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TIMELY LESSONS OF HISTORY: THE MANCHURIAN MODEL FOR SOVIET STRATEGY

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A WORKING NOTE
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PREFACE

The last major combat operation of World War II was the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, an expedition ^{which for several reasons} whose success has been a main model for Soviet military officials since 1960. ^{with respect to} Its exemplary value for modern military ^{doctrine and planning} emulation has been the practical focus of extensive research and analysis by leading Soviet authorities. ^{This has resulted in an extensive} Yet, non-Soviet students of international affairs have had little opportunity to learn the timely lessons of this campaign, despite the proliferation of relevant Soviet publications. To make the illusions, ideals, and interests of Soviet authorities more accessible, this report describes and appraises the peculiarities of their perceptions and evaluations of World War II's final campaign. In the process, it deliberately assumes the standpoint of a person whose views are based primarily on Soviet accounts such as those surveyed by the present authors. Consequently, its assessments of Soviet military achievements may be quite unfamiliar and even incredible to readers ^{whose views are formed} who are more fully informed by Japanese and American versions of World War II's termination. Thus, while it incidentally criticizes Soviet historiography, the main purpose of the present report is to comprehend the lessons drawn by and to draw further lessons from Soviet military-historical publications on the war of August 1974.

The research underlying this report was initially undertaken by Rand on behalf of the Director of Net Assessment, Department of Defense, in connection with studies of Sino-Soviet competition. Presuming that the Manchurian model was particularly pertinent to possible Soviet moves against China, the authors were surprised to discover from published

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Soviet works that its lessons were deemed significant for modern, operational ~~problem-solving~~ ^{planning} in general. The scope of the study subsequently grew and its focus shifted from expeditions in East Asia to major offensive campaigns in a two-front strategic environment.

Several related but unpublished Rand studies have provided the empirical basis for the ideas developed in this report. Indeed, each of the co-authors has conducted specialized research on various aspects of the Manchurian model. Lilita Dzirkals has surveyed and analyzed Soviet military writings on the Manchurian campaign. Barton Whaley has examined the aims, means, and results of strategic surprise in the Manchurian campaign and in other Soviet offensive operations. John Despres has participated in these efforts and in other researches into the leadership, organizational, doctrinal, and economic changes that accompanied official military attention to the Manchurian model. Thus, this report simply summarizes the main implications, assumptions, evidence, and sources of several unpublished studies on the Manchurian model and Soviet strategic development.

While the authors doubt that the Soviets will soon pursue military objectives similar to those achieved in Manchuria thirty years ago, Soviet leaders' commitments to costly and diversified arms programs, in particular expensively offensive ground forces, suggest that they may value highly the potential for doing so. Accordingly, the authors ~~have elucidated~~ ^{present here} the Manchurian model in the hope that such potential may be made a more elusive prospect and less practicable option for future Soviet leaderships. Thus, ^{we} ~~they~~ expect it to interest scholars, students, and policymakers who concern themselves with the historical images and military aspirations that affect Soviet policy.

This working note previews the main contents of a forthcoming Rand publication that is in the process of final review and revision.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research and analysis underlying this report has been a cooperative enterprise that engaged students of Soviet, Japanese, and general strategic affairs. The authors have most valued the conceptual guidance of Andrew W. Marshall, the technical assistance of Col. James Hayes (U.S. Army, Retired), and the translations of Japanese language materials by Mrs. Taeko Okimoto.

SUMMARY

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The Manchurian model for modern offensive campaigns has turned the military conclusion of a two-front war into the strategic design for a two-front peace. It has been the practical focus of historical research and analysis conducted by the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces on the brief war waged against Japan in August 1945. Under the personal leadership of the Chief of the General Staff, Soviet military scholarship dedicated to the campaign expanded substantially in 1960 as Soviet political authorities initiated precautionary security and punitive economic measures against China. Subsequent publications on the subject became abundant toward the end of the decade when the Soviet general-purpose force buildup materialized, especially in Asia, and Sino-Soviet conflict became overtly violent. In its contents and context, the historical model has had current relevance both to the general modernization and to the regional development of Soviet armed forces, at least since 1965. In particular, the model has helped to enhance the missions of non-nuclear combat; to reestablish the leading offensive role of Soviet Ground Forces in combined-arms operations; and to elevate the priority of their claims to the resources required for major offensive campaigns, especially for a renovated combat theater in Soviet Asia.

The war against Japan concretizes for Soviet military officers their main, modern precedent for a quick, cheap, and successful campaign. Premised on strategic surprise, the Soviet design for war against Japan concentrated the forces for three combined-arms fronts around Manchuria. To organize and conduct the campaign, the General Staff developed an

operational plan by weighing the value and feasibility of alternative objectives and methods. The operational plan prepared Front and Army commanders to isolate the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and North Korea and to defeat it in a brief campaign. The final plan postulated sudden, simultaneous attacks along separate lines of advance on all fronts; surprisingly strong, mechanized forces concentrated in the first echelons of the main lines of advance; and a reinforced tank army assigned to lead the main effort across the Gobi Desert, the Greater Khingan Mountains, and the Manchurian Plain.

The Japanese were caught unprepared by the early date of the Soviet offensive, by the location of its main effort, and by the strength and speed of its advance, especially of the powerful leading units on the Transbaikal Front. Notwithstanding several isolated units that fought fiercely for almost ten days, the 40 division Kwantung Army was barely prepared to resist forcefully. Soviet commanders were overfulfilling their planned schedule, which had postulated 20 to 30 days to inflict a decisive defeat on the partially depleted Kwantung Army, when the Emperor's surrender became effective ten days after the Soviet assault.

In the extents of its fronts, depths of its objectives, rates of its advances, and in its ultimate degree of success, the Manchurian campaign has been unprecedented and unexcelled as the Soviet model for a modern, combined-arms offensive based on strategic surprise and paralyzing ground operations. Its breadth, depth, and speed were determined by environmental, military, and political conditions in the Northeast Asian theater in August 1945. Those conditions featured the wide belt of natural obstacles and armed fortifications around the

Manchurian Plain, the proximity of most Japanese forces to easy escape routes, and Soviet determination to occupy Northeast China and North Korea before troops of the United States or Nationalist China could accept the surrender of Kwantung Army units. However successful they might have been against stronger opposition, the weakness of Japanese resistance allowed Soviet forces to achieve their tactical missions, operational objectives, and strategic results substantially ahead of plan and evidently with lower casualties than their commander expected. The consequent euphoria of swift victory in the Far East contrasted sharply with the antecedent traumas of violent attrition in the West.

A key ingredient to the Manchurian model was the calculated achievement of strategic surprise. In designing the Manchurian campaign, the Soviet General Staff deliberately planned to seize the strategic initiative from an opponent before it was fully alerted and prepared to resist effectively. Not only was the plan extraordinarily successful in that effort, but its purposes and techniques have also been recommended for their potential contributions to modern strategic planning.

The promotion of the Manchurian model for nonnuclear (or limited nuclear) war has reconfirmed strategic surprise as a standard objective for the Soviet General Staff's operational planning. Indeed, it is a key ingredient to the model. However, like other ingredients, it is potentially vulnerable. In particular, it is deterrable because assured surprise depends on deception to divert an intended victim's attention away from good images of the real plan toward similarly plausible but fictional plans. Consequently, the appropriate answer to a model based

on surprise-through-deception is the timely detection of deception through a strategy of counterdeception. To the extent that deception can be perceived, appropriate precautions and counter-actions can be taken. And, such measures could be designed to be disclosed to the deceiver so as to deter its planned course of offensive action.

Besides acclaiming its strategic design, operation plan, tactical implementation, and its execution, Soviet military analyses of the Manchurian campaign have recognized several uncontrollable factors that contributed to its success. By their assessments, the Soviet forces' quantitative superiority in total military manpower was at most a minor factor in their success. It was rather by exploiting their weapons' superiority, their freedom of movement in the air, and their strategic as well as tactical surprise that major gains were quickly achieved at low cost. Finally, Soviet accounts admit that the lack of prepared defenses in depth facilitated over-fulfillment of the Manchurian model's original plan. But, they do not recognize the cumulative effects of American air and naval power on the Kwantung Army's ability to resist or on the Emperor's decision to surrender. Without yielding any credit to the United States, Soviet military authorities have significantly recognized actual limits and potential threats to the success of their most splendid offensive in history.

As the last major combat operation of Soviet Armed Forces, the Manchurian campaign has been treated as a major test and demonstration of various forces' strategic offensive operation. Authorities of the main armed services, technical branches, and combined-arms staffs have analyzed the experience to criticize, advocate, and arbitrate competing

claims for past credit and future roles. The mixture of professional interests that motivated this public historical inquiry was evidently latent in the planning and conduct of the campaign itself. Opportunities and requirements to develop new forces in a centralized military organization ultimately depends upon the allocation of roles and missions to the various armed services and technical branches. Thus the Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign are ingredients to the process of institutionalized competition, innovation, and modernization within the Soviet military establishment. Simultaneously, they are the products of a collective, general commitment to develop strategic offensive capabilities by combinations of arms whose total effects are designed to exceed the sum of their parts'.

The Manchurian model has evidently been a partial prescription to increase Soviet strength for lightning operations on the ground. It has thus helped restore the Ground Forces to their traditional dominance of the General Staff since the most appropriate combinations of arms must be determined and commanded by the highest authorities of the leading offensive forces. Technically, it has required longer-range ground combat capabilities through more mobile means of resupply, engineering support, air defense, and secure communications. Operationally, its prescriptions for swift movements by compact forces along separate axes over varied terrain has raised new demands for air-rebasing, air transport, and airborne interdiction capabilities. For a strategically offensive surge capability in Soviet Asia, it has required the development of extraordinarily expensive military base structures, forces-in-being, and civil mobilization potential to provide ample trained reserves,

transport fleets, and rear services. And, for the military manpower policy of the Soviet Union in a multi-front environment, it has required an enlarged pool of active, regular cadre and trained reservists in case of orders for simultaneous buildups on several fronts. In sum, it is a model that generates massive peacetime requirements for modern weapons, specialized troops, ready forces-in-being, a large trained reserve, and ample rear support organizations.

In sum, the Manchurian campaign is unique in several respects. On the one hand, its extraordinarily successful military outcome makes it the main historical model for modern Soviet offensive strategy. On the other hand, the political and military conditions for its unexpectedly stunning success are not reproducible by means strictly under Soviet control. Yet, the model demonstrates how decisive results can be achieved in less time and at lower cost than planned if strategic surprise is well secured and effectively exploited. The question it raises is whether the Soviet leadership since Khrushchev's fall in 1964 may have been vainly striving to acquire the sort of combined-arms capabilities temporarily enjoyed in August 1945; whether it may have been pursuing such superiority as an imminently feasible goal; or whether it may, in the course of critical deliberations, even have entertained the illusion that such exceptional powers have been within its actual reach. Unless they are willing to risk the recurrence of such extreme Soviet strength and confidence, a counter-strategy for wary neighbors, East and West, is to prevent clear Soviet superiority by efficient military competition to make deterrence persuasive in the long as well as the short run.

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I. ORIGINS AND APPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

The Manchurian model for modern offensive campaigns has turned the military conclusion of a two-front war into the strategic design for a two-front peace. It has been the focus for historical research and analysis conducted by the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces on their campaign against the once-formidable Kwantung Army in August 1945. The practical intent of its major advocates has been to develop more decisive, non-nuclear capabilities for Soviet strategic offensives, particularly by Ground Forces. The public promotion of the historical model has manifested Soviet military interest in resurrecting the operational missions of non-nuclear warfare, the leading role of the Ground Forces in combined-arms development, and the priority of general offensive capabilities in Soviet Asia as well as Eastern Europe. The Manchurian model has thus been used to plan and adapt the Soviet's long-term military programs to a two-front strategic environment, at least since 1960.¹

A Model for General Military Modernization

As precautionary, threat-monitoring moves against China took effect during the early 1960s, the Soviet General Staff initiated a variety of military-historical studies to learn the currently relevant lessons of World War II, especially those of the Manchurian campaign. Subsequent

¹In the September 1960 issue of the Ministry of Defense's *Military Historical Journal*, while Soviet advisors were being withdrawn from China, the new Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Zakharov, drew attention to the Manchurian campaign as a model for modern operations. Earlier in the year, the General Staff had implemented the instructions of the Central Committee CPSU "to begin intensive intelligence activity against China." *The Penkovskiy Papers*, Oleg Penkovskiy (Doubleday, N.Y.), 1965, p. 73.

published results of these studies have shown the Manchurian campaign as the main offensive model for strategically decisive, modern operations. The outstanding features of this campaign, aside from the relatively light casualties incurred by Soviet forces, were the size, suddenness, speed, and depth of its initial operations. The campaign is unique among Soviet military campaigns for having achieved major war objectives entirely within its initial phase.¹ Such stunning success has thus made it an exceptionally attractive model for modern military emulation. The proliferation of military studies on this campaign has evidently both expressed and reinforced Soviet Ground Forces' persistent interest in strategic offensive operations by combined-arms and professional military opposition to the "single-variant" doctrine for predominantly nuclear operations imposed by Soviet political leaders in the early 1960s. Soviet military promotion of the Manchurian model has exploited Sino-Soviet hostility to advance the Ground Forces' traditional interest in large, modern, and offensive combined-arms. Even before 1960, military and political authorities had polarized in their assessments of whether nuclear weapons obviated the need for large standing armies. Khrushchev's announcement in 1960 that Soviet Armed Forces would be reduced by 1.2 million men, mostly from the Ground Forces, over the following five years ratified a temporary resolution of the debate. These policies were first resisted, then effected, and ultimately reversed by Minister of Defense Marshal Malinovsky and Chief of the General Staff Marshal Zakharov, two recurrently close collaborators. Their grievances against Khrushchev's cost-saving cuts in the

¹L. N. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda na Dal'nem Vostoke* (Victory in the Far East), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966, pp. 266-267. Hereafter cited as *Victory in the Far East 1966*. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, perhaps modeled on this campaign, was an even more overwhelming success, but its objectives were also less ambitious.

Ground Forces and his unsuccessful policies toward the United States and China were shared by other military and political critics.¹ The departure of the Chief of Staff, Marshal Zakharov, and the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces, Marshal Chuykov, from the General Staff during the year before Khrushchev's expulsion was rectified by their reappointment to the same or equivalent posts shortly afterwards.

Khrushchev's successors allowed military authorities greater political initiative and institutional autonomy in planning long-term programs. Soviet military opposition to Khrushchev's strategic designs was expressed most vividly in public media by Marshal Zakharov's calling his military policies "hare-brained scheming and superficiality" that "can be very expensive and wreak irreparable harm."² And within the Soviet military establishment, a variety of expensive strategic weapons programs, ground force expansions, manpower conscription reforms, regional development requirements, and major new maneuver plans began to receive serious and sympathetic consideration. It was in this context that the two main studies attributable to Marshal Zakharov's initiative five years earlier were finally prepared for publication.³

¹ See Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, The Rand Corporation, 1970, pp. 231-278, Johns Hopkins, for a succinct survey and analysis of the strategic issues and institutional conflicts that surrounded Khrushchev's involuntary removal and his successors' policy deliberations. See the *Penkovskiy Papers*, *op. cit.*, for a disaffected General Staff officer's private views of the Soviet political leaderships treatment and use of the armed forces during the budget-cutting reforms and international crises of the early 1960s.

² *Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star)*, February 4, February 4, 1965, p. 2.

³

Attention must be given to the study of the given operations. Their study with due allowance given for the existing means of warfare will make it possible to reach a number of useful theoretical conclusions for conducting operations in the initial phase of a war *also under modern conditions*.

Marshal of the Soviet Union M. Zakharov, "Kampaniia Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil na Dal'nem Vostoke (The Far East Campaign of the Soviet Armed Forces)," *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 9, September 1960, pp. 7 and 10. Hereafter cited as Zakharov, 1960. Italics added.

