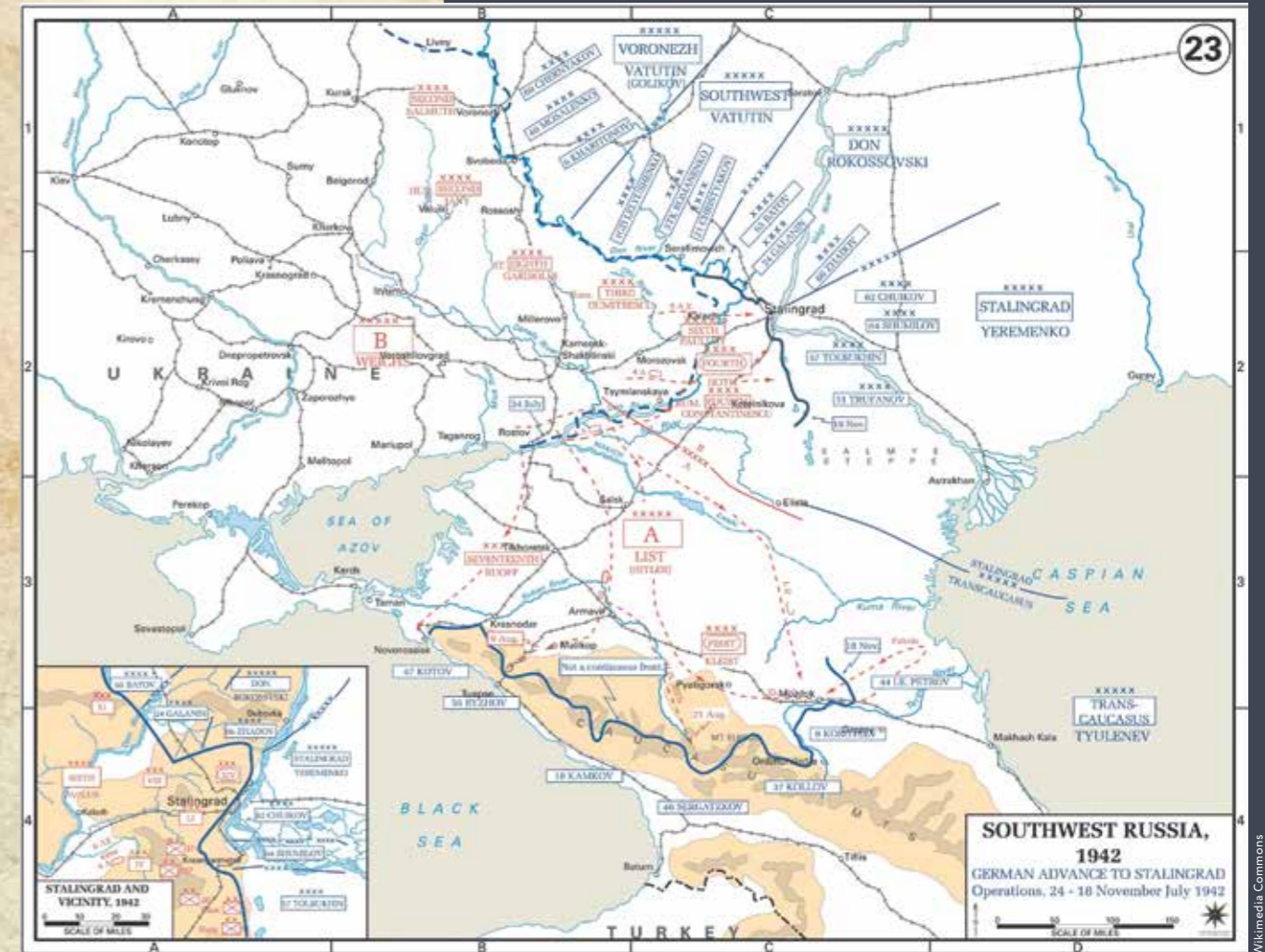


POLITICAL STAFF OF THE 118TH RIFLE DIVISION (CREATED ON THE BASIS OF THE 152ND RIFLE BRIGADE) OF THE 28TH ARMY, MAY 1943

toward Stalingrad. The southern wing turned to the Caucasus. Astrakhan, a strategically important city through which the Red Army units holding positions on the Volga were supplied with everything necessary, was also of interest to the Nazis. This point occupied an important place in the Caspian-Volga transport corridor, which supplied the Soviet Army and defense industry with oil and oil products from Baku. During the Battle of Stalingrad, sailors delivered over 5 million tons of various types of fuel using tankers and railway

tanks (which were towed afloat for the first time in world practice).

To capture Astrakhan, according to the special plan "Grey Heron", the Wehrmacht allocated a special group consisting of the 16th Motorized Rifle Division and units of the 6th Romanian Corps. The Germans were to move to the mouth of the Volga through the capital of Kalmykia – Elista. At the same time, two Romanian divisions were tasked with advancing along the northern regions of the steppe republic. On the 300-kilometer front from the Sarpinsky Lakes to



GERMAN MAP OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST OF THE USSR IN 1942 (OPERATION BLAU)

Dagestan, they were opposed by only two formations – the 34th Guards Division and the 152nd Separate Rifle Brigade as part of the 28th Army.

"There was no continuous line, German units regularly broke through to our rear", recalled 28th Army veteran Alexander Kuznetsov. "Add to this the air superiority of enemy aircraft, and this was in the flat Kalmyk steppe, where there was not a hill or tree to take cover".

NOT A STEP BACK

Wehrmacht units entered Kalmykia in early August 1942. During the first week, the Germans occupied the Western and Yamaltinsky uluses. By mid-August, the Red Army had left the village of Priyutnoye and the northern part of the Maloderbetovskiy and Sarpinsky uluses.

The defense of Elista was held by a combined detachment of a

cavalry squadron, a rifle battalion, an artillery division of ten guns, and a tank company of seven tanks. They were supported by Komsomol militia members and two platoons of police officers. The heroic efforts of the small detachment lasted for two days of fighting.

On August 12, the fascist troops captured Elista and continued moving east towards Astrakhan. Incidentally, the capital of Kalmykia was under German occupation for almost five months. The Gestapo and commandant's office were established in the city, and the police were active. But partisans did not leave the enemy alone. They aimed

aircraft at the Nazi barracks, blew up wells and even set fire to the school building where the German officers were quartered.

By mid-September, the front line was already 150 km from Astrakhan. The Nazis believed that they would take it in a few days and bombarded the positions of the Soviet troops with propaganda leaflets: "We will take Stalingrad by bombing, we will enter Astrakhan with a harmonica".

At the end of September, the 34th Guards Division and the 152nd Separate Rifle Brigade, which had lost almost half of their personnel in stubborn battles in the steppe, received significant reinforcements

of men and equipment, including two armored trains, the Vasily Chapayev and the Kzyl Tatarstan.

The stubborn, bloody confrontation continued. Until November 20, the troops of the 28th Army thwarted all enemy attempts to break through to the mouth of the Volga and cut the Astrakhan-Kizlyar railway line, and then, when the encirclement ring around Paulus's 6th Army closed near Stalingrad, they themselves went on the offensive.

"SHIELD OF EUROPE"

On December 23, 1942, Soviet units reached the village of Yashkul and flanked the German defensive positions. The Germans used the deep ravines and hills of the Yergeni Upland as natural boundaries, where they deployed a screen of tanks, artillery and motorized infantry. The weather was also unfavorable for the advancing troops: a cold wind was blowing, snowing and raining heavily.

During the fighting in the last ten days of December, Yashkul, the villages of Troitskoye and Voznesenovka were liberated, and on New Year's Eve – Elista was liberated.

