

# ICEBREAKER

*By the same author*

**THE LIBERATORS  
INSIDE THE SOVIET ARMY  
SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE  
AQUARIUM  
SPETSNAZ**

# ICEBREAKER

Who Started the  
Second World War?

*Viktor Suvorov*

*Translated by Thomas B. Beattie*



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For my brother



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*The West, with its imperialist ogres, has become a centre of darkness and slavery. The task is to destroy this centre, to the joy and relief of the workers.*

STALIN, *Zhizn Narsional' nosti*,  
No. 6 (1918)



## To the Reader

Who started the Second World War? There is no single answer to this question. The Soviet government, for example, has repeatedly changed its official line on the issue.

On 18 September 1939, they stated in an official note that the government of Poland was the instigator of the war. On 30 November 1939, however, Stalin named other culprits in the newspaper, *Pravda*: 'France and Britain . . . attacked Germany, thereby taking upon themselves the responsibility for the present war,' he wrote. By 5 May 1941, the story had changed again: in a secret speech to graduates of military academies, Stalin laid the responsibility on Germany.

After the war had ended, this circle of 'culprits' grew. Stalin announced that the most blood-stained war in the history of humanity had been started by all the capitalist countries in the world – in other words, all the sovereign states in the world including Sweden and Switzerland, but excluding the Soviet Union.

Stalin's view has long been established in communist mythology. During the times of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and as recently as Andropov and Chernenko, these accusations against the rest of the world were frequently repeated. Under Gorbachev, much is changing in the Soviet Union, but Stalin's view about who started the war remains unchallenged. Lieutenant-General P. A. Zhilin, chief historian of the Soviet Army, repeated during the Gorbachev era that 'the perpetrators of the war were not only the imperialists of Germany, but of the whole world'. (*Red Star*, 24 September 1985)

I would like to suggest that, from the beginning of the war, the Soviet communists made accusations against every country in the world with the deliberate intention of concealing their own role as its instigators.

After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles deprived Germany of the right to a strong army and offensive weapons, including tanks, military aircraft, heavy artillery and submarines. German commanders were unable to use German territory to train for the waging of offensive wars. So they began to make their preparations in the Soviet Union. Everything possible was done, on Stalin's orders, to enable German commanders to carry out military training on Soviet territory. They were given training classes, artillery and shooting ranges, as well as tanks, heavy artillery and military aircraft which, under the terms of the Treaty, they had no right to receive. Similarly, German commanders were given access to Soviet tank-manufacturing plants, the most powerful in the world. *Look, remember and copy.* From the 1920s on, sparing neither resources nor effort, nor indeed time, Stalin revived the strike power of German militarism. Certainly not against himself. For what purpose? There is only one answer – so that war would be declared on the rest of Europe.

Stalin understood that a powerful, aggressive army does not start a war by itself. A mad, fanatical leader is also needed. Stalin did a great deal to see that just such a leader should appear at the head of the German nation. Once the fascists had come to power, Stalin persistently and doggedly pushed towards war. The high point of these efforts was the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. In this pact, Stalin guaranteed Hitler freedom of action in Europe and, in effect, opened the floodgates of the Second World War.

Even before the Nazis came to power, the Soviet leaders had given Hitler the unofficial name of 'Icebreaker for the Revolution'. The name is both apt and fitting. The communists understood that Europe would be vulnerable only in the event of war and that the Icebreaker for the Revolution could make it vulnerable. Unaware of this, Adolf Hitler cleared the way for world communism by his actions. With his *Blitzkrieg* wars, Hitler crushed the Western democracies, scattering and dispersing his forces from Norway to Libya. This suited Stalin admirably. The Icebreaker committed the greatest crimes against the world and humanity, and, in doing so, placed in



Stalin's hands the moral right to declare himself the liberator of Europe at any time he chose – while changing the concentration camps from brown to red.

Stalin understood better than Hitler that a war is won by the side which enters it last and not by the one which goes into it first. Stalin granted Hitler the doubtful honour of being the first, while he himself prepared for his unavoidable entry into the war after 'all the capitalists (will) have fought amongst themselves'. (*Stalin*, Vol. 6, p. 158)