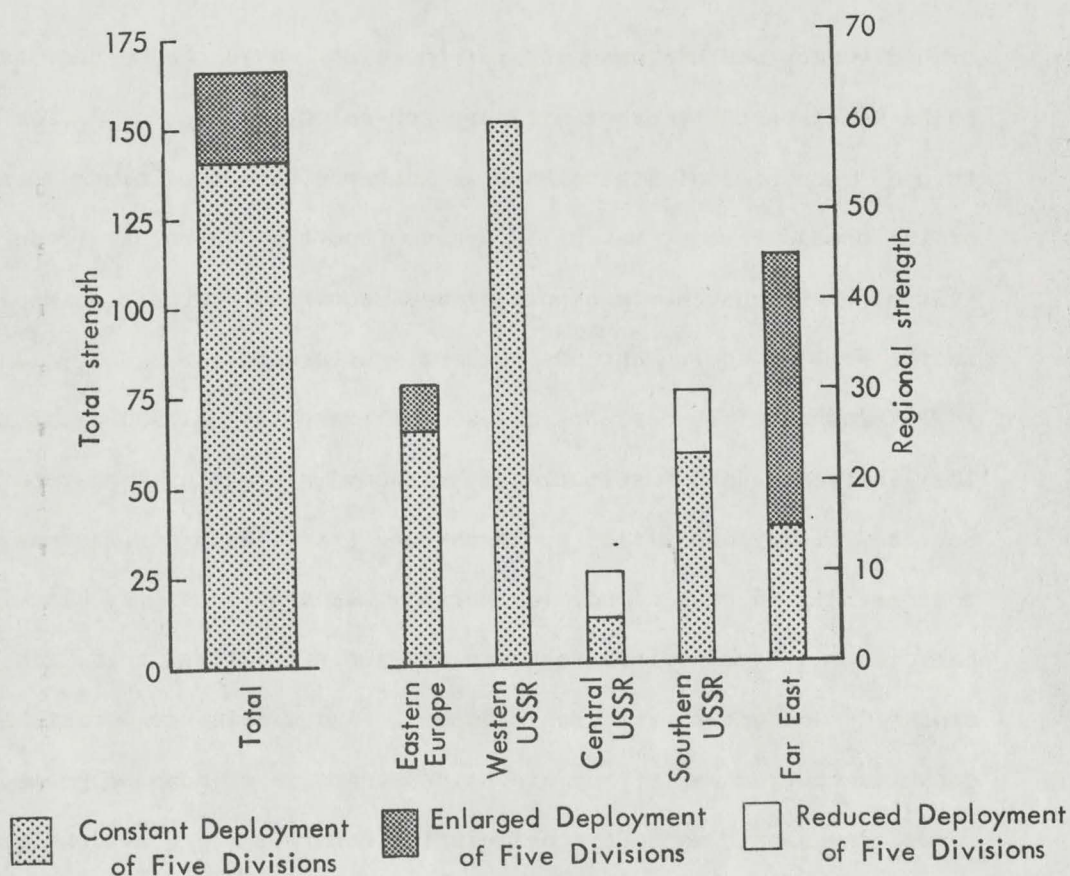


Fig. 1 — Regeneration of Soviet ground forces
(Replenishment and Redistribution of
Soviet Armed Forces' Divisional Strength)
1967-1973

SOURCE AND NOTES

This bar graph is based on estimates in *The Military Balance*, 1967-1968 and 1973-1974, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London.

Since they quantify regular divisions rather than manpower or other resources, they do not reflect significant differences between the regions in the average strength and cost of their ground force units. Average strength levels of divisions have consistently been higher in Eastern Europe, but the costs of a division, of given strength, have been much higher in the Far East than elsewhere. Modernization and training have affected all regions' forces, but the new growth and status of military districts in the East undoubtedly accelerated their qualitative improvement as well.

Subsequently abundant military publications on the Manchurian campaign confirmed the strategic significance of Colonel-General Pavlovskii's promotion in 1967 from Commander of the Far East Military District to Army General and Commander in Chief of Ground Forces, a leading post on the General Staff that had been left vacant since before Khrushchev's demise. Having just established the basis for a large Ground Force buildup in Soviet Asia, he was selected to conduct the first, theater-scale, combined-arms maneuvers in the Soviet Union since World War II where no use of nuclear weapons was assumed. At the same time, a revised law on universal military service was decreed to reduce the terms of required service, increase the skills of inductees, and accelerate the flow of trained servicemen into the pool of active reservists.¹ Before the end of 1967, the institutional and legal basis for a permanent expansion of Soviet Ground Forces was fully established.

Within the next few years, publications on the Manchurian campaign peaked as newly offensive surge capabilities of Soviet general-purpose forces were repeatedly displayed. First was the mobilization by maneuver in Europe preceding the August, 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, and then the large-scale exercises in Soviet Asia to reinforce the war-scare against China in the summer of 1969. The successive buildups and demonstrations of Soviet Ground Forces' strength in Europe and, especially, in Asia confirmed that they had regained their traditional dominance within the combined-arms command of the General Staff and were implementing strategic designs based on the Manchurian model.

¹ See Herbert Goldhamer, *Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level*, Rand R-1513 for a survey and analysis of the extensive institutional changes in the military educational, training, and reserve establishments associated with the reform and expansion of Soviet military conscription in 1967.

Pointing to the quick success of the Manchurian offensive as border incidents and force buildups mounted in Soviet Asia, Marshal Zakharov cited its exemplary demonstration of "the resolution of major strategic tasks in the shortest possible time."¹ Less belligerently two years later, another military authority publicized the logistical and combat operations of the Manchurian campaign as interesting and usable models for modern military training and instruction.² Analyses by senior Soviet marshals as well as by their juniors have made the lessons of the campaign both current and durable in their relevance. Marshal Vasilevskii, who served most of the war as Chief of the General Staff and served as Commander-in-Chief of the Far East Forces for this campaign, distinguished it from the other campaigns of World War II for the "current relevance of many of the military issues that educated the Soviet Armed Forces in preparing and waging the campaign."³ Marshal Malinovsky, whose failing health did not keep him from resurrecting the Ground Forces, instituting buildups

¹ Marshal of the Soviet Union M. Zakharov, "Nekotorye voprosy voennogo iskusstva v sovetsko-iaponskoi voine 1945 goda (Military Art Issue in the 1945 Soviet-Japanese War)," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 9, September 1969, p. 15. Hereafter cited as Zakharov, 1969. In the course of the war scare against China generated by Soviet officialdom during the summer of 1969, the Chief of the General Staff reportedly opposed the execution of "surgical" nuclear strikes. Hypothetically, such a position is quite consistent with advocacy of plans and preparations for large-scale conventional operations in the event future Chinese military moves or political opportunities raised Soviet incentives for direct action.

² Col. L. N. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda na Dal'nem Vostoke*, 2nd ed., rev., and enl., Moscow: Voenizdat, 1971, p. 372. Hereafter cited as *Victory in the Far East 1971*.

The Front and Army operations, as well as the actions by the Navy, the Flotilla, and the country's anti-air defense forces are instructive as the first operations at the start of a war...The experience in preparing and executing these operations is of definite interest and can be utilized for troop training and education in modern conditions.

³ Marshal of the Soviet Union, A. Vasilevskii, "Final," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 6, June 1967, pp. 80-81. Hereafter cited as Vasilevskii, 1967.

in Asia, and facilitating other military programs in the mid-1960s, determined that it was Soviet military might and art (quite apart from the peculiarities of the Far East theater and the weaknesses of the Japanese forces) that brought about the quick and complete defeat of the enemy.¹

Perceptions of the Manchurian campaign as the most modern, proficient, and effective operation in Soviet combat history are not peculiar to the officers who designed, planned, and commanded it. While the size of Soviet forces committed was small relative to most strategic offensives in the West, the strength of opposed units engaged and of Soviet losses suffered were relatively much smaller still than in other Soviet strategic offensives. Thus, the Manchurian offensive has been rated by Soviet authorities (Table 1) as the only entirely effective strategic offensive among Soviet operations of World War II. So, whatever individual commanders' personal interests may have been in publicizing their last, stunning success, less interested Soviet authorities acknowledge this short, cheap war in the East (rather than the protracted campaign of attrition in the West) as especially relevant "under modern conditions."

¹"The concluding campaign of World War II, executed by the Soviet Armed Forces in the Far East, was a new stride in the development of Soviet military art. Many moments of the preparation and conduct of this campaign are very typical for the beginning period of a war, and therefore their experience has current significance. The peculiarity of the theater, which greatly influenced the methods of waging military actions, and also the fact that the enemy did not put up prolonged resistance to our troops, by no means lessens, but even increases the significance of this experience. For in the final analysis, the quick defeat of the Japanese forces and the liquidation of their capability to put up resistance is the result of our Armed Forces' might and the high level of Soviet military art." Marshal of the Soviet Union, R. Malinovsky (ed.), *Final: istoriko-memuarnyi ocherk o razgrome imperialisticheskoi Iaponii v 1945 godu* (Finale: A Historical Memoir on the Rout of Imperialist Japan in 1945), Moscow: "Nauka," 1966, p. 322. Hereafter cited as *Final*, 1966.

Table 1
EFFECTIVENESS OF SOVIET OFFENSIVE
OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II¹

Operation	Enemy Divisions		Percent Defeated
	Engaged	Defeated	
Moscow Counter-offensive	74	25	34%
Stalingrad Counter-offensive	65	49	75%
Kursk Counter-offensive	92	39	33%
Offensive in the Eastern Ukraine	135	76	56%
Byelorussian Operation	114	76	68%
Vistula Operation	70	58	83%
Berlin Operation	116	100	90%
Manchurian Operation	44	44	100%

The Manchurian campaign's attractiveness as a modern model for non-nuclear offensives derives from the vivid contrast between traumatic losses suffered in the defensive and counter-offensive Soviet operations against Germany and the euphoric, final victory won with such offensive ease against Japan.

¹ Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii (ed.), *Voennaia strategiya* (Military Strategy), 2nd ed., rev., and enl., Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963, p. 183. This rating of the Manchurian operation first appeared in the second edition, published in 1963, one year after the first edition. Sokolovskii was a prominent military advocate of Khrushchev's "progressive" strategic views at that time, promoting strategic rockets and nuclear-armed, smaller-sized standing armies. So his testimony to the complete effectiveness of the non-nuclear, Manchurian offensive has the special merit of coming from a presumably reluctant witness, albeit perhaps involuntarily.

The tone and style of Soviet military portrayals of this campaign accordingly do embellish their contents. The image of war projected in these accounts is not an agonizing, traumatic struggle for national survival. Rather, it is a vision of bold, keen strokes designed to minimize the costs, maximize the gains, and terminate the hostilities of World War II. Hence it is among the least abhorrent and most positive images of war current either in Soviet literature or in military writings elsewhere. Not only is it a splendidly disarming vision, but this concrete image of a modern Soviet victory has acquired great credibility in the USSR from the scholarly appearances of the prestigiously-sponsored, military-historical studies devoted to it. These apparently objective works display the standard historiographic devices: footnoted references to documents in archives, judiciously precise qualifications to general assertions, and great masses of fascinating data.¹ Thus, particularly when compared with memories of protracted military attrition against German forces, the Manchurian campaign has been "scientifically" reinforced as the Soviets' most credibly attractive and salient model for modern war.

However unexcelled in Soviet history, the campaign's attractiveness as a model for future operations must ultimately depend on assumptions about the possible use of nuclear weapons. Evidently the published literature on the campaign neither presumes nor precludes the use of nuclear weapons in modern military operations.² Nevertheless, the prescription for conducting

¹In Soviet parlance, these military histories are a part of "military-science" because of their ostensibly technical orientation and objective analysis. To a Soviet military officer, this distinguishes them from purely patriotic or primarily political propaganda.

²Soviet military accounts of the 1945 campaign often mention, with ritual denunciation, the United States' nuclear incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the eve of Soviet entry into the war against Japan. Paradoxically, they deny that this traumatic application of force contributed

combat operations "under modern conditions" are, quite likely, tacitly intended to anticipate nuclear as well as conventional combat. So, while they present a relatively attractive image of modern war, Soviet military analyses of the 1945 campaign suggest no great confidence (nor, for that matter, any particular doubt) that a major campaign could be fought and won before the losing side resorted to using nuclear weapons. Indeed, their reticence on the subject is ambiguous, suggesting discrete uncertainties, internal differences, and deliberate suspensions of judgment.¹ Thus, the model requires improvisation to derive a nuclear-free prescription for modern combined-arms offensives.

A Model for Developing Strength in the East

From 1965 to 1972, when the military buildup against China grew most substantially, Soviet authorities promoted general officers who were best prepared to build bases, train forces, and implement an armed strategy against China; they simultaneously displayed growing interest in the 1945 campaign. In 1966, besides publishing the two major historical works dedicated to detailing, analyzing, and celebrating the Manchurian campaign, significantly to Japan's prompt, subsequent surrender, claiming almost all of the credit for their own Manchurian campaign. The only direct reference to problems of nuclear warfare under modern conditions contained in this literature, to the knowledge of the authors, noted Soviet military engineers' experience supplying water to mechanized armies in the desert as useful models for solving similar problems under nuclear conditions. Colonel-General of Engineers A. Tsirlin, Chief of Engineering Troops on the Transbaikalian Front during the campaign, "Organizatsiia vodosnabzheniia voisk Zabaikal'skogo fronta v Khingan-Mukdenskoi operatsii (Organization of the Troops' Water Supply on the Transbaikalian Front during the Khingan-Mukden Operation)," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 5, May 1963, pp. 36-48.

¹ Hypothetical plans for combined-arms operations could be designed to allow for variable restrictions on the use of nuclear munitions. Rather than plan to destroy all defending forces by physical means, conventional operations would aim to inflict swift, paralyzing strikes, to overcome the opponents' will to resist, without offering lucrative targets for direct nuclear counter-action. Only in the event conventional strikes failed to paralyze resistance would plans for nuclear escalation be invoked. Such plans would be quite consistent with the doctrinal ambiguities and strategic uncertainties implicit in Soviet military analyses of the 1945 campaign.

Soviet authorities ratified a revised treaty with Mongolia allowing their Armed Forces the right to station troops for mutual security "training" against China. Publicly, new priorities were established in 1967 to accelerate the development of a civil mobilization base in the areas where the buildup against China had been planned.¹ To help enforce the priorities for establishing Soviet strength in East Asia, the three military districts adjacent to China came to acquire the only full Army Generals in command of Military Districts within the USSR. Simultaneously in Moscow, the principal service chiefs on the General Staff, Army Generals Tolubko of the Strategic Rocket Forces and Pavlovskii of the Ground Forces, achieved their high posts by serving most recently as Commanders of the Far East Military District. Hence, the publication as well as the initiation of military studies on the 1945 campaign has ratified the reorientation of the Soviet General Staff's work toward developing a major combat theater in the East.

Besides general claims for its relevance to military operations "under modern conditions," Soviet military histories of the Manchurian campaign also note lessons that are particularly pertinent to the natural and logistical conditions of the Far East. Soviet military authorities emphasize the extreme diversity and natural hostility of the Far East combat theater. Ranging from deserts and mountains in the west, through tundra in the north, and forested-mountains in the east, the Manchurian

¹ A party-government decree of July 8, 1967 "On Measures for the Further Development of the Far East Economic Region and Chita Oblast," which was published with a number of its paragraphs conspicuously deleted, fixed new population targets for 1970 and 1975 that were significantly higher than those set by the Five Year Plan begun in 1965. Chita Oblast is in the southeast sector of the Eastern Siberian Economic Region along the Trans-Siberian Railway, immediately adjacent to the Far East Economic Region, Northeast China, and Mongolia.

model was based in an environment that is naturally suited for testing new weapons and developing new tactics because it poses such a wide variety of harsh physical challenges. Thus, the Manchurian model's lessons were most specifically applicable to the reconstitution of a major combat theater in Soviet Asia.

An Offensive Model for Defense on Two Fronts

Whichever was more effective, Soviet political demands for additional military options in a new, two-front environment or Soviet military interests in recreating the grand offensive capabilities of August 1945, both supported the Soviets' renewed military investments in Asia as well as their revived development of general-purpose Ground Forces. The profusion of military publications on the 1945 campaign has thereby helped to express, to reinforce, and to reward professional officers' interests in creating a credible model for Soviet force augmentation and modernization.

Within a year of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Marshal Zakharov yet again advertised this offensive model for Soviet defense planning, as tensions mounted over the China border.

The profound study of the experience of the Soviet-Japanese war has great significance for the strengthening of the security of the Far Eastern borders of our Homeland.¹

Because of its practical implications as a modern model for Soviet combined-arms offensives, the "profound study of the experience" is at least as significant for the security of the Soviets' neighbors, East and West, as it is for the welfare of people in their "Homeland."

¹Zakharov, 1969, p. 25.

Surprise is the harbinger of victory.

Marshal Zakharov, 1969

...it is possible to attain complete surprise in executing the first operations at the beginning of the war....this experience can be of practical interest for planning modern operations.

Victory in the Far East, 1971

II. DELIBERATE DESIGN FOR STRATEGIC SURPRISE

A key ingredient to the Manchurian model was the calculated achievement of strategic surprise. In designing the Manchurian campaign, the Soviet General Staff deliberately planned to seize the strategic initiative from an opponent before it was fully alerted and prepared to resist effectively. Not only was the plan extraordinarily successful in that effort, but its purposes and techniques have also been recommended for their potential contributions to modern strategic planning.

The product of both a defender's ignorance and an attacker's duplicity, strategic surprise is simply the failure of a defender to prepare for an offensive because it mistakes the potential attacker's:

1. Intent to negotiate peace or wage war
2. Time and conditions of attack
3. Direction and objectives of operations
4. Strength and locations of forces
5. Methods and means of combat¹

¹ Although the unforeseen and innovative use of arms can contribute greatly to strategic surprise, it was a minor element in the Manchurian campaign; hence, discussion of tactical surprise is discussed below in Chapter IV.

In practice, the General Staff developed a plan for the strategic deception of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and the Kwantung Army to secure a poorly prepared opponent for its well prepared offensive. As a result, it acquired at least a moderate amount of surprise in all dimensions and a high degree of overall strategic surprise.

Discovering the Potential of Strategic Surprise

Despite good reason from his recent experience to appreciate the value and ease of strategic surprise, Stalin's intention to enter the Pacific phase of World War II had not initially envisioned it at all. Stalin and the General Staff had both correctly perceived that most Japanese statesmen and senior military officers regarded war with Russia as inevitable.

The two countries had been enemies for a half century, with years of overt military confrontation punctuating decades of armed truce. Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 had inspired a well-known Russian desire for revenge; and the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution compounded this nationalist hostility with conflicting ideologies. Moreover, Japan's aggressive seizure of Manchuria in 1931 had usurped Soviet interests in the Far East and threatened its own oriental provinces. Upon the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the USSR had accordingly given substantial political support and clandestine military aid to Nationalist China to help frustrate Japanese imperial ambitions in China. Finally, increasing border incidents around Manchuria led to an escalating series of armed engagements through the summers of 1938 and 1939. It was only Hitler's increasing threat from the West that caused

Stalin to conclude a Non-Aggression Pact with Japan in early 1941, and Japanese authorities recognized it as "low profile" posture that should not alter their expectations of eventual war.