Soldiers of the 105th Guards Rifle Regiment were the first to burst into the capital of the republic. And a few minutes before the New Year,



THE MONUMENT TO THE SOLDIERS OF THE 28TH ARMY WAS ERECTED IN 1982 NEAR THE ROAD FROM ASTRAKHAN TO ELISTA, 2 KM FROM THE VILLAGE OF KHULKHUTA IN THE YASHKULSKY DISTRICT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KALMYKIA. AT THIS PLACE, IN 1942, THE ADVANCE OF GERMAN TROOPS TOWARDS ASTRAKHAN WAS STOPPED. INFORMATION PLAQUES WITH THE NAMES OF MILITARY FORMATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE BATTLE AT KHULKHUTA ARE PLACED IN THE NICHES OF THE OBELISK.

TO THE RIGHT OF THE OBELISK ARE MASS GRAVES OF SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS OF THE 28TH ARMY WITH THE NAMES OF THE FALLEN. THE LOSSES OF THE 28TH ARMY ON NOVEMBER 20–21 IN THIS PLACE WERE 849 KILLED AND 1,005 WOUNDED, WITH ANOTHER 267 MISSING. HERE, 20-YEAR-OLD MEDICAL ORDERLY NATALYA KACHUYEVSKAYA PERFORMED HER FEAT, SAVING 20 SOVIET SOLDIERS AND BLOWING HERSELF AND THE ENEMY UP WITH HER LAST GRENADE.

IN 2009, THE MEMORIAL COMPLEX WAS INCLUDED IN THE REGISTER OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KALMYKIA...

units of the 28th Army entered Elista. On the morning of January 1, the victorious Red Banner was raised over the ruins of the House of Soviets building. It was hoisted by the instructor of the political department of the 34th Guards Rifle Division, Senior Lieutenant Mikhail Kondakov, Sergeant Vladimir Nikanorov and political officer Bulda Mandzhiev.

In the battles for Elista, the Red Army soldiers defeated the 60th motorized infantry regiment, the engineer battalion, the battalion of the 156th regiment and other enemy units.

It is interesting how German propaganda changed after the defeat at Stalingrad and Astrakhan. If up to that point the war with the USSR was explained by the need to "conquer new lands in the East," now German soldiers were presented as defenders of Europe – its shield. In the Signal magazine, published from 1940 to 1945 and intended for Wehrmacht servicemen, in March 1943 the soldiers killed and captured at Stalingrad were presented as freedom fighters for the entire continent. They were compared to the Spartans, forgetting to mention that the Spartans fought the Persians on their own land, and not somewhere far to the East. ●

THE FEAT OF A SCIENTIST

AUTHOR DMITRY KONSTANTINOV

ON AUGUST 3, 1942, ON THE DAY THE NAZIS CAPTURED VOROSHILOVSK (PRESENT-DAY STAVROPOL), MEDICAL SERVICE MAJOR MAGDALENA POKROVSKAYA EVACUATED SAMPLES OF THE PLAGUE AND TULAREMIA VACCINES SHE HAD INVENTED FROM THE CITY

In the summer of 1942, in accordance with Plan "Blau", the German Army Group "A" attempted to break through to the oil fields of the Caucasus. According to a report from Soviet aerial reconnaissance, "by the beginning of August, 25 km from Voroshilovsk, the enemy had concentrated over 200 tanks, tankettes, a large number of armored vehicles, about a thousand motorcycles, up to 300 trucks with troops, as well as passenger cars. The enemy has a variety of artillery at his disposal".

The garrison of Voroshilovsk numbered about 800 men, 25 mortars and only one gun (anti-aircraft). After intense bombardment (12 air raids) and short, sometimes hand-to-hand fighting, the city was captured by German troops on August 3 at 19:00.

According to eyewitnesses, the bombers avoided only one building in the city – the Ordzhonikidze anti-plague station, where Magdalena Pokrovskaya worked in the microbiology laboratory before the war.

Magdalena Petrovna Pokrovskaya was born on July 12, 1901, in the village of Kiselevka, Saratov province. In 1923, she graduated from the Saratov Medical Institute. Actively involved in the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases such as malaria and plague, in 1927 she headed the anti-plague department of the microbiological institute in Rostov-on-Don. Since 1929, she has been developing an anti-plague vaccine based on bacteriophages.

On March 8, 1934, in Stavropol, Magdalena Pokrovskaya successfully tested a new anti-plague vaccine on



MAGDALENA POKROVSKAYA

herself. The world's first plague vaccine was created by microbiologist Vladimir Khavkin and successfully tested on January 10, 1897. But Pokrovskaya's vaccine turned out to be more universal and less dangerous for humans.

In 1939, Magdalina Petrovna was called up for military service. During the Finnish campaign, she experimented with the use of bacteriophages to treat infected wounds in military field conditions. In 1940, she returned to Stavropol, where she began developing a vaccine against tularemia.

With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, Magdalina Pokrovskaya was evacuated from Voroshilovsk to Moscow. When the threat of the Nazis capturing the materials of the Ordzhonikidze anti-plague station became obvious, Magdalina Petrovna fled to Astrakhan and on August 3 at about 17:00 drove into Voroshilovsk by car. She managed to take the vaccine strains from the laboratory, but on the way back the driver asked for time

off to say goodbye to his family and disappeared.

The keys were still in the ignition, but Pokrovskaya did not know how to drive the car. With the help of refugees, she managed to leave the city and drive the car with the valuable cargo to the nearest Red Army positions. There, Pokrovskaya was assigned a driver and mechanic, and eventually the strains were transported to a laboratory in the city of Frunze (modern Bishkek).

In 1945, Soviet troops entered the territory of the "plague island" of Riems in the Bay of Greifswald, where a bacteriological research institute founded by Robert Koch's learner Friedrich Loeffler was located. There, in particular, documents and photographs from the Ordzhonikidze anti-plague station were found. The assumption that bacteriological weapons were being developed on Riems does not seem excessive given the use of such weapons by many warring countries.

Professor, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Honored Scientist of the RSFSR Magdalina Pokrovskaya was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, the Red Star, the medals "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945", "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War".

Since 1958, she worked at the Moscow Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, and was one of the initiators of research into cellular mechanisms in anti-infective immunity. She passed away in 1980 and was buried in Stavropol at the Danilovskoye Cemetery. ●



NATALYA KACHUEVSKAYA, FIRST YEAR STUDENT AT GITIS, 1940

BU RK "N.N. Palmov National Museum of the Republic of Kalmykia"

Wikimedia Commons

THE BROTHERHOOD THAT DESPISED DEATH

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEVEN-MONTH DEFENSE OF THE MALAYA ZEMLYA BRIDGEHEAD NEAR NOVOROSSIYSK IN 1943 HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN EXTOLLED AND DOWNPLAYED. AN OBJECTIVE LOOK AT THE EVENTS SHOWS THAT THEY WERE NOT AN ORDINARY EPISODE ON THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF THE SOVIET-GERMAN FRONT

After the defeat of the German troops at Stalingrad, the Supreme Command Headquarters thought of repeating this success in the Kuban. This time, it was planned to encircle and destroy the 17th Army of the Wehrmacht, which had hastily retreated from the Caucasus to the Taman Peninsula.

Holding Taman with a 400,000-strong group, the Germans simultaneously "covered" the Crimea they had occupied and created a significant threat in the rear of the Soviet troops. The depth of the defensive fortifications here reached an impressive five to six kilometers. Three infantry, a mountain rifle and cavalry divisions were entrenched on the Taman Peninsula. Three more Nazi divisions constituted the reserve.