Conversely, the Russians had been well advised that, when Hitler launched his surprise invasion of Russia in mid-1941, important Japanese officials were eager to exploit the situation by seizing eastern Siberia, and thereby contributing to the permanent demise of the Bolshevik regime and the Soviet army. To the Soviets' relief, the Japanese had instead first aimed to eliminate American, British, and Dutch power in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia. By the end of 1942, the war in the West had plainly turned toward a close, so Japanese apprehensions about Soviet intentions began to quicken as the Soviet Union became more open in its hostility to the Axis' eastern power.

Given this state of increasing alert through 1944, neither Stalin nor the General Staff imagined that strategic surprise would be possible. Giving priority to political considerations, Stalin rather expected -- indeed even hoped -- that the Japanese would initiate the war, although at a time of his choosing. While Stalin clearly valued the initiative, he initially ignored the military advantages the Japanese would gain and the Soviets would lose by yielding the strategic initiative. He was instead wedded to the *political* advantages that flowed from allowing the Soviet Union to be the victim of hostile aggression.

Stalin apparently adhered to this position from 1941 through October 1944 when he told his Anglo-American Allies (and his own General Staff) that he did not believe the Japanese would passively permit the, then,

forthcoming Soviet build-up in the Far East. He remarked that: "If they do attack, they will at least solve what will be my most difficult problem with my own people. It will be obvious who is the aggressor." Nevertheless, Stalin still counted on tight conventional security measures to avoid giving the Japanese such advance warning that they could preempt before the Soviet forces had achieved a reasonably strong defensive build-up and deployment.

The radical idea of launching their attack as a strategic surprise was not even raised in Soviet circles until the initial period of detailed operational planning, February through June 1945. This notion originated within the General Staff, was embodied in its draft plan completed in early June, and was then presented to Stalin who concurred "without demur."

Two factors account for surprise becoming a strategic part of the Manchurian plan. First was the increasing initiative and sophistication developed by General Staff planners in designing for surprise. Second was the immediate requirement imposed by Stalin that the Manchurian campaign be conducted with utmost speed.

Surprise through secrecy, camouflage, and deception had been a standard part of Soviet military doctrine well before World War II. As early as 1918, Stalin himself had raised the concept of surprise to the status of a major "factor" in war, and it had proved its decisive value in General Zhukov's Khalkhin-Gol operation against the Kwantung Army in 1939. However, Hitler's achievement of politically embarrassing and militarily devastating surprise in his invasion of Russia in 1941

exposed both Soviet military unpreparedness and Stalin's strategic fallibility. Therefore, Stalin blithely evaded embarrassment by rewriting doctrine so as to downgrade surprise and separate it from the other "factors" or principles of war. Thus, most principles were distinguished as "permanently operating factors" from surprise, which was demoted to a specially invented lower class of *nonpermanently* operating factors.¹

Although inhibited by Stalin's doctrinal reversal, the General Staff had practically managed to revive and develop the art of surprise. By summer 1944, they had even achieved a certain sophistication in planning and coordinating deception to secure surprise in opening their offensives in the West. Thus, by late 1944 when the General Staff was first ordered by Stalin to begin preliminary planning for offensive operations against Japan, surprise was an established part of the operational planners' repertoire.

The even more proximate cause for designing strategic surprise into the Manchurian plan was that Stalin had assigned highest priority to the campaign's swift completion. His motives were, initially, to avoid a protracted, unpopular war and, later, to achieve political and territorial gains before a final U.S.-British victory over Japan. Given this requirement for speed, the General Staff could not rely on the, then, conventional strategy of sure, slow, and costly attrition.

¹This political linkage of Stalin's authority with the issue of surprise made overt reappraisal of the subject taboo during his lifetime.

Alternatively, strategic surprise promised a low-cost breakthrough that, when coupled with rapid exploitation, could lead to quick victory.¹

Thus, gradually, Soviet strategic thinking about the future Russo-Japanese War had progressed first from a defensive operation fought with little preparation to one fought from a well-prepared front, then to an offensive operation launched against a fully alert Japanese enemy and, finally, to a strategic surprise attack on an unsuspecting or, at least, seriously misled opponent. Since it was a belated decision to seek strategic surprise, the General Staff had to be especially adept and thorough in its deception planning.

Techniques and Calculations of Strategic Deception Planning

Intent. Since V-E Day on May 8/9, 1945, Stalin had been formally bound by Russia's Allies to wage war on Japan and invade Manchuria by August 10th, but the Japanese knew only that Stalin intended to wage war against Japan sometime in the future. At this juncture the Japanese Government invited the Soviet Union on June 24th to become a party to negotiating a conditional surrender between Japan and the Anglo-American Allies. The Japanese clearly signalled that, in return for his good

¹General Shtemenko, then Chief of Operations for the General Staff, has recorded that at first the staff believed the achievement of "strategic surprise was probably quite beyond the bounds of possibility" because "the Japanese had for long been convinced of the inevitability of war with the Soviet Union." That is, knowing the Soviet intention, the Japanese expected war. "Nevertheless," Shtemenko recalls, the General Staff planners "reflected more than once" about the events of 22 June 1941 when Hitler launched his fateful invasion of the Soviet Union. At that time "our country had also expected war and prepared for it, but the German attack had [still] come as a surprise." With that traumatic example of successful strategic surprise standing in vivid contrast to their faint hopes of achieving similar results against Japan, the General Staff concluded it need not entirely "abandon the idea [of planning for strategic surprise] prematurely."

offices, they were prepared to pay Stalin a high territorial and political price. Stalin quickly seized this extraordinary opportunity for secret bargaining and strategic deception to explore his diplomatic options and to affect Japanese perceptions about Soviet intentions and schedules for invading Manchuria.

Stalin, through both his Foreign Minister in Moscow and the Soviet Ambassador to Japan, managed to arouse Japanese beliefs that he was indeed seriously interested in negotiating with them.

The overall effect of this secret diplomacy was to reinforce, in the weeks before the planned attack, official Japanese illusions that Stalin was prepared to negotiate tolerable terms for an end to the war. The Japanese Government expected on August 8th that the Soviets would soon deliver a specification of terms, an ultimatum perhaps but not a declaration of war.¹

Time. Even when one's intent to act is expected, strategic surprise can still follow from the victim's failure to anticipate the time of that act. As with all other forms of surprise, surprise of time is either self-induced or can be induced by deception. The Russians deliberately and successfully achieved the latter by tactfully exploiting certain Japanese preconceptions.

At the Teheran Summit Conference in late 1943 Stalin had committed the USSR, by agreement with its allies in the war, to attack Japan as soon as possible after the defeat of Germany. He then not only promised

¹It is doubly ironic that this illusion was both the one that the Japanese had tried to foster with the Americans immediately prior to 7 December 1941 and the one that Hitler had successfully induced in Stalin immediately prior to the Nazi invasion of Russia.

this to the Americans and British but simultaneously ordered the Soviet army immediately to start stockpiling munitions in Far Eastern depots -- a process that continued until the invasion.

Then, at the end of September 1944, four months after the Allies opened the Second Front in Western Europe and the Soviet summer offensive had succeeded, Stalin told the General Staff to begin preparing estimates for the movement of troops to the Far East, explaining simply that: "Apparently they will be needed soon." The consequent General Staff estimate, which was completed around the beginning of October, scheduled the transfer of troops to begin "early" in 1945, but the unexpected requirement for forces on the Russo-German front during the winter of 1944/45 delayed this schedule.

Preoccupied with the Wehrmacht, the Soviet General Staff did no further strategic planning for the war with Japan during the four months, November to February, at least. However, other Soviet plans were in train that, in fact, determined the Manchurian timetable. From November through January, Stavka and General Staff plans anticipated the capture of Berlin and V-E Day by March 5th. Those plans changed around February 1st with Stalin's decision to cancel abruptly the final Soviet offensive against Germany in mid-course. Then, on February 11th, Stalin committed the Soviet Union to enter the war against Japan "in two or three months after Germany has surrendered," conditional only on specified territorial claims.

At midnight sharp of the 8th-9th of May, Germany's surrender was affected and 9 May became V-E Day. Henceforward 9 August would be

Manchuria D-day for the few who knew what Soviet commitments had been established at Yalta. However, weather was a consideration. July and August were undesirable months to initiate ground operations in Manchuria; while September, October, and November were best. The Japanese were as aware of this climatic influence as were the Russians.

By 13 June the General Staff's timetable called for the last troop units to reach the Far East between August 1st and 5th. And by 18 June, the timetable specified that D-day be between August 20th and 25th. Then, on 3 August, Marshal Vasilevsky reported to Stalin that all Fronts and units were virtually ready and in position and would be set to go into action by 7 August at latest. Given this circumstance plus the suddenly and unseasonably improved weather, Vasilevsky urged that the battle be joined no later than August 9th-10th, that is, one or two days earlier than the then (recently) projected D-day of 11 August. GHQ soon approved this revised schedule and immediately notified Vasilevsky, although Supreme Commander Stalin did not get around to signing the order until 1630 hours on 7 August Moscow time, that is, 15 1/2 hours after the Americans dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima.

Up to the very hour of the Soviet invasion, on 9 August the Japanese Government, Imperial Army General Staff, Kwantung Army HQ, and their respective intelligence services expected that even if the Russians attacked they would and could not do so before September at the earliest. To the extent that last minute warnings were heeded at some local points, it only served (seemingly by deliberate Soviet intent) to draw the Japanese into the open and catch them while in the process of redeploying -- the most vulnerable mode for troops.

Thus, given adroit Soviet reinforcement of their enemy's own pre-conceptions, the Japanese were profoundly surprised by the early timing of the Soviet invasion.

Direction. The choice of direction or axis of the main Soviet attack was of major concern to both the Soviet and Japanese planners. The former sought to mislead Japanese expectations as to the main source and angle of attack while the latter sought to detect Soviet deployments and plans. Soviet claims to the contrary, notwithstanding, the Japanese did fairly well anticipate the main geographical pattern of the invasion.

First, the Japanese correctly foresaw Manchuria (rather than Inner Mongolia, Korea, or the Japanese home islands) as the main theater of Soviet action. Since late 1940 the Kwantung Army had considered the potentially most dangerous Soviet axis of attack to be a drive from the Trans-Baikal toward central or southern Manchuria, even though that axis crossed the formidable Greater Khingan Range. This assessment was based not on secret intelligence but rather on simple geographical and logistic calculations: the proximity of urban, rear staging areas and of strategic reserves in European Russia made the Trans-Baikal the most defensively secure and offensively efficient base in the Soviet Far East. Moreover, Zhukov's victory at Khalkhin-Gol in 1939 had already demonstrated this. Hence when the invasion finally materialized, the Kwantung Army was not at all surprised that a blow was staged from that quarter. However, they were utterly stunned by the timing, size, strength, and speed generated by Marshal Malinovsky's Trans-Baikal Front.

Strength. Although Japanese intelligence estimates of the buildup of Soviet strength in the Far East were approximately correct for *strategic* planning purposes, planned Soviet security, cover, and deception measures actively prevented the Japanese from discovering the specific deployment of these forces *within* the theater. The intelligence sections of both the Kwantung Army and the Imperial Army General Staff had good estimates of total Soviet strength but poor estimates of its distribution. The only deployment that the Kwantung Army could confirm was in two sectors on the eastern front which had apparently been reinforced, but even then the size of these reinforcements remained unknown. In retrospect, one Japanese historian, Colonel Hayashi, suspects that "this detected build-up may have been a ruse to draw Kwantung Army's attention to the eastern front." Indeed, Meretskov's First Far Eastern Front had created false formations to dissimulate its strength relative to the other two fronts.¹ The mal-distribution of Japanese defenders confirms the success of this strategic deception.

In sum, the coordinated Soviet deception efforts evidently insured that Japanese forces were mal-deployed and unprepared for the actual offensive operations that the Soviets had planned to exploit.

¹ Japanese intelligence had identified and located only 7 of the 12 Soviet ground armies (plus the MPRA Group) in the Far East. All those identified had been established by 1941. This was very old intelligence. The Japanese failed to detect either the arrival of 4 entirely new armies or the formation of another plus the Mongol-Soviet MPRA Group. Moreover, they had also failed to detect the transfer of the 16th Army from the west (Trans-Baikal Front) to the north (Second Far Eastern Front). Consequently the Japanese were working from base figures that implied distribution among the western, northern, and eastern fronts of, respectively, 30%, 30%, 40%, when the real distribution was more nearly 40%, 25%, 35%.

Table II

JAPANESE MISALLOCATIONS DUE TO SOVIET DECEPTION

Deployment of Soviet Armies on D-day

<u>Fronts</u>	<u>Japanese Estimates</u>		<u>Actual Deployment</u>		<u>Combat Troops</u>
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
West	2	29	5	42	39
North	2	29	3	25	23
East	3	42	4	33	38
Total	7	100	12	100	100

Deployment of Opposing Combat Troops on D-day

<u>Fronts</u>	<u>Soviet</u>		<u>Japanese</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Trans-Baikal Front	416,000	39.3	72,000	27.0
2nd Far Eastern Front	239,000	22.6	26,000	9.7
1st Far Eastern Front	404,000	38.1	169,000	63.3
Total	1,059,000	100.0	267,000	100.0
Central reserves	0	--	143,000	--

The Manchurian Campaign is therefore exceptional in Soviet experience because strategic surprise was won from an enemy who was receiving and correctly evaluating a substantial amount of authentic intelligence. The Soviet strategic deception operation was moderately sophisticated; it employed most of the ruses or channels that could have been used to supply credible disinformation to the enemy and it adroitly directed this disinformation to the most receptive and influential Japanese institutions and individuals. As a result, significant surprise was effected in *each* of its main dimensions, but in varying degrees. With

respect to disguising Soviet intentions, it was moderate; for the timing of the attack, it was very high; and for the direction, strength, and method of attack, it was fairly high. The overall intensity of strategic surprise was quite high and second only to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in Soviet military history. Yet, the strategic success of Soviet deception planners in the Manchurian Campaign was won from an opponent that was unusually vulnerable to deception due to its primitive intelligence services and its manipulable foreign minister.

The following graph summarizes Soviet military experience in terms of the levels of sophistication of deception employed, the degrees of surprise achieved, the extent to which intended goals were obtained, and the relative costs (in terms of casualties) incurred. With few exceptions, the trend indicates substantial, cumulative improvement over the long run. The more sophisticated the deception plan, the greater the degree of surprise achieved, the greater the extent that goals are met (or even exceeded), and all at relatively lower cost. The Soviet General Staff, slowly and painfully, has relearned Marshal Suvorov's 19th century lesson that: "To surprise is to conquer."

[Graph]

The promotion of the Manchurian model for nonnuclear (or limited nuclear) war has reconfirmed strategic surprise as a standard objective for the Soviet General Staff's operational planning. Indeed, it is a key ingredient to the model. However, like other ingredients, it is potentially vulnerable. In particular, it is deterrable because *assured* surprise depends on deception¹ to divert an intended victim's attention away from good images of the real plan toward similarly plausible but fictional plans. Consequently, the appropriate answer to a model based on surprise-through-deception is the timely detection of deception through a strategy of counterdeception. To the extent that deception can be perceived, appropriate precautions and counter-actions can be taken. And, such measures could be designed to be disclosed to the deceiver so as to deter its planned course of offensive action.

¹There are other notable sources of surprise: completely effective secrecy of attacks; a victim's unreinforced preconceptions; or inadvertent distraction. However, active and deliberate deception is usually required to achieve a high likelihood of strategic surprise.

The Soviet Armed Forces had to realize practically the kind of "lightning operation" that renowned German theoreticians discoursed upon in numerous works, to no particular avail.

Marshals Malinovsky and Zakharov, 1966

The most important feature of the Soviet-Japanese war is that the strategic aims of the war were attained in the course of its initial phase.

Victory in the Far East, 1966

...the rout of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria [was] one of the biggest and most skillfully planned and executed Soviet strategic operations. The swift advance of General Kravchenko's Sixth Guards Tank Army over the Greater Khingan Mountains, hitherto considered impassable to armour, took the Japanese by surprise.

Army General Shtemenko, 1975

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING FOR DECISIVE STRENGTH

The war in Manchuria concretizes for Soviet military officers their major, modern precedent for a quick, cheap, successful campaign. Premised on strategic surprise, the Soviet design for war against Japan concentrated the forces for three combined-arms fronts around Manchuria. Logistical preparations gained momentum in the spring of 1945, by which time Soviet soldiers and civilians had grown weary of the closing war in the West and had acquired little enthusiasm for initiating a new war in the East. To obviate the military costs and political risks of protracted Japanese resistance and a war of attrition, the surprise invasion of Manchuria was planned to yield a prompt and unconditional surrender. In developing its operational plan, the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces considered a variety of military approaches, evaluated alternative objectives, and examined different methods. An early Japanese surrender has been deemed to have required the extension of Soviet power into the

full depth and around the flanks of Manchuria; although potentially even more desirable, major landing operations on the Japanese home islands were insufficiently feasible to effect an early surrender. Accordingly, the operational plan directed Front and Army Commanders to isolate the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and North Korea and thereby defeat it in a brief campaign. The final plan postulated sudden, simultaneous attacks along separate lines on each front; a surprisingly strong, mobile force in the main effort striking south and west from Mongolia; and a tank army leading the advance across the Gobi Desert, the Greater Khingan Mountains, and the central Manchurian plain.

Military Operations of the Campaign

To stage the campaign against the Kwantung Army, the Soviet Armed Forces secretly mounted a strenuous, short-term effort to expand and reinforce the Far Eastern theater of operations. During the three months following the war with Germany, the Far East force of 40 standing divisions was doubled through the transfer of four armies from the European theater of operations. Most of these transferred forces were concentrated in Mongolia, on the Transbaikal Front, for the main effort. By August, the Soviets had positioned in the Far East a fighting force comprising one and a half million men, over 26,000 guns and mortars, 5,000 armored vehicles, and about 5,000 aircraft.

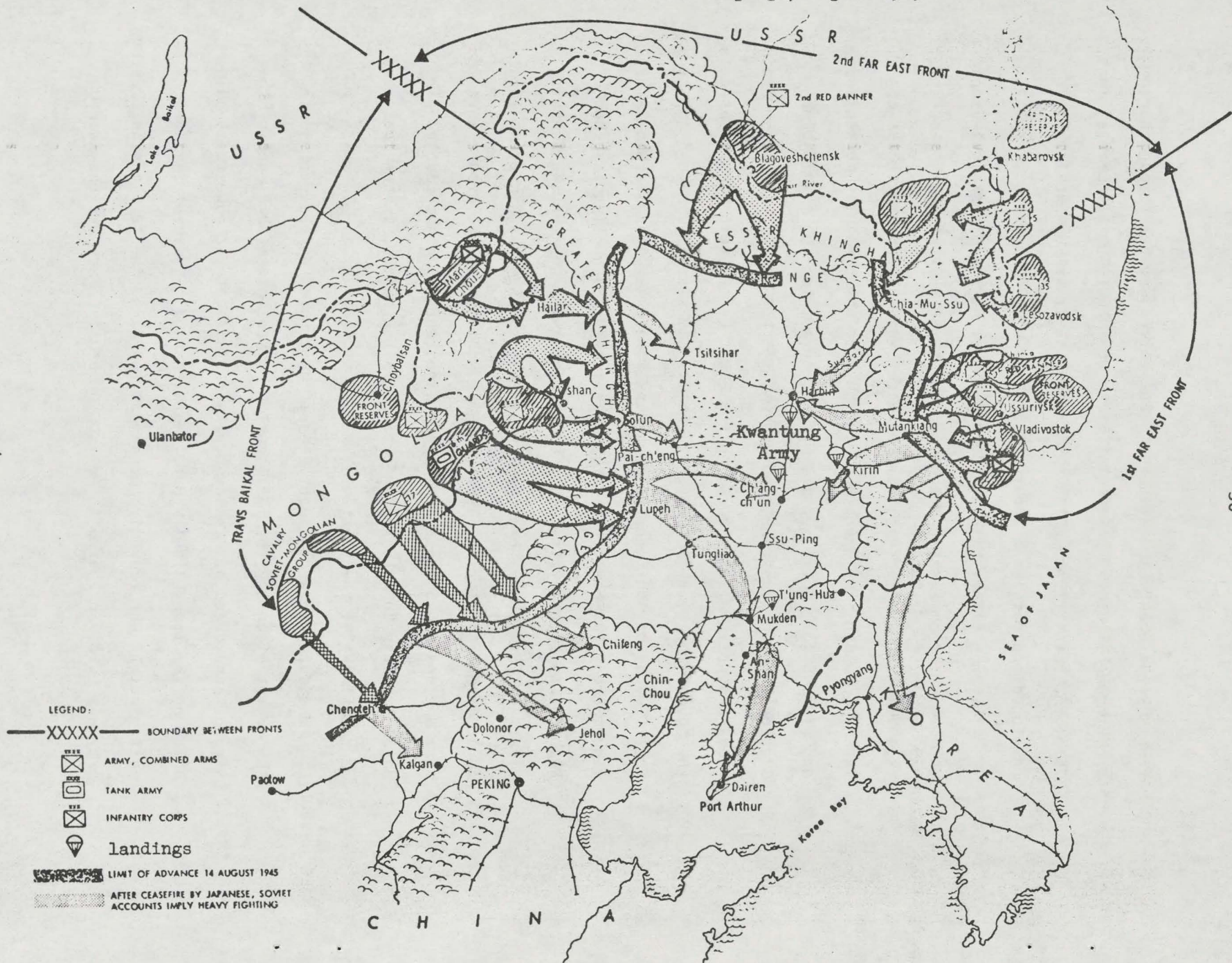
The Soviet offensive was a combined-arms, joint operation that incorporated Soviet air and naval forces as well as Mongolian ground forces. Its theater embraced over 5,000 kilometers (about 3,000 miles) of front, and its operational objectives ranged from 300 to 800 kilometers deep. In the first hours of August 9, three Soviet

fronts began unexpected attacks on and forced marches through narrow breakthrough sectors whose total width was about 300 kilometers, just 7% of the total front. Within six days, their armies had largely enveloped and paralyzed the Kwantung Army.

The main effort originated in the west on the Transbaikal Front, fanning out from Eastern Mongolia along three main axes and then splitting into sub-axes. Initially headed toward Kalgan (northeast of Peking), Mukden, and Changchun, the bulk of these heavily mechanized and armored forces crossed the desert, surmounted the formidable Greater Khingan Mountains, and drove into the Central Manchurian Plain. Simultaneously, a large force on the First Far Eastern Front, based in the Soviet Maritime Province, fought its way westward through Japanese fortified areas and forested-mountains toward Kirin and Harbin. The minor Second Far Eastern Front, concentrated around Blagoveshchensk and Khabarovsk, ferried its forces across the Amur and down the Sungari Rivers to form separate prongs of attack, to engage and prevent local forces from redeploying elsewhere. In addition to the ground invasion that decided the outcome of the campaign, the Soviets conducted air and naval landings to take key objectives in the center, in the rear, and on the flanks of the theater.

The Japanese were caught grossly unprepared by the early date of the Soviet offensive, by the location of its main effort, and by the strength and speed of its advance, especially of the powerful leading units on the Transbaikal Front. Notwithstanding several isolated units that fought fiercely for almost ten days, the 40 division Kwantung Army was barely prepared to resist forcefully. Despite the Kwantung

The Soviet Armed Forces' Manchurian Campaign, August 1945



Army's hardened fortifications and the Soviets' limited (between 1 and 2 to 1) advantage in manpower, Japanese unpreparedness for and inferiority to the Soviet offensive resulted in disproportionately heavy casualties (between 5 and 10 Japanese for every Soviet soldier killed or wounded). Although the Soviet plan had postulated 20 to 30 days to inflict a decisive defeat on the partially depleted Kwantung Army, in practice the Emperor's surrender became effective ten days after the Soviet assault.¹ Even the most heroic Japanese resistance would have ultimately ended in rout due to the limited resources and disarray of their forces. In short, Soviet forces won a relatively low-cost victory, regardless of the determinants or effects of the Emperor's surrender; but how decisive their military operations were on the Kwantung Army's failure to sustain major, organized resistance is the subject of continuing dispute between Soviet and Japanese military historians.

By Soviet accounts, the surprise, strength, speed, and depth of the Manchurian offensive determined its successful outcome. Admittedly, the gross technological and slight numerical inferiorities of the Kwantung Army, its lack of air power and anti-air defenses, and the paucity of Japanese minefields and anti-tank armament facilitated the Soviet invasion of Northeast China. Nevertheless, Soviet military histories record their planners' and commanders' anxieties at the possibility of having been drawn into protracted combat by successive

¹ Soviet accounts ignore the effect that U.S. military operations, including the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, may have had on the timing of the Imperial surrender, and attribute the haste of Japan's surrender primarily to the success of Soviet operations in Northeast China.

Japanese retreats and counterattacks. To obviate such costly prolongation of the war, the Soviet strategy to isolate the Kwantung Army from other Japanese forces before it could either evacuate the theater or receive reinforcements was designed to be spearheaded by fast and potent advance detachments. These mobile, strike elements operated independently ahead of the main forces, overcame provisional defense, proceeded deep into rear areas, and disorganized communications and command centers while bypassing heavily defended fortifications. In the wake of these advance detachments, prompt advances by the main body of Soviet forces enabled them to outflank and take centers of resistance and other fortified objectives.

The speed of the advance detachments was not matched by the main body of troops whose heavy supply trains and masses of artillery retarded progress over the rugged terrain and poorly paved roads. The campaign plan was particularly strained by lack of fuel and by ineffective transport. Soviet as well as Japanese accounts depict the precariousness of certain Soviet forces stranded deep within Manchuria and ordered to pool their fuel supplies, to form advance battalions, and to accelerate their advance.¹

Soviet memoirs portray the campaign as exceedingly hard to command due to its far-flung and dispersed operations; incorrect maps; incomplete intelligence on the enemy; acute shortages of fuel, water, and even food; and its fragile troop control network. Still, Soviet military scholars and commanders publicly concur that the concept and design of the campaign was correct; the problems encountered have rather been

¹ Japanese military historians have duly noted the weaknesses of many Soviet units that were isolated, depleted, and therefore vulnerable to potential counterattacks, which failed to materialize for the most part.

attributed to improper planning of details, to inadequate preparations, and to equipment that was unsuited to the stringent natural demands of the theater and physical requirements of the plan.

Strategic Design of the Campaign

The Manchurian model for Soviet military planning, besides relying and capitalizing on strategic surprise, was designed to achieve decisive operational strength in the full depth of the theater. Therefore, to plan operations against Japan, the first problem was to identify the extent and limits of the theater. Early in the war when Soviet representatives were discussing their material "requirements" with the United States, favorable consideration was given to an eventual invasion of the Japanese home islands by sea and air landings. However, the General Staff quickly rejected this idea as riskier and costlier than it was rewarding. In particular, operational planners were initially discouraged by the prospect of large losses due to potentially strong resistance in Japan proper. Moreover, at that stage of the war in the Pacific, the remoteness of "Allied" forces promised insignificant outside support. Thus, the design for seizing Japan's main metropolitan and military centers, which was politically ideal from the Soviet standpoint, was briefly considered and then discarded as infeasible by the General Staff's operational planners.¹

A more feasible but less desirable design was to seize the Japanese-occupied cities and to disarm Japanese forces in northern China, around Peiping (as Peking was then called by the Nationalist Chinese government),

¹This and other rejected options were not discussed in the first edition of *Final*. Basically concurrent accounts appear in *Final*, 1969, pp. 66-68 and Shtemenko, pp. 329-334.

Tientsin, and the Shantung peninsula. This option was eventually rejected primarily because it offered inadequately lucrative objectives and, secondarily, because the dispersion of Japanese forces in and limited access routes to north China made the costs and risks unduly high.

A still more feasible design which offered new extensions of Soviet territory well into the Pacific Ocean was to seize and hold the Japanese-occupied islands of Sakhalin and the Kuriles. Since Japanese forces on the islands were quite small, these objectives did not require major Soviet military investments; nevertheless, the islands were sufficiently valuable to be included in the final design as second-priority objectives. As a result, when the surprise attack against Manchuria was underway, the Soviet Navy was directed to prepare secondary landing operations against these objectives as soon as possible.¹

The design actually chosen specified the disarmament of Japanese forces in Northeast China and North Korea as the main objective of Soviet military operations. Since the Kwantung Army was the most compact and formidable Japanese military force on the mainland of Asia, its destruction would be a fatal blow to Japanese power abroad and would deny the home islands the potential strength of its strategic redeployment. But, the very strength that made the Kwantung Army such a lucrative political-military objective also posed a variety of worrisome problems for Soviet operational planners. Aroused by these new challenges, the operational planners on the General Staff have claimed credit for having become committed to this design first, before their political superiors.² General

¹For a good summary of Soviet amphibious operations in the 1945 war against Japan, primarily around the flanks of the theater in North Korea, see Raymond A. Garthoff's article in *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1966.

²The Chief of the Operations Department during the planning of the campaign, General Shtemenko, has written "First the General Staff, and then GHQ [General Headquarters, i.e., Stalin], became dedicated to this idea [of disarming the Kwantung Army]." (Shtemenko, p. 329.)

Shtemenko, who served as Stalin's main liaison among the planners on the General Staff, has cited political as well as military goals in Manchuria: "Hitler's Eastern partner in the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis interested us not only as an immediate military threat to the USSR, the 'Japanese problem' had further significance. It was directly connected with the task of shortening the war, which had to be done for the sake of suffering humanity. World peace was inconceivable without the defeat of Imperialist Japan. And finally, it was necessary to help the peoples of Asia, particularly China, to throw off the foreign yoke."¹

By the time political endorsement was required, the military planners had learned to anticipate their superior's needs and aims. As the war in the west drew to a close, Front and Army Commanders became conscious of political pressures to occupy strategic areas in Germany and Manchuria ahead of "Allied" forces. Furthermore, the transfer of Japanese arms to local, Communist Chinese forces turned out, in practice, to be a significant clandestine aspect of the Soviet's military occupation of Manchuria, whether or not it was part of the operational plan. For the Soviet leadership of 1945, the strategic design against the Kwantung Army in Northeast Asia was both a politically worthy and a militarily feasible challenge.

Marshal Vasilevsky, Chief of the General Staff during most of World War II and Commander in Chief of the Far East for the Manchurian campaign, distinguishes this campaign for the extraordinary influence that professional military officers had on its strategic design as well as its

¹Shtemenko, 1968, pp.

operational plan.¹ Having partly determined and correctly anticipated the strategic design, Soviet military planners proceeded to solve the main operational problems posed by the uncertain strength of Japanese forces, the limits on Soviet strength in the theater, the extreme natural and logistical difficulties, and the constraints required to insure strategic surprise. The most significant and, at the time, controversial solution was an unprecedentedly heavy concentration of mechanized forces in large battalions of advance detachments and in highly mobile brigades, divisions, and armies of the fronts' first echelons, particularly the assignment of the Sixth Guards Tank Army to lead the main effort across the Gobi Desert and over the Greater Khingan Mountains within six days. But the plan was novel in many other, less controversial respects due to the unique opportunities and exceptional conditions that confronted Soviet operational planners and military commanders in the Far East theater during the spring and summer of 1945. These opportunities and conditions had at least partly been anticipated in the prior development of the Far East theater. (See the Appendix for a chronology of its strategic evolution.)

Operational Plan of the Campaign (see Table III)

The Manchurian campaign's operational plan directed the largest strategic offensive based on surprise ever implemented and executed by the

¹"The 1945 campaign in the Far East, as no other during the last war, convincingly demonstrated that the development of strategic designs and plans is not the prerogative of individual persons, no matter how high the position that they occupy, but rather the result of intensive creative activity of a large collective: the Supreme High Command, the General Staff, the top echelons of the different armed services, the central boards of the [Ministry] of Defense and Rear Services of the Red Army, the command and staffs of the Fronts, the Navy and the Armies." (Vasilevsky, 1967, p. 80)

Table 3

PLANNING MODEL FOR THE MANCHURIAN CAMPAIGN

Tasks	Problems	Solutions
1. Choose main routes and objectives.	Kwantung Army could stage counter-offensive and strategic evacuation from its main bases near points of escape and reinforcement.	Concentrate main effort in Mongolia to strike swiftly and deeply from least expected direction, and to close routes of escape or reinforcement.
2. Acquire field intelligence.	Strict limits on pre-war collection to minimize warning of planned attack.	Intensive pre-attack surveillance and extensive post-attack reconnaissance.
3. Concentrate superior strength.	Barely 40 divisions in the theater early in 1945.	Transfer as many battle-seasoned, adaptable units from the West.
4. Implement command and control procedures.	Threat of Japanese spoiling operations; continuous, secure communications difficult during rapid advances along widely separate routes through mountainous and hostile terrain.	Exercise contingency plans for preemptive attack in case of detection of enemy spoiling preparations; issue coded orders for secure radio communications on the march.
5. Coordinate rates of advance between fronts, armies, and air forces.	Extreme and varied distances to major enemy force concentrations, lines of communications, control centers, and evacuation points.	Continuous, deep, mechanized advances supported by air resupply, reconnaissance, and bombing up to enemy headquarters.
6. Organize troop formations.	Uncertain terrain obstacles and enemy defenses.	Allocate almost all mobile firepower to the first echelons and the advance detachments to overwhelm points and to bypass centers of resistance.
7. Prepare rear support services.	High planned rates of fuel and water consumption: exceptionally rugged terrain, poor roads, and deep series of obstacles; natural and military threats of disease; expected bad weather.	Augment water supplies through well-drilling; use airlift for fuel in emergencies; capture enemy supplies; train non-regulation engineers; immunize troops and motorize medical units.
8. Complete troop training.	Newcomers unfamiliar with the theater, and originals untested in combat.	Conduct combined-arms exercises under joint command with old and new troops operationally integrated.
9. Assign target priorities.	Unknown enemy designs for counterattack.	Direct commanders to pursue lucrative targets of opportunity and to converge on Headquarters facilities.
10. Secure strategic and tactical surprise.	Forward concentration and deployment areas subject to enemy reconnaissance and surveillance.	Execute active cover and deception measures and attack along all fronts simultaneously at night either from the march or by commando action to minimize enemy warning, preparedness, and resistance.