Preparations for the landing of Soviet troops near Novorossiysk lasted several months. For the operation codenamed "Sea", two motorized rifle brigades were withdrawn from the front, which were supplemented with personnel and Lend-Lease tanks. The light «Stuarts» did not have thick armor, but with a modest weight of 12 tons they could be transported on special landing craft — Bolinders. These watercraft received their name from a Swedish shipbuilding company that carried out orders from the tsarist government. From the sea, two cruisers, a destroyer leader, two destroyers, patrol and torpedo boats



M3 "STUART" TANK ON THE BEACH OF YUZHNAJA OZEREYKA, 1943

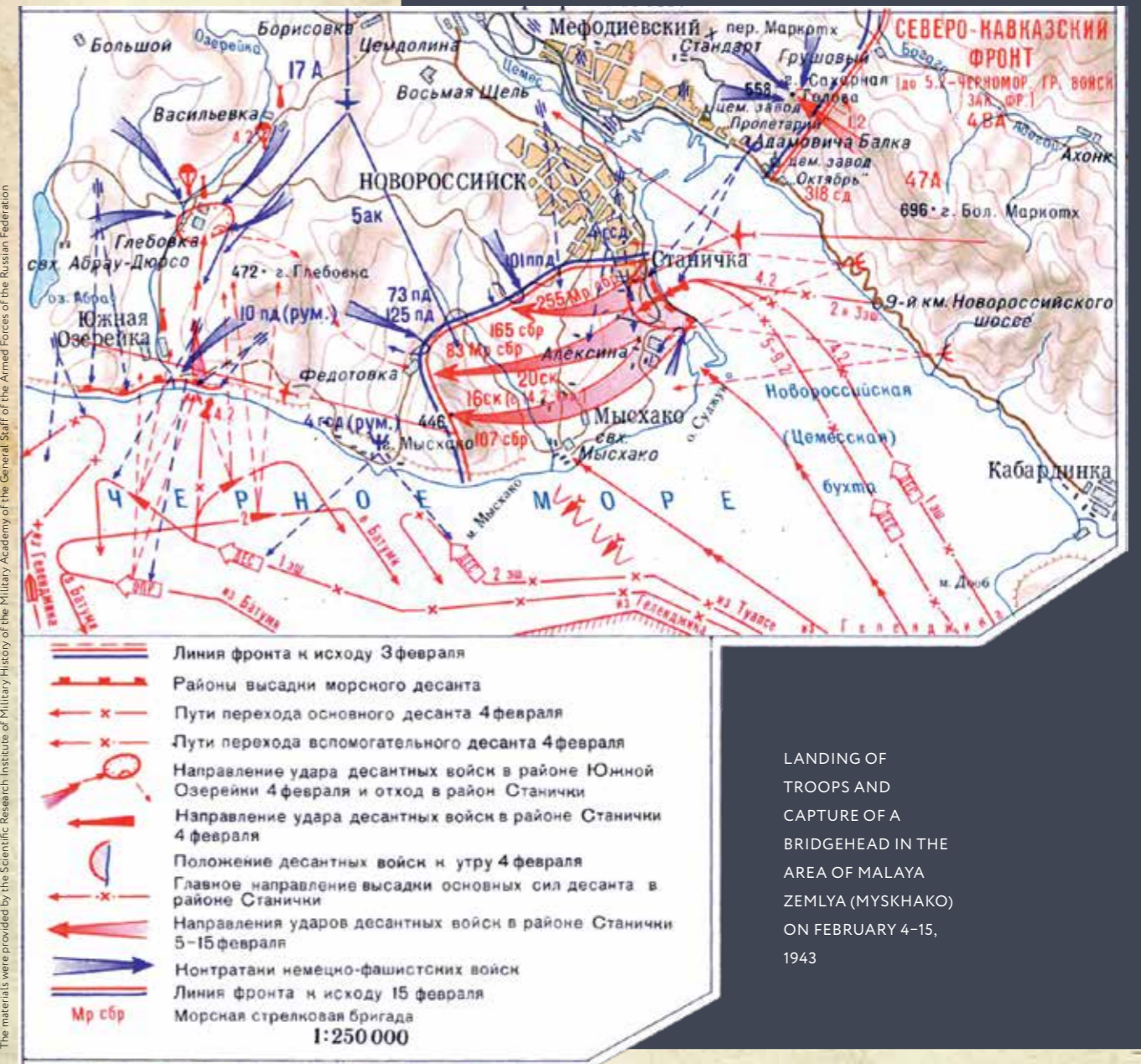
were to provide fire support to the landing force.

The area of Yuzhnaya Ozereyka was determined to be the site of the main attack. Intelligence reported that there was a gap in the sea minefields here, and in the village itself there was up to a company of Romanian soldiers. The plan was to reach the rear of the Germans holding Novorossiysk and take it with the help of joint, synchronized actions with the units of the Black Sea Group of Soviet Forces. This is where the American "Stuarts" were supposed to come in handy for the paratroopers.

In order to distract the Nazis, a landing of auxiliary troops was

prepared in the Stanichka area near Novorossiysk (30 km from Yuzhnaya Ozereyka). In addition, the Black Sea Fleet warships were to "imitate" landings of paratroopers on the shore at Cape Zhelezny Bog, near Anapa and the village of Blagoveshchenskaya.

At the first hour of the morning of February 4, in Yuzhnaya Ozereyka, Glebovka, Vasilyevka, Stanichka and Anapa, the silence was broken first by the roar of aircraft engines, and then by the explosions of numerous bombs. A few minutes later, ships joined the shelling of the shore. Despite the fact that they fired more than two thousand shells at the enemy, the effectiveness of



the artillery preparation was quite low. The German artillery divisions, machine gun and mortar crews, sheltered by the mountains, suffered almost no damage and confidently held the lines they had sighted in advance. They met the landing of the paratroopers, which began at 2:30 a.m., with unrelenting heavy fire. As a result, all three Bolinders were lost, and most of the tanks were unable to overcome even the beach strip.

The storm was getting worse, dawn was approaching, the losses among the sailors and paratroopers were growing, and the headquarters of the operation decided to abandon the

continuation of the landing. By this time, only part of the first echelon troops had been landed in Yuzhnaya Ozereyka — 1,450 people. Deprived of support and communication with the command, the detachment fought for several days with superior enemy forces in the Glebovka area, then tried to break out of the encirclement in groups.

The fate of the landing in the Stanichka area turned out differently; it was planned to be auxiliary, but due to circumstances it became the main one. In fairness, it should be added that such a possibility was not excluded by the operation plan, but

250 paratroopers under the command of Major Tsezar Kunikov did not know about it. The Marines were preparing to accept their last battle, distracting the enemy's attention from Yuzhnaya Ozereyka. "We will give our will, our strength and our blood drop by drop for the life and happiness of our people, for you, our beloved Motherland", Kunikov's men took the oath before loading onto the landing ships.

Kunikov selected each of the 250 fighters himself. There were no random people: defenders of Odessa and Sevastopol, participants in the Feodosia and Kerch landings, heroes of the battles on Taman and in



Evgeny Khalidey/TASS



Photo from the collections of the Kropotkin City Museum of Local Lore

TSEZAR LVOVICH
KUNNIKOV (JUNE
23, 1909, ROSTOV-
ON-DON –
FEBRUARY 14, 1943,
GELENDZHİK) – MAJOR
OF THE MARINES,
COMMANDER OF
THE LANDING
DETACHMENT THAT
CAPTURED THE
MALAYA ZEMLYA
BRIDGEHEAD, HERO OF
THE SOVIET UNION

from all sides that the uninitiated had the impression that an entire division had landed”, German journalist Paul Karel wrote in his post-war book “Tragedies on the Southern Front”.