Soviet Armed Forces.¹ In theory, the plan governing the Red Worker and Peasant Army's Field Service Regulations of 1936 as well as the strategic preparations in Western Russia before the German invasion aimed to achieve quick victory "with little blood" by creating the capability for similarly stunning, strategic offensives. In practice, though, the Soviet Armed Forces received rather than delivered unexpected attacks in the West. To survive and recover from these traumatic battles and retreats, their operations against Germany initially were strictly defensive, subsequently counter-offensive, and only toward the end were they overwhelmingly offensive; of these, none were distinguished by either strategic surprise or "little blood."² However, as the balance of forces on the Western front shifted in their favor, the Soviets' growing initiative developed better prepared and more offensive operations. Finally, in approaching the war on Japan, the General Staff had the opportunity to gain still greater strategic initiative in offensive operations against a poorly prepared opponent. But, Soviet military planners could not conclusively persuade the Front commanders until the eve of attack, when they confirmed that the Kwantung Army was still mostly either building deep defense lines or still in transit toward blocking fortified positions, that strategic

¹General Zhukov's surprise offensive against the Kwantung Army at Khalkhin Gol, Mongolia in 1939 and General Pavlovskii's surprise invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were much more limited in size and force, even if they may be considered strategic for having achieved their objectives within a single operational phase.

²The third edition of Marshal Sokolovsky's *Military Strategy*, for the first time, reported that in addition to 70,000 towns and 1,710 cities completely or partly destroyed, over 20 million people were killed during the war in the Soviet Union. (FTD Translations, p. 179) Reportedly, outside the USSR the Soviet Army also lost over 600,000 killed in Poland, over 140,000 in Czechoslovakia, over 140,000 in Hungary, over 69,000 in Romania, almost 26,000 in Austria, around 8,000 in Yugoslavia, and over 102,000 in Germany. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, March 14, 1975, p. 3.

surprise would prevent well-organized Japanese resistance to the Soviet offensive. Until then, several key decisions had been delayed pending more definite estimates of Japanese strength.

Sparse and uncertain information on Japanese forces in and around Manchuria was a chronic source of controversy for planners on the General Staff. Soviet military planners had lacked ample and reliable data on the Kwantung Army for at least several years. Moreover, they had been the target of Japanese strategic deception efforts designed to reinforce Soviet impressions of a formidable Kwantung Army and to cover the fact that many of its units' men and weapons had actually transferred to more active combat theatres. Early in the war, a secret agent in Tokyo, Richard Sorge, had reliably assured the Soviet leadership that Japanese offensive priorities were aimed south rather than north. However, Soviet military historians display little knowledge, so heavily emphasized by their Japanese counterparts, of how depleted the once-formidable Kwantung Army had become by 1945. According to their published recollections, General Staff planners and Front Commanders concentrated substantial resources to insure against the dangers of preemptive spoiling operations, delaying counter-attacks, and major counter-offensives, including the use of bacteriological warfare, posed by the uncertain strength and plans of the Kwantung Army.

Soviet estimates of total Japanese strength in and around Manchuria immediately prior to the campaign approached one-and-a-half million men, including about one million in the Kwantung Army, a quarter-of-a-million in local or regional forces of the Japanese authorities,¹ and a hundred

¹In practice, most of these forces either switched sides or became neutral.

thousand Japanese troops on the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin. Before the buildup in 1945, Soviet manpower strength in the Far East was barely half as great. Indeed, assuming that the opposing commanders could only use forces in place, Soviet estimates of their own offensive strength could only promise the expulsion of Japanese forces from northern Manchuria, at most. Hence, Soviet wartime deployments were primarily aimed at repelling possible Japanese attacks from the well-developed line of fortified staging areas around the Maritime Province, opposite Blagoveshchensk, and southeast of Chita.

By doubling their own strength during the spring and summer, the Soviet Armed Forces achieved a certain quantitative parity with their Japanese opposites. However, depending on how they defined and measured effective military manpower on the two sides, the reported strength ratio varied from less than equality to two-to-one superiority for Soviet forces. In the numerator, Soviet personnel strength in combat units was just over a million men, another half million being in support units. Thus, by varying the denominator as well, the total estimated manpower of Japanese forces exceeded Soviet combat strength, but total Soviet manpower was double the strength of the Kwantung Army. The disparities between and uncertainties¹ in these estimates of military manpower ratios generated evident controversy

¹ Indeed, these uncertainties have outlasted the war by at least a generation. Marshal Zakharov, who as Chief of Staff on the Transbaikal Front had been initially most skeptical of the General Staff's assurances, continued to insist during the 1960s that the campaign's success was mostly due to the Soviets' qualitative rather than quantitative superiority. With his demise in 1971, the basic history of *The Liberating Mission of the Soviet Armed Forces in World War II* edited by the Minister of Defense, Marshal A. A. Grechko, altered its estimate of Soviet superiority in manpower from 1.1:1 to 2:1 between the first edition of 1971 and the second in 1974. Hence, the controversy over Japanese strength at the time of the campaign has apparently recurred in the course of assessing retrospectively the relative value of quantitative and qualitative superiority.

between the General Staff planners, who confidently discounted Japanese strength, and the Front commanders, who warily insisted on more and better evidence.

Besides effective military manpower, other critical dimensions of the Japanese ability to resist eluded Soviet planners and commanders. Constrained by the need to conceal their intentions, reconnaissance in force was too overt to preserve surprise. Similarly, extensive covert reconnaissance was also too intrusively conspicuous and likely to alert the Kwantung Army's warning system as a precursor to attack. Hence, remote surveillance and limited reconnaissance, mainly by Communications Troops, Border Guards, and Air Forces, were the main means of information gathering in the theater. Because the means were so limited, maps of Japanese positions, data on force dispositions, and analyses of their combat characteristics were evidently quite deficient, especially for the main concentration of Japanese strength in the depths of Manchuria. However, there was abundant and relevant data for planning the initial, midnight attack by armored columns from the march in the West, by river-crossings at selected points in the North, and by saboteurs infiltrating narrow breach sectors in the East. The main uncertainty concerned plans for the Transbaikal Front and the threat posed by Japanese mobile forces, combat aircraft, and mechanized divisions based in Central Manchuria to large Soviet armies that bad weather alone could stall in mountain passes, far from secure supply and air bases.

Despite persistent doubts and controversies surrounding the General Staff's draft plan ostensibly due to inadequate intelligence, the final plan conformed closely to the original prescription. First, the Sixth

Guards' Tank Army was allowed to lead the first echelon into Manchuria, but only after it had been precautiously augmented with two motorized infantry divisions, two self-propelled gun brigades, and four independent tank battalions to allay the doubts aroused by its Front Commander, Marshal Malinovsky, and his Chief of Staff, General Zakharov.¹ Secondly, mechanized forces were more generally concentrated in the armies' first echelons; in reinforced battalions of advance detachments assigned to operate independently 10-50 kilometers ahead of first echelon divisions; and in special reconnaissance detachments assigned to operate about another 40 kilometers ahead of the main body. Thirdly, almost all air transports, a disproportionately large share of tanks, bombers, and fuel stocks, and the most battle-seasoned manpower were assigned to the main effort in the West where Japanese fortifications and forces were weakest. Finally, rather than a slow squeeze or successive strikes, the final plan dictated sudden, simultaneous thrusts deep into the theater along separate lines of advance on all three fronts.

The plan for the main effort was unprecedented in specifying operational depths up to 820 kilometers;² in providing the logistics support for the Sixth Guards Tank Army to advance an average of 82 kilometers a

¹As this was the first time a "tank" army had ever led a general Soviet offensive, the "special meaning" of these reinforcements, according to combined-arms authorities, is that it had become a "mechanized" army comprising 44 battalions of motorized infantry and 25 tank battalions. See Zakharov 1969, p. 19 and Col. I. Krupchenko, "6-ia gvardeiskaia tankovaia armia v Khingano-Mukdenskoi operatsii" (Sixth Guards Tank Army in the Khingans-Mukden Operation), *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 12, December 1962, p. 16.

²The zone of advance on the main efforts in offensives against Germany ranged from 130 kilometers in the Byelorussian operation (Third Byelorussian Front, July 1944) to 330 kilometers in the Jassy-Kishinev operation (Second Ukrainian Front, August 1944). Major General V. Matsulenko, D.Sc. (History), "Massing of Forces," *Soviet Military Review*, No. 2, February 1975, p. 54.

day over a roadless desert, a substantial range, and a rainy plain; and in permitting Soviet bombers and air transports to deliver battlefield support, fuel, reconnaissance, communications, and landings over long distances. Although the rates of advance achieved in practice were even greater than planned, the plans themselves were premised on knowledge of inadequate Japanese defense lines in depth and of certain weaknesses in their air defenses.¹

The Manchurian campaign was planned and expected to be unprecedentedly successful. Its original operational plan was based on cautiously high estimates of Japanese strength and on strategic designs to optimize Soviet strength's effectiveness. Since its initial implementation had anticipated greater resistance than was encountered, both on the ground and in the air, in practice it was even more successful than planned.

Besides acclaiming its strategic design, operational plan, tactical implementation, and its execution, Soviet military analyses of the Manchurian campaign have recognized several uncontrollable factors that contributed to its success. By their assessments, the Soviet forces' quantitative superiority in total military manpower was at most a minor factor in their success. It was rather by exploiting their weapons' superiority, their freedom of movement in the air, and their strategic as well as tactical surprise that major gains were quickly achieved at low cost. Finally, Soviet accounts admit that the lack of prepared defenses in depth facilitated

¹"The execution of Front missions of such depths was possible because of the strength and surprise of the first strike, the presence of powerful mobile units in the formations of the Transbaikal and First Far Eastern Fronts, the absence of prepared defense lines in the depth of enemy dispositions, our dominance of the airspace, and the high rapidity, boldness and uninterruptedness of the offensive of Soviet forces, who swiftly and astutely overcame enemy resistance and difficult natural obstacles." *Final*, 1969, pp. 361-362.

over-fulfillment of the Manchurian model's original plan. But, they do not recognize the cumulative effects of American air and naval power on the Kwantung Army's ability to resist or on the Emperor's decision to surrender. Without yielding any credit to the United States, Soviet military authorities have significantly recognized actual limits and potential threats to the success of their most splendid offensive in history.

An offensive along separate axes is characteristic of modern military actions. The study of this problem according to the experience of the Manchurian operation can provide useful material for modern military theory and the combat training of the troops...In conditions of a rapid offensive and fast development of events, the advance detachments recommended themselves well. The experience of their use must be studied and introduced into practice.

Marshal Zakharov, 1960

In modern conditions...troop movements will have to be conducted by organic means, utilizing all available roads regardless of their condition and quality...the support of a high-speed operation will require even more significant engineering reinforcement of the troops and the maximum mechanization of all labor-consuming engineering tasks.

Victory in the Far East, 1971

IV. TACTICAL INNOVATION AND ARMS MODERNIZATION

As the last major combat operation of Soviet Armed Forces, the Manchurian campaign has been treated as a major test and demonstration of various forces' strategic offensive operation. Authorities of the main armed services, technical branches, and combined-arms staffs have analyzed the experience to criticize, advocate, and arbitrate competing claims for past credit and future roles. The mixture of professional interests that motivated this public historical inquiry was evidently latent in the planning and conduct of the campaign itself.¹ Opportunities and requirements to

¹Professional concerns to establish claims for continued peacetime development on the basis of wartime accomplishments is nicely illustrated by the story told in the memoirs of a staff general of the railroad troops. Shortly after VE-Day during May and June 1945, while strenuously preparing the neglected Far Eastern rail system for the forthcoming transfer of forces, the administration of the railroad troops took time out to arrange a major conference of its leading cadre to sum up the service's accomplishments during the war and to "mark the future perspectives of the development of our affairs."

develop new forces in a centralized military organization ultimately depends upon the allocation of roles and missions to the various armed services and technical branches. Thus the Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign are ingredients to the process of institutionalized competition, innovation, and modernization within the Soviet military establishment. Simultaneously, they are the products of a collective, general commitment to develop strategic offensive capabilities by combinations of arms whose total effects are designed to exceed the sum of their parts'.

Ground Forces

Ground armies were the dominant form of Soviet military power in the main Soviet operations of World War II, including the Manchurian campaign. Ground force officers similarly dominated the Soviet General Staff and institutionalized a doctrine of combined-arms operations that both reflects and sustains their professional assessments and values. To these military staff officers, planners, theoreticians, and historians, the 1945 Far East campaign apparently demonstrates that lightning offensive operations on the ground can be made into a decisive means of modern warfare. Indeed, the General Staff's prominent role in publicizing this campaign as an instructive model, which began in 1960 and continued throughout the 1960s, was closely associated with the successful efforts of Ground Force leaders to stem and reverse Khrushchev's budget-cutting reductions of their ranks.

Since the literature on the 1945 campaign was stimulated and controlled by General Staff officers who were most closely affiliated with Ground Forces, it was presumably intended to confirm their preferences and to improve their assessments of the possibilities for modern operations on the ground.¹ Thus, it has both coincided with and also contributed to the recovery of Soviet Ground Forces and their institutional advocates. Like the main armed services that played a role in this campaign, various subordinate branches of the Ground Forces have also examined this experience's lessons for their own modernization and planning.

Infantry. Besides constituting the bulk of Soviet forces and providing most of the Front and Army commanders in the Far East campaign, according to its advocates infantry played the leading role in developing a major instrument of lightning warfare, the advance detachments. The "artful use of surprise" in the initial assault and speed in the immediate advance has also been claimed as special contributions of infantry to the campaign's success. No doubt, dense and powerful infantry formations were also the main means for sustained offensive action; not only were 72 out of the 87 equivalent ground force divisions composed of infantry, but the infantry has also been generally credited with correspondingly great contributions to the campaign's success.²

¹In his review of *Final 1966*, Marshal Vasilevskii publicly rebuked the authors for the "inaccuracy" of their claim that the campaign had been planned as a strategic operation by three *ground force* fronts. In the 1969 edition of *Final* this limited definition of the *combined-arms* Fronts was deleted (p. 88).

²"Kampaniia Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1945 g." (The 1945 Far East Campaign of the Soviet Armed Forces), *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 8, August 1965, p. 67; *Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 275. For a recent evaluation of motorized infantry as the "queen of the battlefields," see the interview with Army General I. G. Pavlovsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, in *Smena*, No. 2, 1974, pp. 24-27.

The initial breaching operations were executed primarily by infantry as commandos; the immediate exploitations were executed primarily by mechanized infantry integrated with mobile armor and self-propelled artillery as advance detachments of divisions in the first echelons. Virtually complete tactical surprise was achieved by foot soldiers through elaborate camouflage measures and well planned night assaults. To breach border fortifications, advanced battalions of infantry infiltrated under cover to neutralize remotely surveyed positions up to a depth of five kilometers. Such discrete infantry actions enabled the main forces to launch a surprise attack without the prior warning of intrusive reconnaissance, air strikes, or artillery barrages. At the same time, surprising strength was concentrated in densely powerful infantry formations that constituted the main forces for sustained offensive action. By covertly concentrating its artillery and armor within the narrow breakthrough sectors of the front, the first echelon of infantry amassed an average of over 200 artillery pieces and 30 armored vehicles per kilometer. Deeply-echeloned reinforcements were also available to support the first echelons of the offensive in surprising strength. In addition to these elements of tactical and strategic surprise, the infantry also combined stealth, speed, and strength to exploit them with sustained operational effectiveness in depth, against weakly organized resistance.¹

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¹Victory in the Far East 1966, pp. 275-276. Infantry corps occupied 5-5.4 km and regiments 1-1.5 km of front in the breakthrough sectors.

Infantry officers organized and commanded most of the advance detachments in the offensive. Advance detachments of mechanized infantry were created initially in every division and subsequently in each corps of the armies' first echelons. These shock units combined the strength, speed, and flexibility of command required for independent operations far ahead of the main forces. Their purpose was to facilitate the fast, uninterrupted advance of the main body of forces which followed in their wake, most often led by a tank brigade in its first echelon.¹ They comprised a battalion to a regiment of motorized infantry reinforced with up to a brigade of tanks, up to a regiment of artillery, combat engineers, chemical troops, and signal troops.² To expedite their own advance, advance detachments themselves detached special armed-reconnaissance units to scout ahead and to secure bottlenecks along the planned route of march. In addition, air reconnaissance, interdiction, resupply, communications, and close support forces cooperated directly in screening them from possible counter-attacks, pursuing retreating forces, routing covering deployments, and bypassing strong fortifications.³

The specific size, composition, and rate of advance of these special detachments varied with the natural conditions, the enemy dispositions, and the missions of the units within the various sectors. The Sixth Guards Tank Army, which advanced 150 kilometers the first day and 500 kilometers over the Greater Khingan Mountains within six days, was led by

¹Liudnikov, pp. 50 and 78. *Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 276.

²*Ibid.* Liudnikov, pp. 78-80.

³*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 334-335.

advance detachments operating 30 to 40 kilometers ahead and by special reconnaissance detachments operating from 70 to 80 kilometers ahead of the main body.¹ On the average, advance detachments were separated from the main force by 10 to 50 kilometers, ranging from 20 to 80 kilometers on the Transbaikal Front to 25 to 30 kilometers on the First and Second Far East fronts.² Certain reinforced advance detachments in hot pursuit actually operated up to 120 kilometers ahead of the main forces.³ Because of their exceedingly rapid progress and the severe fuel supply problems stalling the main forces, especially on the Transbaikal Front, advance detachments of the divisions pooled their supplies and equipment and reorganized themselves into corps detachments on the fifth day of the campaign to accelerate their advance and to capture the main Manchurian cities as soon as possible.⁴ Yet, these extraordinary separations were allowed only because the advance detachments could maneuver and fight well enough to elude or fend off the weak Japanese counter-attacks that were anticipated.

For most of the infantry, problems in the rear rather than severe resistance in front were the effective constraint on rates of advance. The progress of the main body was limited by the shortage of motor transports, so acute in some cases that artillery transport was converted to

¹ *Voennaia istoriia (Military History)*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1971, p. 268.

² *Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 277.

³ *Voennaia istoriia*, 1971, p. 271.

⁴ Liudnikov, pp. 80 and 98. Krupchenko (p. 26) reports that in the sector of the Sixth Guards Tank Army, lack of fuel necessitated creating the strong advance detachments by August 12 and 13. He also notes that the "decisive condition enabling the success of the advance detachments of the tank army, operating up to 100 km ahead of the main forces, was the absence of organized enemy resistance."

carry troops.¹ The poor cross-country capability of motor transport further hampered infantry movements over terrain without adequate roads.² Inadequate information on the conditions of roads and insufficient preparations for road service, including engineering support, were notable deficiencies on both major fronts.³ Rather than the bulk of foot soldiers, though, the main problems in the rear were caused by its associated mass of artillery and were further exacerbated by the consuming demands for fuel by the armies' rapidly advancing mechanized forces.

Armored and Mechanized Forces⁴

In the Manchurian campaign, the forward concentration of tank units on the Transbaikal Front was a strategic decision designed, and deemed, to have enhanced the success of the entire campaign.⁵ The uninterrupted advance of the Sixth Guards Tank Army in a naturally hostile environment with enormous logistic problems has been acclaimed by many Soviet analysts including its Front Commander who had originally resisted its commitment to lead the first echelon of the main effort. But, armored and mechanized forces also led the other offensive concentrations of the Manchurian campaign. Their successful employment demonstrated that the "Far East region (including the Greater Khingans) is accessible to large masses of troops

¹Liudnikov, pp. 60, 92.

²*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 141.

³Liudnikov, p. 91, and *Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 334-335.

⁴According to a current Soviet military authority, "tank forces remain the main strike force of the Ground Forces" and are "the most suited for actions under conditions of nuclear arms employment" (General Gusakovskii, *Trud*, September 8, 1974). Tank forces are even considered a means of seizing strategic objectives under nuclear conditions (Marshal of Tank Troops Babadzhanyan, *Pravda*, September 8, 1974, and Chief Marshal of Armored Troops Rotmistrov, *Vremya i tanki*, Moscow: Voenizdat, 1972, p. 45 (of JPRS translation).

⁵*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 70 and 330.

equipped with modern technology."¹ More generally, "in the absence of major concentrations of enemy forces and prepared defenses," the campaign showed that the "use of tank divisions and armies in the first echelon of the Front is advantageous under conditions of a surprise initiation of war."²

Selecting a tank army to lead the main effort, namely the Sixth Guards Tank Army on the Transbaikal Front, was unprecedented in Soviet military history. Its mission was to achieve the major, ultimate objectives as quickly as possible.³ However, conventional formations with infantry leading the tanks were seriously considered and only reluctantly rejected as incapable of assuring optimal rates of advance. Specifically, the General Staff in late June of 1945 persuaded the Supreme Commander, contradicting Marshal Malinovskii's previous plan for the Transbaikal Front, that after crossing the desert and scaling the Greater Khingan Mountains, large infantry units, especially their artillery support, would inevitably congest the passes and slow all the forces behind them.⁴ By early August, the tank army was augmented with two motorized infantry divisions, two

¹Zakharov, 1969, p. 25, and *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 329.

²Zakharov, 1969, p. 25. Zakharov, as Chief of Staff of the Transbaikal Front, apparently sided with his commander, Marshal Malinovskii, in their unsuccessful argument against the General Staff's decision to lead the main effort with a fully mechanized tank army. See Shtemenko's account in his memoirs for one well-placed observer's view of how the Supreme Commander initiated, supervised, and resolved this argument.

³Krupchenko, p. 16. See *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 70, Shtemenko, p. 342, *Final 1969*, p. 109, for various accounts of the Supreme Command's directive on the employment of the tank army.

⁴Zakharov, 1969, p. 19; Shtemenko, pp. 335 and 339. Marshal Malinovskii and General Zakharov had, in June, opposed the leading role of the Sixth Guards Tank Army assigned to it by the General Staff. Their intent could have been to transform it into a mechanized army and, thereby, insure that the infantry had a good claim for some of the armored forces' scarce industrial and technical resources necessary for its own post-war, high-quality motorization.

self-propelled gun brigades, and four independent tank battalions. Through these reinforcements, the army's combat capability was increased to improve its independent operation in depth.¹ Particularly significant for advocates of mechanized infantry, the "special meaning" of the Sixth Guards Tank Army's experience is that it had, through these additions, actually become a mechanized army comprising 44 battalions of motorized infantry, and 25 tank battalions.² Similarly, in other armies of the Transbaikal Front, tanks were heavily concentrated in the first echelon. For certain experienced Army commanders, this was an innovation in operational formation that had no counterpart in their prior offensives on the western front.³

Tanks and mechanized forces aided the development of the campaign because of their unique ability to pursue retreating forces deeply and to prevent them from organizing well prepared defenses.⁴ The advantages of tanks were surprisingly great in mountainous and desert environments which, until then, had been regarded by Soviet commanders as inaccessible to their large masses of heavily equipped troops. Whether in advance detachments or leading the first echelons of the main body, tank forces were particularly suited to executing sudden, rapid, and deep encirclements of opposing forces, paralyzing their movements, and disrupting their combat coordination. Besides their potent combination of mobility and fire power, tank forces were particularly advantageous in the desert because their armor and maneuverability made their flanks less vulnerable than softer and less mechanized infantry forces.⁵

¹ *Final* 1969, p. 106.

² Krupchenko, p. 16; Zakharov, 1969, p. 19.

³ Liudnikov, p. 50.

⁴ *Victory in the Far East* 1966, p. 281.

⁵ *Victory in the Far East* 1971, p. 331.

The overwhelming concentration of tank forces in the first echelon at the start of the war facilitated penetration in depth for the initial exploitation of surprise attacks. Indeed, this innovation allowed accelerated advances in this offensive.¹ The poor state of Japanese defenses has been clearly acknowledged to have contributed further to the success of Soviet mechanized assaults and advances.² Still, the main credit for the stunning Soviet success has been attributed to the operational planning, tactical execution, supply organization, and technical quality of its modern, combined-arms offensive.³ Indeed, the technical modernization and superiority of Soviet forces was not only a material ingredient of their success in combat, but was also instrumental in deterring Japanese commanders from engaging their units in futile combat as well.

Mechanized forces, though, were heavily burdened by rear support and resupply problems in the Manchurian campaign. In 1945, the hostile natural environment of the Far East theater required two to three times as much engineering support and materiel as the more benign conditions in the western plains. Under modern conditions, similarly high rates of advance would require even more mechanized engineering support.⁴ Depending on the specific terrain, climate, and resistance encountered, a variety of problems developed in supplying or improvising traversing aids, inspecting and

¹ *Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 70, 329-330.

² Zakharov, 1969, pp. 13 and 25; *Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 278; *ibid.*, 1971, p. 337; *Final 1969*, p. 363.

³ *Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 279. Krupchenko, who has recurrently noted the absence of organized resistance, has concluded that the rapidity of the advance of the Sixth Guards Tank Army was equally attributable to the "masterful organization" of the advance of its units and their technical supply (p. 30). See also *Final 1969*, p. 96; *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 337; Kazakov, p. 257.

⁴ *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 331.

repairing tanks, and conserving scarce fuel.¹ Fuel shortages were particularly constraining for the most unexpectedly successful forces as their accelerated rates of advance imposed excess demands on the limited-capacity supply lines. Slow transport movements over rain-soaked roads as early as the second day of the offensive aggravated these problems so that even the main forces on the Transbaikal Front began to stall soon after the war began. In some sectors, tank (and self-propelled artillery) forces resorted to moving on railroad beds to facilitate movement and economize scarce fuel.² In sum, the natural hostility of the Far East theater compounds the normal difficulties of providing combat support services to heavily armored and mechanized forces, especially in a rapid offensive.

Aside from the Transbaikal and Mongolian Fronts of Inner Asia, tank armies are deemed ill-suited to the Far East. On the First Far Eastern Front, because of continuous fortifications and successive mountain barriers, the massed deployment of a tank army or even a corps requires especially extensive engineering and logistics measures. The disappointing results achieved by the Tenth Mechanized Corps in these forested mountains have been largely attributed to inadequate engineering support. Rather than several corps using a single road, as in 1945, the minimal requirement implied by retrospective analysis is that at least one engineering

¹*Final* 1969, pp. 156-157; Col. V. Ezhakov, "Boevoe primeneniye tankov v gorno-tacznoi mestnosti po opytu 1-go Dal'nevostochnogo Fronta," *Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 1, January 1974, p. 79; *Victory in the Far East* 1971, p. 332.

²Strokov, p. 516, judges this "fully justified." Liudnikov, pp. 99 and 103-105, on the other hand, reports that this use of rail beds was halted to prevent their damage. He further cites the effective use of rail transport to move fuel-starved tanks and artillery and, particularly, of railroad bridges to move vehicles across rivers, observing that due to the absence of railroad troops, the requisite work had to be done by combat engineers.

brigade and two or three roads would be needed for each corps-size unit.¹ Moreover, because of terrain constraints, the maneuverability of tank forces could not be fully exploited even with adequate support. Instead, tank brigades and self-propelled artillery regiments, attached as reinforcements to the combined-arms armies, were the most effective organization for mechanized forces under these conditions.² Advance tank battalions were particularly useful as battering rams to breach enemy fortified areas and make way for the main forces. In conjunction with special sapper and engineering units, tanks also proved valuable as trail-blazers through the thick forests where they bulldozed roads for the main forces and artillery. The "rich and valuable experience [by the tank forces on the First Far Eastern Front] of a forced offensive, breaching fortifications in mountainous forests, and crossing rivers" provides concrete guidance for the uses and requirements of armored forces in such terrain.³ In sum, the uneven success of tank forces on the First Far Eastern Front proved both the value and the limits of employing heavily equipped units in mountainous forests.⁴

The experience of the tank forces on the Transbaikal Front, which was apparently more successful because it quickly suppressed all serious resistance, illustrated the value of numerous operational and tactical innovations. First, it demonstrated the feasibility of deploying into combat while on the march in the opening assaults of an offensive.⁵ Secondly, the experience of direct and multi-faceted cooperation with air forces has

¹ *Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 331-332, 335.

² Zakharov, 1969, pp. 19-20.

³ Ezhakov, pp. 77-81

⁴ *Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 276.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1971, p. 81. To adapt this experience, Soviet readers have been reminded that "the higher degree of motorization of modern forces and their heightened maneuverability allow them to execute movements and marches in even less time and at faster rates."

been "of great interest" to Air Force as well as Ground Force authorities.¹ The extraordinarily rapid advances by the Sixth Guards Tank Army were critically dependent on massive air deliveries of fuel, ammunition, and even water in the desert.² Air Forces also provided the heavily mechanized advance detachments with valuable reconnaissance, communications, navigation, and interdiction support through difficult and potentially hostile terrain. Finally, a particularly "instructive" innovation was the use of armed reconnaissance teams to smooth the way for tank forces. Operating on motorcycles 150 to 200 kilometers ahead of the tank corps, these special units were trained and equipped to seize and secure key objectives such as intersections, bridges, and airports. Even more than the advance detachments and the first echelons of the main effort, these specially detached, highly advanced units were heavily dependent on air support for resupply and reconnaissance.³

Air superiority, more advanced weapons, and unprepared opposition permitted Soviet mechanized ground forces to attain unprecedented rates and depths of advance in the strategic offensive of August, 1945. To exploit these advantages for optimal effects, innovative combinations of the most modern forces were integrated into the leading mechanized-infantry and tank armies.

Artillery

Despite the massive weight of artillery units committed to the planned offensive in the Far East, the contributions of the artillery troops to the

¹Rudenko, p. 427; *Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 342-344.

²*Final 1969*, pp. 193-194.

³Krupchenko, p. 27.

campaign's success do not figure prominently in most Soviet accounts and analyses.¹ While aggravating general congestion and transport difficulties in the rear, artillery nevertheless provided strong, mobile firepower for the advance pursuit and exploitation forces that led the offensive drives. In addition, its massive weight could have been, and in certain cases was, successfully concentrated against main centers of resistance that leading units bypassed. As combat conditions changed, plans for the heavy utilization of artillery were substantially revised, both before and during the offensive.

To optimize the surprise, speed, strength, and depth of the operations under the circumstances, much of the planned and prepared artillery support turned out to be unnecessary.² For maximum surprise in the initial assaults, the offensive was launched around midnight by commandos without either artillery or air support.³ The general success of the initial assaults and weakness of Japanese resistance allowed most Front and Army commanders to exceed their planned rates of advance and to leave behind their heavy artillery support. Artillery spokesmen, though, insist that "of all the service arms, artillery inflicted the greatest losses on the enemy and personnel, not to mention physical destruction," and "artillery had the decisive role in the

¹This has aroused the indignation but not substantially altered the public assessments of artillery advocates. A terse and critical evaluation of artillery forces' contribution to the campaign appeared in *Victory in the Far East 1966*, and was amplified in the 1971 edition (pp. 345-349). General Liudnikov's memoirs on the campaign were so deficient in the eyes of the Transbaikal Front's Artillery Commander, Col. General N. Fomin, that he composed a postscript for it to correct the "rather modest role" artillery actions play in the account. The first major exposition of artillery's role in the campaign appeared only in the second edition of Artillery Marshal K. P. Kazakov's memoirs in 1973 (pp. 246-295). The first edition, published in 1969, did not even mention the Far East campaign.

²*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 284.

³*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 103; Liudnikov, pp. 56-57.

struggle against Japanese fortified areas," particularly on the First Far Eastern Front.¹

In the Far East theater, the deployment and positioning of artillery pieces required inordinate time and effort. This was partly because the enormous construction and other work required had to be performed at night under strict camouflage discipline to insure surprise and partly because of the theater's poor roads and rough terrain.² In contrast to the standard three to four days required under normal conditions, presumably temperate plains, 10 to 15 days were required just for positioning artillery in the Far East.³ Pre-war restraints on reconnaissance by artillery survey parties and on live firing to register the range of the guns were compounded by poor visibility at night and heavy rainfall at the time of the offensive. Thus, most Front and Army commanders decided to forego artillery bombardments in advance of the initial assaults.⁴ In the rear, artillery ammunition took up so much of the limited-capacity transport facilities that 75-85% of rail cargoes on the First Far Eastern Front were occupied by artillery materiel.⁵ To move artillery forward, reassign it

¹ Kazakov, pp. 282, 292.

² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

³ *Victory in the Far East 1961*, p. 347.

⁴ *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 345. In the course of training, experiments were conducted to employ powerful searchlights for range finding at night; but, dust, debris, and rainfall were found to obscure the targets or blind the observers with reflections, making the illuminated artillery barrage an ineffectual prelude to attack.

⁵ *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 347. Marshal Kazakov (pp. 260-262) acknowledges this criticism by noting the importance of timely stockpiling. In fact, ammunition transports for artillery were first allocated to the Far Eastern theater in January 1945, and by the time of the offensive, the first Far Eastern Front's stocks contained six million rounds, including mines and charges of various calibers (p. 265).

to new units, and deliver its ammunition under fluid combat conditions created severe transportation problems in the exceptionally rough terrain of the Far East theater.¹ In sum, artillery was not only superfluously abundant, but its mobility was grossly deficient relative to the exceptional requirements for lightning operations in the Far East.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, even critics recognize that artillery was very effectively employed in the Far East when it was well prepared, and that the leading role of artillery belongs to its mechanized and self-propelled mobile forces.² But heavy, slow-moving artillery was restricted to breaching fortifications and destroying points of resistance because it lagged too far behind the fast-moving infantry and tank units when employed in pursuit.³ Indeed, the congestion of the roads caused by artillery equipment and support elements occasionally paralyzed movements by tanks and infantry. Their high rates of fuel consumption practically exhausted allocated supplies and left them stranded because deliveries could not be accelerated.

Thus, sub-division strength and self-propelled artillery units, rather than larger and heavier artillery units, were best suited for exploitation and pursuit because of their superior mobility. Emphasizing these strengths, artillery advocates alone have noted that in many cases the artillery component of advance detachments was so large that these elite units were actually commanded by artillery officers.⁴ To achieve the requisite operational efficiency and flexibility, especially when

¹*Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 346.

²*Victory in the Far East 1966*, pp. 285-286.

³*Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁴See p. 117 of General Liudnikov's memoirs, i.e., the postscript contributed by Col. General of Artillery, N. Fomin.

operating in the depth of prepared positions and engaging in unplanned and unforeseeable combat conditions, the command organization of artillery is of "exceptional importance."¹ Thus, it was an innovative adaptation to the Far East for the Manchurian campaign that centralized artillery command was ordinarily maintained only up to division level, and very seldom at corps level.

Border Troops

In the Manchurian campaign, Soviet border troops for the first time took part in offensive operations under the command of Fronts and Armies. In this capacity they executed such tasks as overcoming border obstacles and positions, pursuing troops, engaging sabotage and reconnaissance units, and protecting the rears of the field forces.² The experience "proved convincingly" that border troops can "under certain conditions successfully execute active offensive missions."³ Because of the special and unpredictable missions that Border Troops may be assigned in the event of hostilities, "it is only by means of all inclusive training of Border Troops in peacetime that successful actions in the beginning phase of war can be guaranteed."⁴

In the assessment of Marshal Vasilevskii, the Far East Commander in Chief in 1945, the Border Troops rendered "enormous support" to the regular forces throughout the campaign. Besides pursuit, security,

¹*Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 346.