Building on their success, the command landed a rifle division, four brigades, two regiments and other units on the bridgehead. They built an entire city on Malaya Zemlya: they dug 32 km of trenches, equipped 230 hidden observation posts and more than 500 firing points, and placed a command post at a depth of six meters. From the opposite side of Tsemesskaya Bay, Soviet long-range howitzers provided powerful artillery support to the paratroopers.

Pilots also played a major role in defending the bridgehead on Malaya Zemlya. It was with the battles over Myskhako that the air battles for Kuban began. To neutralize the German dive bombers, which were based only 40 km from Novorossiysk, the Gelendzhik aviation group of Major General V. I. Izotov, numbering about a hundred fighters, was deployed. The battles over Kuban saw the full talent of the master of tactics, Soviet ace Alexander Pokryshkin. Operating against the best «named» fighter squadrons of Goering – the 3rd Udet, the 51st Mölders, the 54th Grünherz – Pokryshkin first used the Kuban Shelf battle formation.

The fighting on Malaya Zemlya continued for several more months. On September 9, 1943, the operation to capture Novorossiysk began, in which the bridgehead in the Stanichka area played its role: one of the three groups of troops advancing from it ensured the blocking and capture of the city. By September 16, Novorossiysk was liberated. This date is also considered the end date of the defense of Malaya Zemlya, which lasted 225 days. ●

Novorossiysk. For 25 days he drove the fighters according to his own training program, which included landings from a boat in full gear in the cold January water, silent movements on pebbles, rock climbing, tactical medicine. Kunikov’s men learned to assemble and disassemble any weapon, including captured ones, blindfolded, to recognize comrades by their voice and whisper, to throw knives, to throw an incoming grenade towards the enemy, to mine and de-mine the area.

Having secured the bridgehead, Major Kunikov sent an open radiogram to the command: “The regiment landed successfully, acting according to plan. I am waiting for the next echelons”.

The Germans threw all their available resources into the fight against the “regiment”: infantry, tanks, artillery and aviation. In the first day alone, the defenders of the bridgehead repelled two dozen powerful attacks, but neither to cut off the paratroopers from the coast, nor to cut into their defense the Germans failed. And when the ammunition ran out, the marines captured a German artillery battery in a surprise attack (the study of captured equipment came in handy) and turned the guns towards the enemy.

“There was complete confusion. No one knew what had happened... Kunikov’s fighters entrenched singly or in small groups and fired so furiously

SEE MORE DETAILS
ABOUT THE LANDING
IN YUZHNAJA
OZEREVKA HERE:



“KUTUZOV” VS “CITADEL”»

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOVB

THE GREATEST TANK BATTLE IN HISTORY ON THE KURSK BULGE IS INTERESTING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ALSO FOR ITS FUEL SUPPLY ISSUES

The story about the Battle of Kursk should begin with an important event in Switzerland. It was in this neutral country that Soviet intelligence officers received a top-secret document in April 1943 – Hitler’s draft directive “On Operation Citadel”. A unique case: the plan was endorsed by all services of the Wehrmacht, all that was missing was the Fuhrer’s resolution, and it was already read in the Kremlin. By this stage of the war, the Soviet command could rely on a whole system of strategic, military, political intelligence, tactical intelligence operating at the front, air reconnaissance, radio intelligence, as well as information from partisans.

GERMAN VA-BANK

The decision to operate was not an easy one for Hitler. After the winter offensive of the Red Army and the German counteroffensive in eastern Ukraine, an arc was formed on the line Mtsensk – Maloarkhangelsk – Dmitrovsk – Sevsk – Rylsk – Sumy – Belgorod – Volchansk with a depth of up to 150 km and a width of up to 200 km. If the converging attacks on the base of the salient were successful, the defending Russian divisions could be surrounded and destroyed. Operation Citadel was to be immediately followed by Operation Panther: a breakthrough into the resulting gap in the front with a strike into the rear of the Red Army units standing on the threshold of Donbass.

However, there was no consensus among the German generals. After the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad, many skeptics appeared there, who warned that in case of failure, the Wehrmacht would not be able to



Galina Smirnova / RIA Novosti

GERMAN MEDIUM TANK PZ.KPFW. V “PANTHER”. FIRST COMBAT USE – BATTLE OF KURSK

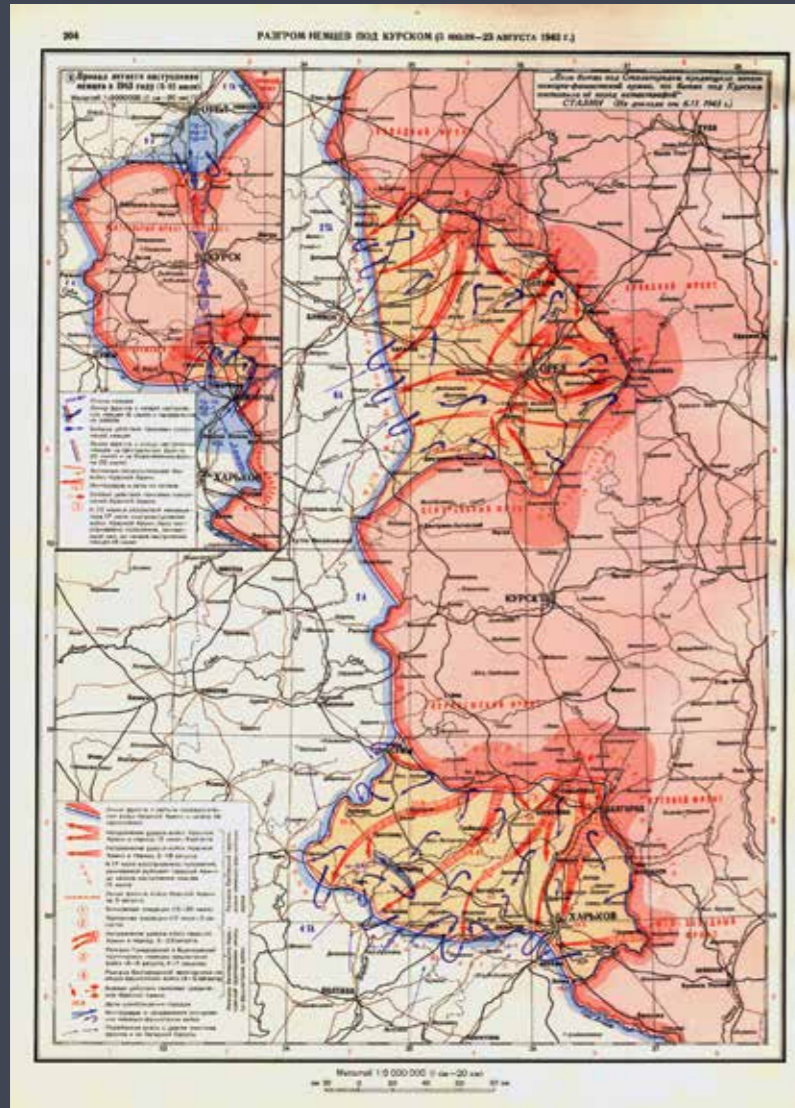
return even to its original lines. And yet Hitler signed the directive.

The opponents began to prepare for a new battle. Possessing accurate information about the German plans, Stalin’s headquarters decided to first exhaust the enemy in defensive battles, bleed his strike forces, and then defeat them by carrying out counterattacks on the attackers at a critical moment. This plan also carried significant risks for the Red Army: at all previous stages of the war, it had never been able to stop the enemy’s prepared offensive at the stage of breaking through its positions. This was the opinion of the commander of the Voronezh Front, N. F. Vatutin.

The defense of the Kursk ledge was entrusted to the troops of the Central and Voronezh fronts, numbering more than 1.3 million people, up to 20 thousand guns and mortars, over 3.3 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 2650 aircraft. In the rear, the

Steppe Front was deployed, which was the strategic reserve of the Supreme Command Headquarters. In the zones of responsibility of the Central and Voronezh fronts alone, 9,240 kilometers of trenches were dug, more than 930,000 mines were installed, of which half a million were anti-tank.

Each front prepared three lines of defense. They were based on antitank strongpoints (ATSPs), united into antitank areas. Experience from previous years of the war showed that lining up antitank weapons in a line is ineffective. The best result is achieved by compactly positioning guns and antitank rifles in “islands” ready for all-round defense in the path of an avalanche of enemy tanks. At a distance of 600-800 m between ATSPs, German armored vehicles were forced to expose their sides under fire, becoming especially vulnerable to the defenders.



SOVIET MAP OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ON THE KURSK BULGE, JULY 5 – AUGUST 23, 1943

Igor Lijashkov/Levi

German aviation managed to break through to the Saratov oil refinery, disable it and destroy a significant part of the reserves there. The situation was saved by a rapid increase in production at other plants (including the Guryev Oil Refinery) and a reduction in volumes for the fronts not participating in the Battle of Kursk.

It is important to note: in accordance with the clearly defined tasks of the Red Army, methods for accumulating and storing fuel reserves on the Soviet fronts were also developed. That is, even at the defensive stage of the operation, more than half of the fuel was delivered directly to the regiments and divisions. As subsequent events confirmed, such placement of fuel not only increased the stability of the defense, but also made it possible to immediately go on the offensive without pause.

THE ENEMY HAS NOT PASSED

The German offensive began on July 5th. On the southern front of the arc, moving out from the Belgorod area, attacks were carried out by ten tank, one motorized and seven infantry divisions. At the same time, from the north, from the area west of Oryol, seven tank, two motorized and nine infantry divisions went to break through the Soviet positions. Great hopes were placed on the massive use of the latest formidable "Tiger" and "Panther" tanks and "Ferdinand" self-propelled guns. On the northern face of the bulge, the Germans used technologies that were far ahead of their time. For example, radio-controlled "Borgward" tankettes were used to clear minefields.

However, the northern group of Germans covered only 10 km in five days of battles, and, leaving up to two-thirds of their destroyed tanks on the battlefield, quickly lost their offensive potential. The Wehrmacht's steel fists literally got stuck in the labyrinths of Soviet defensive structures. Behind the first defensive line, the Germans encountered densely mined fields, all passages in which were shot through by artillery.

The Nazis success was somewhat greater on the southern phase of the bulge. Here, the group under the command of General Erich von Manstein created a significant superiority in manpower and equipment and managed to penetrate the defense by 35 km. Almost 400 aircraft supported it from the air. Without sparing equipment and ammunition, the 2nd SS Panzer Corps overcame the first line of Soviet defense in 17 hours. To plug the gaps in the defense, Soviet tank units were sent out from the reserves to meet the enemy. The strongest of them was the 1st Tank Army of M. E. Katukov, but it also suffered heavy losses: the guns of the "Tigers" and "Panthers" penetrated the frontal armor of T-34s from 2 km. Soviet tankers retreated to the second line of defense, reducing the distance of duels to 400 m.

In five days of fighting, the Germans broke through the second line of Soviet defense. This success came at a high price: of the 200 "Panthers" who took part in the assault on the southern face of the bulge, only 16 remained in service.

The success of the Nazis success was somewhat greater on the southern phase of the arc. Here the enemy created a significant superiority in manpower and equipment and managed to wedge 35 km into the defense. Then, faced with stubborn resistance from Soviet troops in the direction of Oboyan and Korocha, the enemy deployed tank columns to Prokhorovka, trying to approach Kursk through the Belgorod highway.

In turn, Soviet troops, reinforced by strategic reserves, launched a powerful counterattack against the wedged enemy group. On July 12, in the Prokhorovka area, a head-on tank battle took place in a narrow 4.5-kilometer corridor from the Psel River to the railroad between the 5th Guards Tank Army of P.A. Rotmistrov and divisions of the 2nd SS Tank Corps. Both sides suffered heavy losses, but due to the fact that Soviet units operating on the opposite side



NIKOLAI FEDOROVICH VATUTIN (DECEMBER 16, 1901, CHEPUKHINO, VORONEZH GOVERNORATE – APRIL 15, 1944, KYIV) – COMMANDER OF THE TROOPS OF THE VORONEZH, SOUTHWESTERN AND 1ST UKRAINIAN FRONTS, ARMY GENERAL, HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION

of the German wedge simultaneously launched a successful attack, the enemy was forced to go on the defensive, and on July 16, to begin withdrawing its forces. Operation "Citadel" failed.

RADICAL CHANGE

On July 12, the Red Army with the forces of the Western and Bryansk fronts attacked the German positions. The plan for the destruction of German troops in the Oryol area received the code name "Kutuzov". On July 26, the enemy was forced to leave the Oryol bridgehead, and on August 5, Soviet troops liberated the city. On the southern front, the counteroffensive began on August 3: formations of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts went forward. On August 5, the Germans were driven out of Belgorod, and on August 23, from Kharkov. By the time the front stabilized, Soviet troops approached the starting lines for crossing the Dnieper.

During the summer days of 1943, the "fuelers" also worked hard. During the

counteroffensive, almost 100 thousand tons of fuel were supplied to the five fronts participating in it. On average, each front received two trains with fuel every day. If during the defensive operation on the Kursk Bulge, Soviet troops spent about 1.4 thousand tons of fuel per day, then in the counteroffensive this figure increased more than twice. Moreover, the consumption of automobile fuel increased three times, and tank fuel – 2.7 times.

Thorough preparation of the fuel services for the counter-offensive made it possible to provide the armies with an impressive pace of attack. Difficulties with fuel delivery arose only when army communications stretched for 150–180 km. In the absence of paved roads, motorized convoys with cargo moved at low speed, spending three to five days per trip.

The railway troops came to the rescue – they quickly restored the branch to Oryol. Along this route, the tanks arrived at the stations closest to the troops, where fuel was supplied to military vehicles, bypassing army warehouses. More than 13 thousand railway tanks and about 1.5 thousand trucks were used to supply the troops participating in the counteroffensive.

Military historians note: the Battle of Kursk completed the very formation of the Red Army's fuel supply service. This service became capable of solving even more complex tasks of uninterrupted supply of troops, which was especially important in conditions when the subsequent offensive unfolded on a wide front – from Nevel to the Sea of Azov.

In a global sense, the Battle of Kursk was the collapse of the Wehrmacht's offensive strategy. After the defeat at Kursk, the Red Army fully consolidated its strategic initiative; the German command went on the defensive along the entire line of the Soviet-German front. A radical turning point in the course of the Great Patriotic War was the final one.

FUEL OF WAR

The fuel services of the Red Army were also preparing for the largest confrontation in history involving tank formations. The State Defense Committee conducted an audit of fuel and lubricants accumulations in all fronts planned for future operations. Convinced that the available resources were not enough, the committee ordered to take the required amount from reserves in the Far East.

Taking into account previous war experience, the committee established a special priority schedule for the transportation of fuel and lubricants for the USSR People's Commissariat

of Defense via railways and waterways. And the corresponding rear units of the fronts had to immediately receive such transports. All trains were ordered to be unloaded only at night, which was supposed to take no more than four hours.

Until mid-summer, the supply of Soviet troops on the Kursk Bulge was carried out along the only railway route Kastornaya – Shchigry – Kursk. Since the second half of July, the newly built Stary Oskol – Rzhava branch also started operating.