²*Final 1969*, p. 181.

³Cols. V. Platonov and A. Bulatov, "Pogranichnye voiska perekhodiat v nastuplenie" (Border Troops Assume the Offensive), *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 8, August 1965, p. 16. This article was apparently inspired by the armed forces of the KGB, which, in effect, constitute a special branch of the Ground Forces, the Border Troops.

⁴*Ibid.*

counter-sabotage, and counter-intelligence operations, newly formed special detachments took over the defense of large sectors of the front and thereby freed field troops to concentrate densely in the narrow breakthrough sectors, particularly on the First Far Eastern Front. Border troops also acted as guides for the advance and reconnaissance detachments of the field forces on the first night of the offensive.¹ The operations by one detachment of Border Troops allegedly cleared hostile forces from an area 427 kilometers in length and 90 kilometers in depth, and simultaneously secured 24 population centers, including one town.² Altogether, two-thirds of the Border Troops assigned to the armies moved with the advancing forces and only one-third stayed behind at the border. Accordingly, upon launching the offensive the Border Troops' primary mission moved with the front and protecting the rear became a secondary mission, but a secondary mission that was "fully justified" in view of apparent Japanese attempts to infiltrate through the frontier.³

Thorough advance arrangements for mutual support by Border Troops with ground and naval units was noteworthy, particularly in the sectors where Border Troops actually led the surprise attack.⁴ Border Troops mounted the initial sneak attack on Japanese fortifications the night of the offensive, thereby allowing the main forces to advance immediately without air or artillery preparations. Thus, the Border Troops enhanced the tactical surprise of the offensive.⁵

¹*Final 1969*, p. 182. Their peacetime language training, reconnaissance activities, and surveillance functions doubtless enhanced their value in this role.

²Vasilevskii, 1973, pp. 165-166. The Marshal's account fails to record the relative strengths of friendly and hostile forces in this sector.

³*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 293 and 1971, p. 359.

⁴Platonov and Bulatov, p. 14.

⁵Kazakov, p. 272, *Victory in the Far East 1966*, pp. 103, 276.

In March and April of 1945 the task of border defense was reassigned to the garrisons of the fortified areas. These garrisons were subsequently reinforced by combined-arms units that prepared and occupied the field defenses which ultimately served as starting areas for the offensive. As forces concentrated and supplies accumulated in these "border defense" sites, strict camouflage discipline was enforced to insure cover and surprise. Accordingly, during the preparatory phase, Border Troops patrolled actively outside the fortified areas to prevent the detection of the build-ups by the other side's reconnaissance. Finally, in anticipation of pressing demands for field intelligence, relevant staff officers engaged in "timely planning of reconnaissance in force by forward battalions along a broad front."¹ Thus, Border Troops were central to the insurance of strategic surprise as well as to the acquisition of tactical surprise.

In sum, given the constraining precautions adopted to deny warning to the Japanese forces, the Border Troops helped to provide critical intelligence for the initial attack, to secure maximum surprise, and to serve as armed scouts for advance detachments and rear guards for field forces in the offensive itself.¹

Engineering Troops

In addition to the enormous construction tasks required to prepare and conduct the campaign, Engineering Troops also assumed important combat and reconnaissance missions in the 1945 offensive. Such vast demands were imposed on the engineers that they had to train large numbers of nonregulation

¹*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 82, 318.

²*Final 1969*, pp. 130, 182, 368.

combat engineers during the final build-up.¹ Unlike operations in the West, the Far East campaign "opened up a new page in Soviet military engineering art" for an offensive conducted in a theater of forested mountains and desert plains.² In such a hostile natural environment, engineering support was not only necessary for preparing the theater before the offensive, it was also an important factor in its progress.³ Aside from their novel roles in the advance detachments and mechanized forces recorded above, the engineers' unique accomplishments in this campaign were: 1) helping to lift a whole Front's forces across the Amur River; 2) supplying water to an entire Front in the desert, and 3) launching an offensive through heavily forested and fortified mountain areas.⁴

During the buildup, Engineering Troops constructed 1,390 kilometers of new and repaired 5,000 kilometers of old roads.⁵ On the Transbaikal Front, they drilled thousands of wells for water and excavated underground shelters for the tanks of the Sixth Guards Tank Army.⁶ They also performed extensive and elaborate camouflage measures to cover preparations for the campaign.

¹*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 286. Soviet texts indicate the *sapery* (sappers) as a distinct part of the engineering troops. Hence, "sappers" correspond to U.S. combat engineers and "engineers" to U.S. construction engineers.

²Col. General of Engineers A. F. Khrenov, "Inzhenernye voiska v operatsii po razgromu Kvantunskoi armii Iaponii v Man'chzhurii v avguste 1945 goda," in Lt. General of Engineers V. I. Zheleznykh (ed.), *Inzhenernie voiska Sovetskoi Armii v vazhneishikh operatsiakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny; sbornik statei*, Moscow: Voenizdat, 1958, p. 308. Khrenov was Chief of Engineering Troops on the First Far Eastern Front in 1945.

³*Final 1969*, p. 129. Marshals Malinovskii and Zakharov presumably subscribed to the following, ostensibly conservative credit: "It is not an exaggeration to state that in a number of situation, engineering support was the deciding factor in the successful accomplishment of missions by the Soviet troops." (p. 127)

⁴*Final 1969*, p. 127.

⁵*Final 1969*, p. 128.

⁶Krupchenko, p. 19. Khrenov in Zheleznykh, p. 296. Tsirlin, pp. 39-40, states that almost 50% of the engineering troops on the Transbaikal Front were detailed to the water supply mission.

In the offensive itself, "significant interest" is attached to the engineering support provided for storming permanent fortifications. The Combat Engineers Units of the Fifth Army on the First Far Eastern Front were particularly enterprising in training over 5,000 men as non-regulation combat engineers and organizing them into 163 obstacle-removing and 106 assault groups.¹ Combat engineers performed a central role in securing railroad junctions, facilities, and tunnels that were critical for the rapid progress of the main forces.² For lack of special railroad troops, in certain cases, combat engineers assumed the task of operating the railroads.³ Both for reconnaissance and for holding valuable assets deep within enemy lines, combat engineers comprised a large share of the airborne landing missions conducted in this campaign.⁴

The natural conditions of the theater, its inhospitable climate, rugged terrain, paucity of construction materials, and poorly paved roads seriously aggravated the normal problems of the Engineering Troops in this campaign, especially in supporting the assaults on the First and Second Far Eastern Fronts.⁵ Like the infantry, their forward movements were badly hampered by the shortages of motor transports to the extent that certain reconnaissance and combat engineers actually lagged behind the advancing forces they were supposed to lead and had to resort to hitchhiking on infantry and artillery vehicles.⁶ Nevertheless, Engineering Troops played a "decisive" role in the advance of tank units through the

¹*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 287.

²*Final 1969*, pp. 157-158; Khrenov in Zheleznykh, pp. 301-302.

³Liudnikov, p. 105.

⁴Lt. General I. I. Lisov, *Desantniki* (Airborne Troops), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968, p. 192; Khrenov in Zheleznykh, pp. 294-295.

⁵Khrenov in Zheleznykh, p. 304.

⁶Liudnikov, p. 82.

exceptionally hostile terrain and climate of the Far East theater. Such substantial support demanded two to three times more engineering troops and equipment than was ordinarily required in the plains of the West. Moreover, in the particularly arid and rugged conditions of deserts and mountains, operations require higher allocations of water crews and road service units. Thus, Soviet military analyses have endorsed the exceptionally large role played by combat for engineering support and construction engineers in the 1945 campaign; and they have projected an even larger role in more mechanized operations, especially under extreme natural conditions such as prevail in the Far East.

Communications Troops

The offensive along multiple, widely separated axes by Soviet forces into Northeast China in 1945 forced the Communications Troops, reluctantly, to relinquish their previous reliance on cable and to adopt the radical innovation of radio for operational coordination as well as tactical communications.¹ Among the lessons of this experience are the difficulties that were encountered and aggravated by inadequate advance allocations of appropriate equipment, preparations for moving it forward quickly with the front, and means of protecting it. In addition, the threat of interrupted communications required the preparation of advance orders that were

¹The instructiveness of this campaign's experience for solving modern command and control problems was emphasized by Marshal Zakharov in 1960, as follows:

Despite the great separation of the attack formations, the command and staffs succeeded in obtaining precise coordination of their actions during the course of the operation. An offensive along separate axes is characteristic of modern combat. The study of this problem according to the experience of the Manchurian operation can provide useful material for modern military theory and combat training of troops. (Zakharov, 1960, p. 12.)

given to units so they could plan to operate completely independently.¹

As it was "especially important" to guarantee continuous combat initiative, these advance orders were drawn up to avoid restrictive command and control arrangements.²

Deep and rapid advances of mechanized forces over rough terrain created major difficulties for the Communications Troops. Soon after the start of the offensive, cable communications had to be supplemented and then completely replaced by radio vehicles and aircraft which, in turn, subsequently suffered their own logistics and rebasing problems. For the most part, communications and controls were successfully maintained by the adroit use of complementary means, but accounts by commanders in the field indicate that there were occasionally complete interruptions due to inadequate equipment and transportation. In place of continuous communications between the various levels of command and adjacent units, special compensatory command arrangements have been singled out for having mitigated the command and control difficulties due to interrupted communications.

¹*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 334, 360. At the higher levels, however, there was no relaxation of tight command. Liudnikov, p. 56, notes the Front Command's order to his Army staff on August 8, which "made it obligatory for us to report on combat actions to the Front staff every four hours." Vasilevskii (1967, p. 85) states that the "Supreme Commander stayed in direct and daily communication with the acting fronts, even while at the Potsdam Conference." Lt. General of Signal Troops, P. Kurochkin, "V shtabe Glavkoma na Dal'nem Vostoke (On the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Far East)," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 11, November 1967, p. 82. Kurochkin, p. 77, reports that he was "struck with the great attention to the communications service by the top leadership" and that in the July 5 *Stavka* directive troop command and control ranked among the very top priorities.

²Pliev (p. 35) observes that the Front command permitted the Soviet-Mongol Group "freedom of action and full opportunity to show initiative" in fulfilling its mission of covering the flank of the main effort on the Transbaikalian Front. *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 325, notes that the above-plan performance of the Second Far Eastern Front was achieved through the multi-directional maneuvering of its forces permitted by the absence of a tightly structured front. Fomin (in Liudnikov, p. 166) claims that in the Far East operations "commanders at all levels were given considerably greater independence than on the Soviet-German front."

These included the formation of operational groups of staffs, maintaining command posts close to the advancing troops, and issuing advance orders to unit commanders.

To a commander of the Communications Troops, the Far East campaign is of "special interest" because of the acute difficulties it posed in: 1) maintaining communications across extreme distances, 2) maintaining communications during very high advance rates and very frequent relocation of the command points for large units, 3) setting up communication systems in the complete absence of roads, 4) transporting signal units and equipment by air, and 5) maintaining communications with air and naval landing parties and with the Supreme High Command across territory not controlled by Soviet troops.¹ This Commander of the Far East theater's Communications Troops has expressed his branch's peculiar anxiety in the face of unexpectedly high rates of advance which required the extensive use of mobile and insecure radios. From the standpoint of a field commander, on the other hand, the Army-Front link must "more boldly" switch to radio communications during rapid advances.² Noting that 30% of all non-combat sorties of the Air Forces were committed to communications functions, the Chief of Staff of the main effort similarly endorsed the frequent relocation of staffs and their exclusive reliance on radios to maintain communications with such rapidly advancing units as the Sixth Guards Tank Army. Citing the exemplary performance of communications on the Transbaikal Front, he deemed its organization "especially instructive."³

¹Kurochkin, p. 82.

²Liudnikov, p. 92.

³*Final* 1969, pp. 370-371.

Basing its analysis on the same data and assessments, a practical prescription for Communications Troops' operations in the Far East stresses the need for high-powered radio stations in mountainous areas, and recommends that "under new conditions" mobile radio stations should have armored protection, while their transport vehicles must have sufficient cross-country mobility to keep up with combat formations. It concludes that "combat experience proved the necessity of echeloning and planned relocation of radio equipment in the complex terrain conditions of the Far East military theater."¹ In sum, combined-arms authorities have clearly inferred from the Manchurian campaign that the slow-moving, ultra-secure cable systems traditionally preferred by Communications Troop commanders are inappropriate for lightning offensives. Ample, hardened, and highly mobile systems are instead required.

Air Forces

In the Manchurian campaign, Soviet Air Forces "completely dominated" the air space over the opposition of acknowledgedly weak Japanese air forces and air defenses.² Yet, extraordinary efforts were required to deliver strong air support to the ground forces because of the natural barriers to effective air operations inherent in the Far East theater.³

¹*Victory in the Far East 1966*, p. 297; *ibid.*, 1971, p. 332. Given the poor road conditions, even mobile radio means could not keep up with the rapidly advancing army staffs. A solution was found in organizing all staff radio vehicles in three echelons or series, each comprising stations of high, medium, and low capacity and thus ensuring the constant availability of at least the basic communications means (Kurochkin, p. 81).

²*Final 1969*, p. 366; Rudenko, p. 429; *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 338, Ivanov, p. 300.

³*Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 340. Indeed, the cost of creating substantial air capabilities to overcome the terrain, climate, and logistic problems of that theater exceed the norms established in more militarily hostile but naturally congenial environments.

Thus, the Soviet Air Forces acquired new experience in performing several missions during pursuit in naturally hostile areas: 1) air transport of fuel, ammunition, and even water;¹ 2) airborne landings;² 3) guiding ground forces through desert and mountains.³ Finally, the plans and measures successfully used to cover the pre-war concentration of air forces in the theater have been cited for their "definite interest."⁴

To insure surprise, the buildup was conducted according to a strict regime that covered Air Force movements and communications. The divisions of the Twelfth Air Army did not begin to move from their dispersed bases toward the Transbaikal Fronts' intermediate airfields until 20 days before the start of operations.⁵ At about the same time the Ninth and Tenth Air Armies on the First and Second Far Eastern Fronts began to move to forward air fields from their permanent bases further back. On all fronts, extensive camouflage was employed and radio communications maintained their normal routines while actual commands were transmitted by cable and courier. On the Transbaikal Front, not until one or two days before the start of operations were aircraft moved to forward air fields, and attack and fighter aircraft only arrived on the eve of the war. Air Force authorities have drawn particular attention to the operational camouflage of air basing and the organization of low-altitude flight formations during the final

¹*Final* 1969, pp. 194, 363-364; Rudenko, p. 427.

²A full account of airborne landing operations during the campaign is presented in *Desantniki* (Airborne Landing Troops) by Lt. General I. I. Lisov, 1968, pp. 191-198.

³*Victory in the Far East* 1971, pp. 338-339.

⁴*Victory in the Far East* 1971, p. 342.

⁵*Victory in the Far East* 1971, p. 341. They were initially distributed over an area of about one million square kilometers. Their intermediate airfields were located 100 to 200 kilometers from the border and 200 to 300 kilometers from the area of the main effort.

relocation to forward air fields.¹ Without explaining them in detail, combined-arms authorities state such measures "deserve attention."²

Planned disparities in the operational depths, rates of advance, force compositions, and other characteristics of the three fronts demanded different forms of air support. The initial allocations and missions priorities of the air armies accordingly varied between the three fronts in ways that remain applicable under similar conditions.³ The bulk of the long-range bomber and transport units were concentrated in support of the main effort on the transbaikal Front, while fighter-bombers and short-range fighters were disproportionately allocated to the Second Far Eastern Front for operations primarily along the banks of the Amur and the Sungari Rivers. For reconnaissance, communications, and resupply on the Transbaikal Front, non-combat sorties actually exceeded combat sorties, while the First and Second Far Eastern Fronts had one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half times as many combat as non-combat sorties.⁴ Although weakly challenged by opposing forces and limited to the main effort, Soviet long-range air bombing and support capabilities demonstrated extraordinary offensive strength by directly assisting mechanized forces on the ground.

Due to the prewar constraints on information collection and the need to insure rapid rates of advance, the primary missions of the Air Force at the start of operations were long-range reconnaissance and bombardment, concentrated on fixed fortifications, supply depots, command centers, and railroads. Overall, thirty percent of the sorties were for reconnaissance

¹Rudenko, p. 436.

²*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 341-342.

³*Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 344.

⁴"Kampaniia Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1945 g." (The 1945 Far East Campaign of the Soviet Armed Forces), *Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 8, August 1965, Table 3, p. 68.

purposes and, for lack of appropriate aircraft, a substantial share of combat aviation helped to perform this urgent task.¹ The initial priority on destroying command centers and isolating the area from reserves "arose from the concrete situation of the war, and the experience continues to be of timely significance."² In particular on the Transbaikal Front, the mission to bomb enemy rail transportation was especially important.³ Yet, there were notable lapses in planning and possible failures in executing the air interdiction of force movements, particularly in the vicinity of the Greater Khingan Mountains where the Japanese could have reached, and blocked, the passes by road.⁴

As the offensive developed, Air Forces progressively concentrated on supporting the mechanized armies, especially their divisional and corps advance detachments leading the Fronts. Since the distances traversed by ground units grew unexpectedly fast, their demands for air support were compounded and plans were superseded. Resupply requirements for the Sixth

¹Rudenko, p. 429, and *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 341. The latter source indicates that this "experience possesses definite interest."

²*Final 1969*, p. 366.

³Rudenko, p. 435. This assessment was confirmed by *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 342, and Zakharov 1969, p. 22. Indeed, they state that air bombardment of the limited rail and road system of the area "fundamentally affected the successful development of the operation."