Sometimes the Germans managed to disrupt the rhythm of fuel supplies. Thus, during the most intense period,

ON THE BRINK OF VICTORY

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

AT THE END OF 1944, SOVIET TROOPS DEPLOYED THE FIRST MILITARY MAIN PIPELINE IN ROMANIA. THIS STEEL ARTERY PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SUPPLYING FUEL TO THE RED ARMY UNITS ADVANCED ON BUDAPEST

By the end of the summer of 1944, the Red Army, having defeated large groups of Nazis in the west of the country, continued its offensive beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. The situation of Nazi Germany was rapidly deteriorating. Now it had to defend itself on three fronts at once – in Italy, in France and against the USSR – in Central and Southern Europe. At the same time as losing huge territories, Germany was also losing access to hydrocarbon resources. In August, the oil-bearing region of Ploiesti in Romania remained behind the front line. After its loss, Hitler still had Hungarian deposits, which he prepared to decisively defend.

Already in September 1944, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts crossed the Hungarian border. During October, they liberated a third of the country's territory, creating conditions for an offensive on Budapest. However, achieving this goal turned out to be a difficult task. "The operation required lengthy, serious preparation, especially since the autumn bad weather had set in, there were heavy rains. The aviation was almost inactive. Artillery often had to be dragged by hand. Any transport got stuck on the washed-out roads. In these conditions, it was very difficult to supply the



US AIR FORCE B-24 BOMBER OVER BURNING PLOIESTI OIL REFINERIES

front with everything it needed", recalled General Shtemenko.

In order to supply fuel to the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts, the Black Sea Fleet and the Danube Flotilla, the USSR State Defense Committee decided to deploy a 225 km long collapsible pipeline from Ploiesti to the oil depot in the port city of Reni with subsequent transshipment to rail and river transport.

MARCH TO ROMANIA

In the second half of 1944, sets of American collapsible pipelines with pumping units, as well as Chevrolet vehicles with a lifting

capacity of 1.5 tons, were delivered to Naro-Fominsk near Moscow. The formation of fuel transfer battalions began here. Fuel service officers were appointed to the positions of company commanders, and mechanical engineers were graduates of the fuel and lubricants department of the Armored Forces Academy.

The battalions marched to Romania by rail at the end of October. After the route had been selected and reconnoitered, the pipeline was deployed and pumping stations were installed.

When deploying the pipeline, soldiers used sets of pipelines

made of so-called lightweight and standard pipes. Lightweight pipes were made of thin sheet steel and were relatively light, which allowed for loading and unloading operations and installation of the pipeline without the use of lifting equipment. In areas where the use of lightweight pipes was not recommended, standard pipes were used.

The military installed check valves at elevation points to automatically shut off the fuel line in case of a rupture, and automatic pressure regulators to equalize the pressure at hill descents.

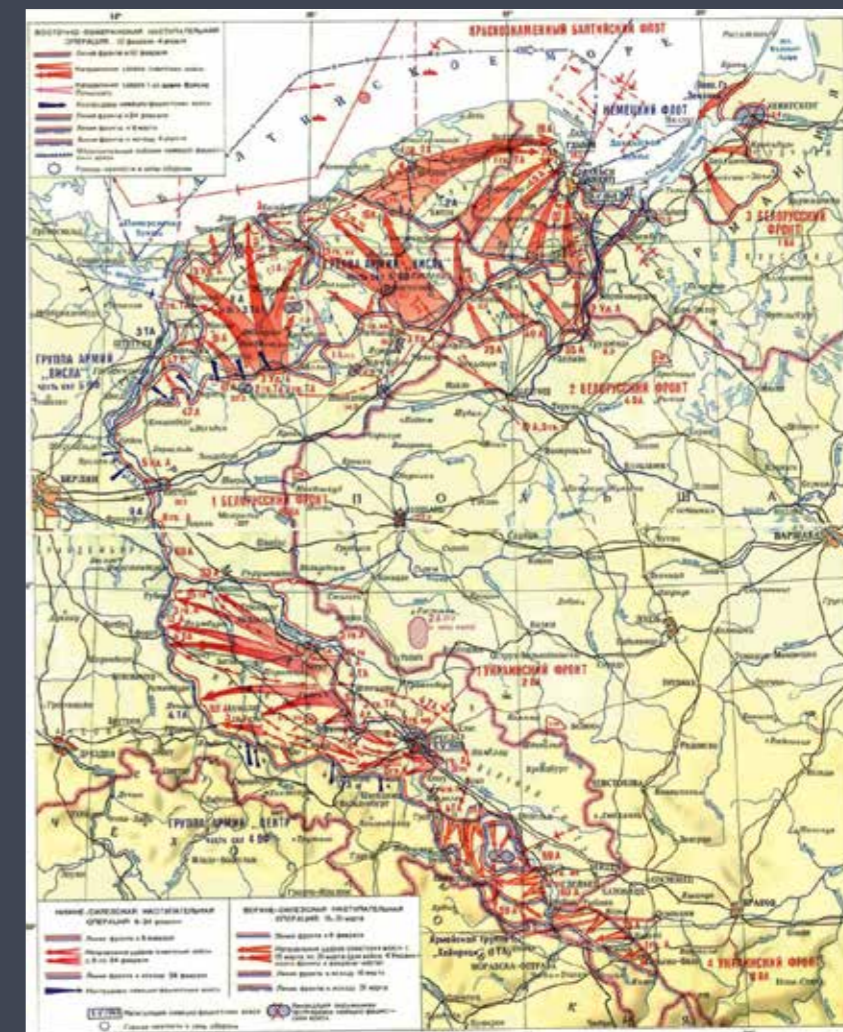
On average, pumping stations were located at intervals of 10 km. They consisted of a two-stage centrifugal pump with a drive from a carburetor engine, mounted on a common frame. The engine power reached 90 hp at 500 rpm.

At the same time, the fuel transfer battalions had to participate in the work to restore the oil fields and refinery in Ploiesti. As a result of persistent work, the task of starting pumping through the pipeline was completed by the end of December 1944.

The pipeline's pumping capacity was 40 m³ per hour. In total, about 610 thousand tons of fuel were supplied through it. Thanks to the pipeline, the Soviet units of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts advancing in Hungary did not experience a shortage of fuel.

BATTLE OF BUDAPEST

The battles for the Hungarian capital were particularly tenacious. The Nazis created a powerful fortified area with three lines of defense, concentrated large mobile units, including elite SS troops. The enemy not only defended, but also repeatedly went on the offensive, during which the Red Army had to recall the defensive experience of the Battle of Moscow, the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk.



MAP OF THE EAST POMERANIAN OFFENSIVE OPERATION. FEBRUARY 8 – APRIL 4, 1945

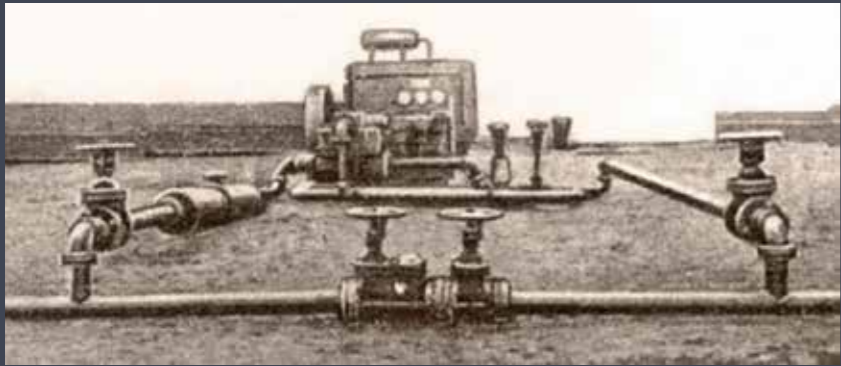
In the 20s of December 1944, the German command carried out Operation Late Harvest, in which three tank divisions were deployed, with about 400 tanks and self-propelled guns. It helped to briefly hold back the advance of two Soviet armies – the 4th Guards and the 46th. And yet, on December 26, units of the Red Army were able to completely encircle the enemy's Budapest group. Four German and three Hungarian divisions, totaling 180 thousand people, were blocked. To help them, despite the protests of Chief of the

General Staff Heins Guderian, Hitler sent the 4th Tank Corps and two infantry divisions from Warsaw.

The Battle of Budapest began with the formalities inherent in such an occasion. Soviet envoys arrived to the besieged with an offer to surrender without senseless bloodshed. Their murder was particularly noted in a report by the Soviet Information Bureau: "The history of modern wars does not know of such crimes. Since time immemorial, envoys have enjoyed the right of inviolability. This right is sanctified by tradition.



FIGHTING ON THE STREETS OF BUDAPEST. FEBRUARY 1945



FIELD PUMPING UNIT

was created to the communications of the Balkan group of Germans, who were forced to accelerate the withdrawal of their troops from Yugoslavia. The troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts were able to develop an offensive on Vienna, Berlin and Prague.

EVERYTHING FOR THE FRONT, EVERYTHING FOR VICTORY!

In the spring of 1945, the troops of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian Fronts carried out the East Pomeranian Offensive Operation. The Red Army had to operate in this area in conditions of greatly extended communications (the depth of the rear zone of the front reached 300 km), muddy roads, wooded and swampy terrain. The enemy destroyed dozens of bridges, and cargo had to be transported along temporary crossings, the operation of which was hampered by floods and ice drifts.

The Vistula River, 400 m wide and up to 6 m deep, presented a particular challenge for the Soviet military. Here, near the cities of Forden and Graudenz, two lines of collapsible pipelines were deployed. In his memoirs about this period of the war, Marshal K. K. Rokossovsky wrote that "the workers of the rear were inexhaustibly inventive".

In total, according to the assessment of the Chief of the Fuel Service of the USSR Armed Forces, Colonel General V.V. Nikitin, during the years of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Armed Forces spent 16.4 million tons of various fuels during strategic, frontline and army operations: "The use of field pipelines to supply fuel to the troops of the active army clearly confirmed the feasibility and necessity of creating a field main pipeline as a type of transport and its widespread use for supplying fuel not only across water obstacles, but also over significant distances on land". ●

It is also recorded in the Hague Convention of 1907 "On the Laws and Customs of War on Land". This report caused an unpleasant resonance even in Germany itself: an investigation was initiated, which, however, did not lead to anything.

The Red Army rarely used tanks in urban battles, but actively used flamethrowers. They burned enemy armored vehicles with jets of flame, helped assault groups capture buildings and smoke out the enemy from basements.

The turning point of the battle was February 11, when

the German group was split in two. The southern part, which had found itself in a pocket and consisted of approximately 30 thousand soldiers, tried to break through. No more than 800 people reached their own under heavy fire.

On February 13, the Hungarian capital was liberated from the enemy. In 108 days, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts routed about 60 enemy divisions and brigades. The successful completion of the Budapest Operation dramatically changed the strategic situation. A threat

THE VANQUISHED WOULD NOT DRINK "BAVARIAN"

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

THE RIGHT TO CRUEL ACTION ON THE EASTERN FRONT WAS SUPPORTED BY NUMEROUS DIRECTIVES FROM THE GERMAN COMMAND

In the summer of 1941, the Red Army intelligence officers got their hands on the appendices to the Barbarossa plan. In particular, they stated: "The war against Russia is the most important part of the struggle for the existence of the German people. This struggle must pursue the goal of turning today's Russia into ruins, and therefore it must be waged with unprecedented cruelty".

On May 13, 1941, a document was issued under the signature of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, "On the application of military jurisdiction in the Barbarossa area". It stated directly: "There will be no mandatory prosecution for actions committed by Wehrmacht personnel and service personnel against enemy civilians, even in cases where these actions constitute a war crime or misdemeanor".

On June 6, 1941, the same Field Marshal approved an order that went down in history as the "Commissar Order". In fact, becoming a license to kill political workers, the document prescribed: "The bearers of the state political idea and political leaders (commissars) must be destroyed".

The further the Nazis advanced into the USSR, the more terrifying their orders were towards the civilian population. The incapacitated and the sick were to be exterminated. On July 10, 1941, the commander of

the 6th Army, Walter von Reichenau, demanded "shoot soldiers in civilian clothes who are easily recognized by their short haircuts", then came the permission to "shoot without warning any civilian of any age and sex who approaches the front line".

In a photo taken in the Bryansk oblast in October 1941, Wehrmacht soldiers stand at a school board with the inscription: "Russians must die so that we can live". Entire German units had as their motto "Everything that helps save German blood is permitted".

Both capitals, Leningrad and Moscow, were to be destroyed. In an address to his soldiers, Hitler demanded that "Moscow and its environs be flooded, so that where Moscow had stood until now, a huge lake would form, which would forever hide the metropolis of the Russian people from the eyes of the civilized world".

The Fuhrer spoke about Leningrad at the very beginning of its blockade as follows: "The poisonous nest of Petersburg must disappear from the face of the earth. The city is already blockaded; now all that remains is to shell it with artillery and bomb it until the water supply, energy centers and everything necessary for life are destroyed. The Asians and Bolsheviks must be expelled from Europe. The period of 250 years of Asiaticism must be ended".

In the second half of the summer of 1941, the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories was created, which dealt with the rear areas that were not within the area of responsibility of the military command. The Reichskommissariat Ostland with its center in Riga and the Reichskommissariat Ukraine with its center in Rovno were formed. Later, it was planned to add the Reichskommissariat Muscovy for the entire European part of Russia.

The head of the ministry, Alfred Rosenberg, and his subordinates developed the so-called principles of civil administration in the occupied eastern regions. In the vast area up to the Urals, the ministry agreed to leave no more than 45 million local residents of non-German origin. Interestingly, the ministry continued to operate even in 1945, when all territories of the USSR were liberated by Soviet troops. On this occasion, Joseph Goebbels, who was responsible for mobilizing officials to the front, wrote in his diary in March 1945: "Reich Minister Rosenberg still refuses to disband his ministry. He no longer calls it the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Regions, for that would sound too ridiculous, but only the Eastern Ministry".

Of the 70 million Soviet citizens who remained in the occupied territories, almost every fifth did not live to see May 1945. ●

OIL AND GAS MILESTONES OF VICTORY

AUTHOR PAVEL KRETOV

MAY MARKS THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VICTORY OF THE SOVIET ARMY AND THE SOVIET PEOPLE IN THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SCIENTISTS, HISTORIANS AND OTHER SPECIALISTS, EACH WORLD WAR WAS TECHNOLOGICALLY MORE COMPLEX THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE, BECOMING FOR THE OPPOSING PARTIES NOT ONLY A BATTLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND "IRON", BUT ALSO A CLASH OF STRATEGIES – HEADQUARTERS, LOGISTICS, FUEL AND ENERGY

Five years ago, with the support of CPC, the Open Lecture Hall was reopened at Gubkin University – a panoramic room above the main entrance originally designed by Boris Iofan and used for auxiliary purposes for many years. Immediately after the opening of the lecture hall, the first lecture in the TEDx format was held, which was prepared by the Vice-Rector for Additional Professional Education, Head of the Department of Design and Operation of Gas and Oil Pipelines Nikita Golunov. The lecture topic – "Oil and Gas Milestones of Victory" – was not chosen by chance. The teachers and graduates of the then Oil Institute made a significant contribution to the defeat of the enemy on the front lines, forged victory on the labor front, and even while evacuated to Ufa during the war, the university continued to work and develop fruitfully. In 1945, for these achievements and especially for training highly qualified personnel for the Red Army fuel services, the educational institution was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor.