⁴*Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 340. Colonel Vnotchenko also notes the inadequate planning for the bomber support of the 39th Army, north of the Sixth Guards Tank Army, whose progress could have been most readily impeded. In contrast, the account edited by both the Commander and the Chief of Staff of the Transbaikal Front, *Final 1969* (p. 126), rejects as unfounded the criticisms made by histories of the planning and assignment of air support to the various axes on the grounds because they fail to recognize the limited capability of the aircraft at the time, especially the limited range of bombers. They concur, however, in criticizing the lack of rebasing plans for the Transbaikal Front's 12th air army in view of the planned deep advance of the tank army. Krupchenko, pp. 17-18, recounting the Sixth Guards Tank Army's operations, attributes to the tank army the mission of interdicting pass approaches, and notes that it included securing sites for airfields in the Greater Khingan range.

Guards Tank Army became particularly urgent as it sped across the desert and spanned the Greater Khingans within three days, barely half the time expected. Similarly, unanticipated demands for relocating communications facilities further limited combat air operations, especially on the Transbaikal Front.

Shortcomings in fulfilling assigned missions on the Transbaikal Front were ultimately due most to the failure to make advance plans and allocations of materiel for rebasing the 12th Air Army into forward airfields.¹ With the limited range of fighter-bombers, the Sixth Guards Tank Army could be substantially supported only by long-range bombers.² At the same time, supplying such a large force by air transport in the mountains involved exceptional difficulties for lack of natural landing sites.³ Moreover, forward airfield construction was seriously hampered by the "extreme shortage of transport aircraft" needed to lift airfield personnel and supplies. On account of the unexpectedly great demand for fuel and diminished capacity of ground transport caused by heavy rains, air transport had to concentrate on filling urgent fuel supply requirements and was inadequate to move airfield equipment at the same time.⁴

¹*Final* 1969, p. 127.

²Rudenko, p. 431.

³*Ibid.*, *Final* 1969, p. 194.

⁴*Victory in the Far East* 1971, p. 344. A significant lesson of this experience has been explicitly inferred:

On the territory of Manchuria, because of the limited road network and its inevitable congestion, it is expedient to use transport aircraft for transferring to forward airfields air rear units with their fuel, ammunition, and supplies. With this consideration in mind, it is necessary to provide a reserve of rear units as well as corresponding quantities of transport aircraft.

Throughout the campaign, the close air support of mechanized forces on the ground, particularly on the Second Far Eastern Front, was based on detailed joint plans, the formation of joint operational groups within armies and divisions, the placement of command points for air attack divisions close to the front lines, and provision of joint communications documents such as coded maps, radio signal tables, and mutual positioning signals.¹ This close cooperation was particularly valuable in one sector, from an army commander's standpoint, in its "exceptional" contributions to orientation and navigation on the ground.² Similarly "interesting" experience with ground-air cooperation in this campaign was exhibited in its numerous but small airborne landings. Although concentrated toward the end of the campaign, these airborne landings showed that "great opportunities for the use of airborne troops exist in conditions of desert, mountainous desert, and mountainous-forested locales containing significant sectors which are not occupied by enemy troops, and that are inevitably weak in air defenses."³ More generally, though, the 1945 campaign showed that "in the Far East military theater, the role of air transport is exceptionally great," both in supplying and moving troops.⁴

The criticism of the "extreme shortage of transport aircraft" (*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 344-345) appears to be entirely directed to planning oversights, since it does not refer to a general Soviet shortage of the craft. Together with the criticisms of "feeble projections for airfield maneuver" (*ibid.*, p. 340; *Final 1969*, p. 127), it implies prior underestimation of the role of air transport. Also see Rudenko, p. 433.

¹Rudenko, p. 436.

²Ludnikov, p. 92.

³Zakharov, 1969, p. 22. Alternative views have been expressed by other authors. Strokov (p. 516) has noted that these landings "were made primarily at enemy airfields and were possible because of the demoralization of the enemy." *Victory in the Far East*, on the other hand, has emphasized the value of airborne landings in such difficult terrain because it "will render difficult the use of other types of troops for lack of freedom of maneuver" (1971, p. 320). Most of the landings conducted in the Manchurian campaign were not combat assaults by paratroops but were unopposed landings by transport aircraft.

⁴*Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 344.

Anti-Air Defense Forces (PVO)

Each of the Fronts had its own PVO army consisting of three fighter-interceptor divisions, several anti-aircraft artillery corps and regiments, and armored trains equipped with anti-aircraft artillery. In addition, combined-arms armies as well as tank and infantry divisions had organic (mobile) air-defense forces, primarily artillery.¹ Special forces and arms were also deployed in the rear of each front to limit the extent and damage of airborne landings that might have penetrated the air defense screen in forward areas. Actual employment of the PVO forces during the campaign was not necessary because of the absence of Japanese air capability. Nevertheless, Soviet military authorities have increasingly stressed the need for both national and theater anti-air defense systems to safeguard Soviet deployments and, thereby, permit greater confidence in carrying out offensive operations.² Finally, the offensive value of air defense forces in providing fighter-escort and ground-based defense coverage for deep penetrating air and ground forces has been explicitly affirmed.³

Naval Forces

In the Manchurian operations, the Soviet Amur Flotilla ferried troops and supplies along the Amur and Sungari Rivers, and thereby enabled the Second Far Eastern Front's limited forces to maneuver rapidly and to exceed their plan.⁴ Outside Manchuria itself, operations by the Pacific

¹*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 78-79. See also the tables provided in *Final 1969*, pp. 399-401.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 367-368; *Victory in the Far East 1971*, p. 317.

³Army General P. F. Batitskii (editor-in-chief), *Voiska protivovozdushnoi oborony strany; istoricheskii ocherk* (The Anti-Air Defense Forces: A Historical Account), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968, pp. 305-306.

⁴*Victory in the Far East 1971*, pp. 273 and 325; *Final*, 1969, pp. 364 and 367.

Fleet interdicted Japanese and secured Soviet naval movements in the Sea of Japan, attacked Japanese naval bases by sea and air, and protected the Soviet coast against Japanese landings.¹ Only after the ground operations in Manchuria had definitely succeeded were amphibious landings to seize Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands finally implemented. The short notice, their inadequate equipment, the poor coordination between their ground and naval forces, and their weak communications made these landings much less successful than those planned, prepared, and integrated by Ground Force Commanders on the Second Far Eastern Front. The Pacific Navy, though, had prepared in advance its air arm for anti-shipping and anti-port operations in the Sea of Japan to start simultaneously with the Manchurian offensive.² And the Naval Infantry had also been assigned to new, permanent coastal-defense fortifications along the Sea of Japan beforehand.³ On the whole, the Soviet Navy's special attention to the 1945 Far East campaign was superseded by the Ground Forces' interest in the Manchurian campaign by 1960.⁴

Conclusion

The Manchurian model has evidently been a partial prescription to increase Soviet strength for lightning operations on the ground. It has thus helped restore the Ground Forces to their traditional

¹*Final* 1969, p. 86.

²*Victory in the Far East* 1966, p. 271.

³*Victory in the Far East* 1971, p. 78.

⁴The Soviet Navy was, by 1960, the only Soviet military organization to have published histories devoted entirely to the 1945 Far East campaign, one each in 1958 and 1959. Since then, ground and air forces have monopolized the field.

dominance of the General Staff since the most appropriate combinations of arms must be determined and commanded by the highest authorities of the leading offensive forces. Technically, it has required longer-range ground combat capabilities through more mobile means of resupply, engineering support, air defense, and secure communications. Operationally, its prescriptions for swift movements by compact forces along separate axes over varied terrain has raised new demands for air-rebasing, air transport, and airborne interdiction capabilities. For a strategically offensive surge capability in Soviet Asia, it has required the development of extraordinarily expensive military base structures, forces-in-being, and civil mobilization potential to provide ample trained reserves, transport fleets, and rear services. And, for the military manpower policy of the Soviet Union in a multi-front environment, it has required an enlarged pool of active, regular cadre and trained reservists in case of orders for simultaneous buildups on several fronts. In sum, it is a model that generates massive peacetime requirements for modern weapons, specialized troops, ready forces-in-being, a large trained reserve, and ample rear support organizations.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Soviet military leaders and historians concentrated on the Manchurian model during the 1960s for purposes that were, in their own terms, quite practical. For tactical improvement, operational planning, strategic design, and for developing forces that could be applied under various conditions, the Manchurian campaign has been their best general model. Since 1968, the invasion of Czechoslovakia may have superseded it as a model for more limited operations against still more limited resistance. But, aside from General Zhukov's stunning success against the Kwantung Army at Khalkhin-Gol, Mongolia in 1939, there are no comparably positive models of Soviet strategic proficiency. In fact, Soviet strategic deficiencies have been displayed more frequently in practice, in Spain in 1936, at Lake Khasan in 1938, Finland in 1940, against Germany in World War II, and in Hungary in 1956. To avert such failures in the future, professional Soviet officers have revived strategies for decisive offensive action as guides for general arms modernization and force development.

The Manchurian model was an unexpectedly successful strategic design that yielded prompt politico-military results by isolating and overwhelming an unprepared opponent through surprise attacks. Preparing to emulate this model of a decisive, surprise offensive and to develop greater surge capacity in peacetime has been economically more demanding and professionally more rewarding for Soviet officers than simply planning to deter or to defeat others' strategically offensive operations, according to the model of 1941.

During the 1960s, as in the 1930s until Stalin purged their leaders, the Soviet Armed Forces effectively controlled the most modern industrial resources, renovated and proliferated military installations, designed advanced weapons, and generated major mechanized forces for offensive operations both in Asia and in Europe. The Manchurian model has thereby helped to create for the 1970s the sort of Soviet force structure on two-fronts that the Soviet leadership wished it had completed in 1940.

To date, Soviet strategic offensive expeditions have been confined to weak, adjacent states and may have been as much motivated by the insecurity as by the arrogance of Soviet power. As Finland demonstrated in 1940, Hungary in 1956, and China in 1969, the offensive models of Manchuria in 1945 (and Czechoslovakia in 1968) cannot be duplicated by Soviet arms alone. And, Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign incidentally reveal how fairly small or poor powers could help to deter limited strategic offensives by efficiently employing their military resources to inflict heavy losses even on surprise attacks. Soviet military authorities have indicated keen sensitivity to the costs that could be imposed on their preferred offensive plans by well prepared, mobile defenses in depth; by survivably effective air defenses; and by skillful use of advanced weaponry. So, whatever international designs the Soviet leadership may develop to enhance its security, influence, and power abroad, countries within striking range of Soviet expeditionary forces can potentially deter even unexpected, limited attacks by being militarily as well as politically prepared to resist them.

In sum, the Manchurian campaign is unique in several respects. On the one hand, its extraordinarily successful military outcome makes it the main historical model for modern Soviet offensive strategy. On the

other hand, the political and military conditions for its unexpectedly stunning success are not reproducible by means strictly under Soviet control. Yet, the model demonstrates how decisive results can be achieved in less time and at lower cost than planned if strategic surprise is well secured and effectively exploited. The question it raises is whether the Soviet leadership since Khrushchev's fall in 1964 may have been vainly striving to acquire the sort of combined-armed capabilities temporarily enjoyed in August 1945; whether it may have been pursuing such superiority as an imminently feasible goal; or whether it may, in the course of critical deliberations, even have entertained the illusion that such exceptional powers have been within its actual reach. Unless they are willing to risk the recurrence of such extreme Soviet strength and confidence, a counter-strategy for wary neighbors, East and West, is to prevent clear Soviet superiority by efficient military competition to make deterrence persuasive in the long as well as the short run.

Appendix

STRATEGIC MOVES TOWARD THE FAR EASTPre-War

- 1929 *Special Far East Army* (OVDA) formed by Marshal Bliukher to punish Chinese for armed clashes over the Soviet-run Chinese Eastern Railroad (KVZhD).
- 1930-31 Small-scale border hostilities with White Guard (anti-Soviet Russians) and White Chinese ("militaristic" nationalists).
- 1936 Military cooperation treaty between USSR and MPR concluded.
- 1938 *Far East Front* temporarily formed from the local district's armies to absorb over 100,000 new soldiers and 100% greater expenditures for operations against Japanese at Lake Khasan.
- 1939 *Front group* temporarily formed under General Zhukov from local Special Corps (the 57th) and transferred armies for operations against Japanese at Khalkhin-Gol.
- 1940 *Chief of the General Staff* Meretskov maintained priority of Japanese threat. *Far East Front* reestablished in June.
- 1941 *Marshal Zhukov* succeeds Meretskov as Chief of the General Staff and assigns top priority to the threat from the West. *Neutrality Pact* concluded with Japan in April.

War in the West

- 1941 *Siberian Armies* transferred to defense of Moscow. *Transbaikial Front* formed from Armies in the area.
- 1942 *Deputy Chief of the General Staff for the Far East* created and Major General Shevchenko appointed to the post. Food, fuel, and ammunition stockpiles built up in the Far East as the war in the West began to draw to a close.
- 1943 *Army General Purkaev* transferred from an active combat post as Front Commander to the inactive command of the Far East Front. *Major Generals* Lomov and Shevchenko exchanged operational planning posts for the Far East on the General Staff and the Far East Front Staff. *General Staff* estimated the force requirements for alternative plans associated with the agreement at Teheran Conference to join the war in the East some time after victory in the West. Military Council of the Air Force (VVS) suggested to the *Supreme Council* that reserves in the West and requirements in the East both favor initiation of reequipment of the *Far Eastern* and *Transbaikial Fronts*.

- 1944
January-June
Lieutenant-General Shevchenko elevated to Chief of Staff of the Far East Front. *General Antonov*, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and Supreme Commander Stalin resisted pressure of U.S. Military Attaché General Dean and Prime Minister Churchill to hasten Soviet entry into the war against Japan.
- 1944
July-December
General Antonov executed Supreme Commander's orders to estimate requirements for forces in the East on the basis of previous evaluations. *General Shevchenko* accompanied him to meet in Moscow with Churchill, Eden, and Stalin. Soviets declared their intention to start war in the East three months after the defeat of Germany.
- 1945
January
Supreme Commander Stalin ordered acceleration of materiel shipments to the Transbaikal Front, planned site of the main effort.
- 1945
February
Summit Conference at Yalta secretly formalized Soviet commitment to start war against Japan two-three months after the end of war in Europe.
- 1945
March
Stavka ordered organization of border and coastal defenses against Japanese attack, shipment of supplies and transfer of seasoned troops to the East, security of railroads and concentration areas, and plans for preemptive counter-attack with forces-in-being to insure the buildup against spoiling operations into the Maritime Province. *Marshal Meretskov* selected Commander of the First Far Eastern Front (to be formed from the Maritime Group), retaining the staff of the Karelian Front. *Marshal Malinovsky*, selected Commander of the Transbaikal Front, retaining the staff of the Second Ukrainian Front. *General Staff* attended detailed report by Medical Troops on intercepted Japanese Ministry of Defense orders to the Kwantung Army to increase production of bacteriological weapons.
- 1945
April
Marshal Meretskov (incognito) and staff (uninformed of destination) travel to Maritime Province to meet acting commanders, inspect troops, and form the First Far Eastern Front. *Supreme Commander Stalin* tells *Marshal Vasilevskii* to coordinate Soviet forces in the Far East. *Stavka* reassigns General Liudnikov's 39th Army to the Transbaikal Front and redirects new tank output to the East. *General Staff* completes mobilization and attack plans for the main effort through Mongolia and the VI Guards Tank Army in the first echelon across the Greater Khingan Mountains.
- 1945
May
39th and 5th Armies depart for the Far East as Germany capitulates.
- Post-War
- 1945
May
Western-experienced commanders assigned Armies stationed in the Far East, former commanders subordinated as deputies. Communications and air defense nets expanded and activated.

1945
June

Supreme Commander Stalin accepted General Staff's operational design and estimates, called Marshal Malinovsky and General Zakharov from Prague, received their proposal for Transbaikal Front operations, and put off decision (pending fresh assessments) whether to place the VI Guards Tank Army in the first (following the General Staff plan) or the second (following the Front Staff plan) echelon of the main effort. *Marshal Vasilevskii* approved General Staff proposal to add to his role as *Stavka* representative a new post of Far East Commander-in-Chief. Deputy Chief of the Rear Services led a group of representatives of central administrations of the Defense Commissariat to establish a regional supply system in the Far East. *Stavka* directive accompanied Front and theater commanders to the Far East after fresh troops begin arriving, exercising, and advancing toward final staging areas.

1945
July

Marshal Vasilevskii proposed to establish post of Far East Commander-in-Chief. Augmentation and recomposition of Fronts and Armies completed by mid-month. *Marshals Vasilevskii and Malinovsky* inspected the troops, surveyed the axes of the main effort, and agreed to place the VI Guards Tank Army in the first echelon (following the General Staff plan) and to allow only five rather than ten days for crossing the Greater Khingans. *Marshal Malinovsky* orders Front Armies to be ready by August 1, the Soviet-Mongolian Mechanized-Cavalry Group by August 3. Commanders at all levels decided plan implementation; prepare, approve, and adopt documented decisions; supervise troop concentrations, exercises, and security; establish basis for operational, material, technical, and medical supply of the troops; conduct reconnaissance, surveillance, and training in the theater. *Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Forces in the Far East* created and, on July 30, Marshal Vasilevskii appointed to the post. Strict security, active deception, intensive surveillance, and limited reconnaissance conducted within the constraints of normal appearances.

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