And today, 80 years after the Victory, the events of the



N.N. GOLUNOV DELIVERS A LECTURE "OIL AND GAS MILESTONES OF VICTORY" TO CPC SHAREHOLDERS AT THE OPEN LECTURE HALL OF GUBKIN UNIVERSITY. FEBRUARY 10, 2020

Great Patriotic War continue to cause controversy among scientists and history buffs. Also, in certain political circles, attempts to revise the past to suit their immediate interests continue. At the same time, revisionists often do not bother to cite sources and historical documents. For example, one of

the most controversial topics is the reasons for the unsuccessful actions of the Red Army in the initial period of the war. Nikita Golunov called on the audience to abstract from assessing the personalities of military leaders and the movements of the fronts, and to look at the course of military operations only from

the standpoint of energy and the supply of fuel and lubricants.

"Archival data show that before the attack on the USSR, the Nazis had a sixfold advantage in fuel reserves", Nikita Nikolaevich notes. "This indicates that the German army was more mechanized, mobile, maneuverable, and was capable of covering long distances without a shortage of resources".

ON QUALITY AND QUANTITY

According to military archives, from 1941 to 1945, the Red Army used 16.6 million tons of petroleum products (here and below, N.N. Golunov refers to data from a study by the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation, published in 2015 – ed. note). For comparison: during the same period, Germany produced 20 million tons of synthetic fuel for military needs alone.

Of course, the quality characteristics of fuels and lubricants played no less a role. In 1940, the Soviet Union did not have a single plant with catalytic cracking units capable of producing high-octane gasoline. And while the German aviation flew on kerosene with an octane number of up to 100, Soviet aircraft used fuel with an octane number of 56 to 74. This meant that the Luftwaffe fighters and bombers were faster, operated at higher altitudes, and had a wider range. Add to this another indicator – a shortage of B-78 fuel in the USSR flight schools (less than 4% of the required volume), whose graduates as a result had only 12 hours of flying time. This will give an exhaustive answer to the question of why German aviation dominated the air until the end of 1942.

FOR THE FRONT AND THE REAR

The large-scale evacuation of industry and the construction of new factories during the war are sometimes rightly called the second



TRANSFER OF FUEL FROM RAILWAY TANKS TO VEHICLES. 1943



SOVIET ARTILLERY APPROACHES BUDAPEST

industrialization. By the end of 1941, more than 1,500 large enterprises alone had been transported to the east.

"It was during the war years that the USSR's gas industry was established. Gas provided energy for the factories that forged the weapons of Victory – they produced rolled metal, tanks, airplanes, gunpowder, shells", emphasizes Nikita Golunov.

The oil pipeline laid along the bottom of Lake Ladoga in 1942 to besieged Leningrad deserves special mention. The vital pipeline was completed

in just 43 days with the highest quality of work: only one defect was found out of 5.8 thousand welded joints. By the way, the chief engineer of the project was David Shinberg, a Gubkin graduate in the specialty "transportation and storage of oil".

Today, there are about 50 oil and gas universities in Russia. But during the war, there were only three, and their specialists were in high demand, so it is not surprising that in 1943, the creation of the oil mechanical department at the Gubkin Oil Institute was initiated by the State



Vladimir Grebnev/RIA Novosti

THE VICTORY BANNER IN MAY 1945

Defense Committee (SDC). The SDC decree was issued on July 4, the department was created on July 22, and on September 1, its first students sat down at their desks.

“It’s amazing! We call many periods of our history difficult, but during the war we had to do everything at once — transfer enterprises, build new factories, develop deposits, lay pipelines, open faculties, and no one complained”, notes Nikita Golunov.

WAR OF MOTORS

In 1942, the Nazi offensive to the Caucasus and the Volga significantly complicated the supply of fuel to

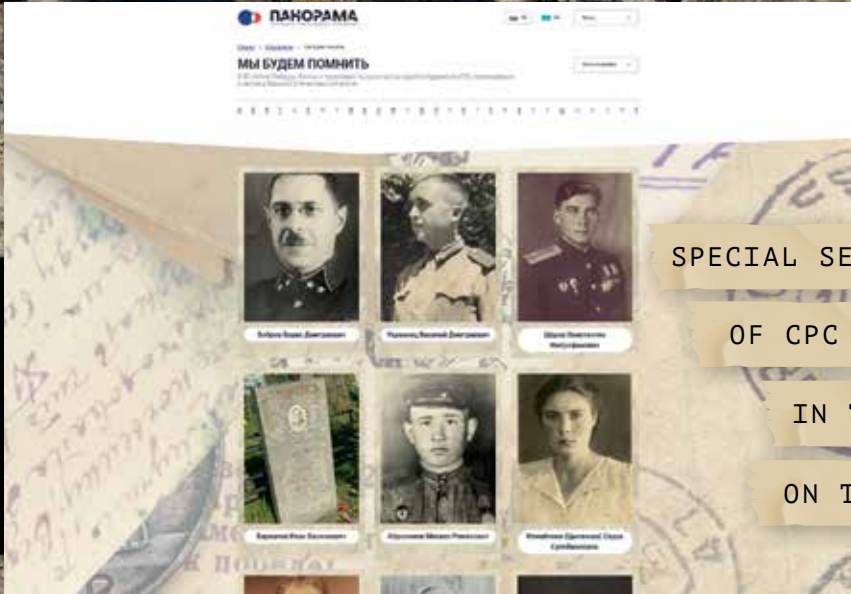
Stalingrad. If before the war the Baku-Stalingrad transport route was 1.2 thousand km, then at the time of the Battle of Stalingrad it increased to 5 thousand km. From Baku, railway tanks with raw materials were towed along the Caspian Sea to Turkmenistan, from where they were transported through the territory of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Saratov, where the black gold was processed, and the oil products were sent to the troops defending Stalingrad. The most dangerous were the last 380 km from the Saratov Oil Refinery to Stalingrad, which were under targeted bombing by German aircraft.

The structure of the consumption of various types of fuel by the Red Army during the Battle of Kursk in 1943 is interesting from the researcher’s point of view. We know it as the largest tank battle of the war, and the largest amount of fuel and lubricants was consumed by cars — 44%, which were directly involved in the delivery of fuel and weapons to the troops. 30% of the fuel in the confrontation on the Kursk Bulge came from Soviet aviation, which cleared the sky of the enemy and supported the attacks of armored troops with the actions of attack aircraft from the air.

An analysis of fuel consumption from one major battle of the Great Patriotic War to another shows the dynamic mechanization of the Red Army. In the Battle of Stalingrad, and in the “war of motors” on the Kursk Bulge, and during the Berlin offensive operation, Soviet troops consumed approximately 150 thousand tons of fuel and lubricants. But in the first case, this amount was spent in half a year, in the second — in 23 days.

Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky noted that in the most difficult conditions, fuel service specialists always coped with all assigned tasks without disrupting a single operation. Marshal of the Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky gave a high assessment to the officers and soldiers of the fuel and lubricants services, emphasizing that they were inexhaustibly inventive. And, of course, we would add, the Gubkin school had its effect!

The Great Patriotic War lasted 1,418 days — difficult, unbearable, and deadly. But each of those days, filled with the heroism of Soviet soldiers on the fronts, sacrificial work in factories, hard work in headquarters and design bureaus, brought Victory closer. The feat of the Soviet people will always live in the hearts of ancestors, its’ glory is eternal, its’ memory is immortal. ●



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