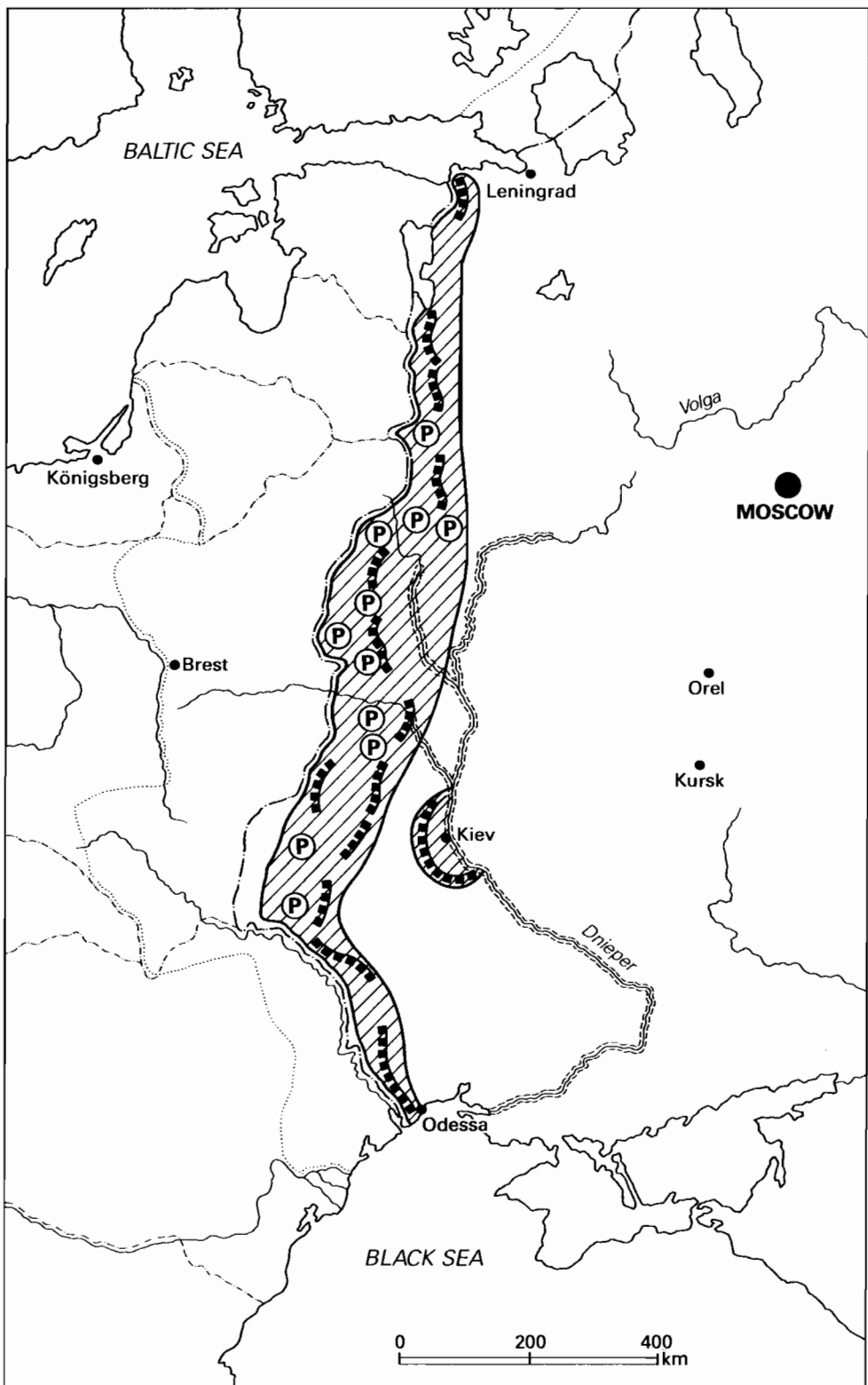
Much has been done to uncover the crimes of Nazism and find the butchers who perpetrated atrocities in its name. This work must be continued and stepped up. But while unmasking fascists, one must also expose the Soviet communists who encouraged the Nazis to commit their crimes, so that they could avail themselves of the results of these crimes.

The communists weeded their archives thoroughly a long time ago, but what still remains preserved there is almost inaccessible to researchers. I was fortunate enough to work briefly in the archives of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, but quite intentionally I am making little use of secret archival material. Overt Soviet publications are my main source. Even these are quite sufficient to place Soviet communists in the dock with Nazis.

My chief witnesses are Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and all the Soviet wartime marshals and many leading generals. The Soviet communists admit that they used Hitler to unleash a war in Europe, and prepared a sudden blow at Hitler himself in order to seize a Europe which had been destroyed by him. The value of my sources lies in the fact that it is the criminals themselves who speak of their own crimes.

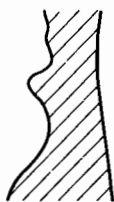
I know that on the communist side there are many apologists. I took the communists at their word, so let us allow them to defend themselves independently.

Viktor Suvorov



## MAP I

**As soon as Britain and France declared war on Germany, the Red Army began to destroy its own defensive systems. The Soviet Command was no longer interested in defending its own territory.**



The 'death' zone is a security zone against a surprise attack from the West. Inside this zone, all transport, communications and water supply systems and industrial installations were made ready for demolition. Minefields and other engineered obstacles were set up to a depth of up to 150 kilometres. The zone was completely cleared of mines in the autumn of 1939.



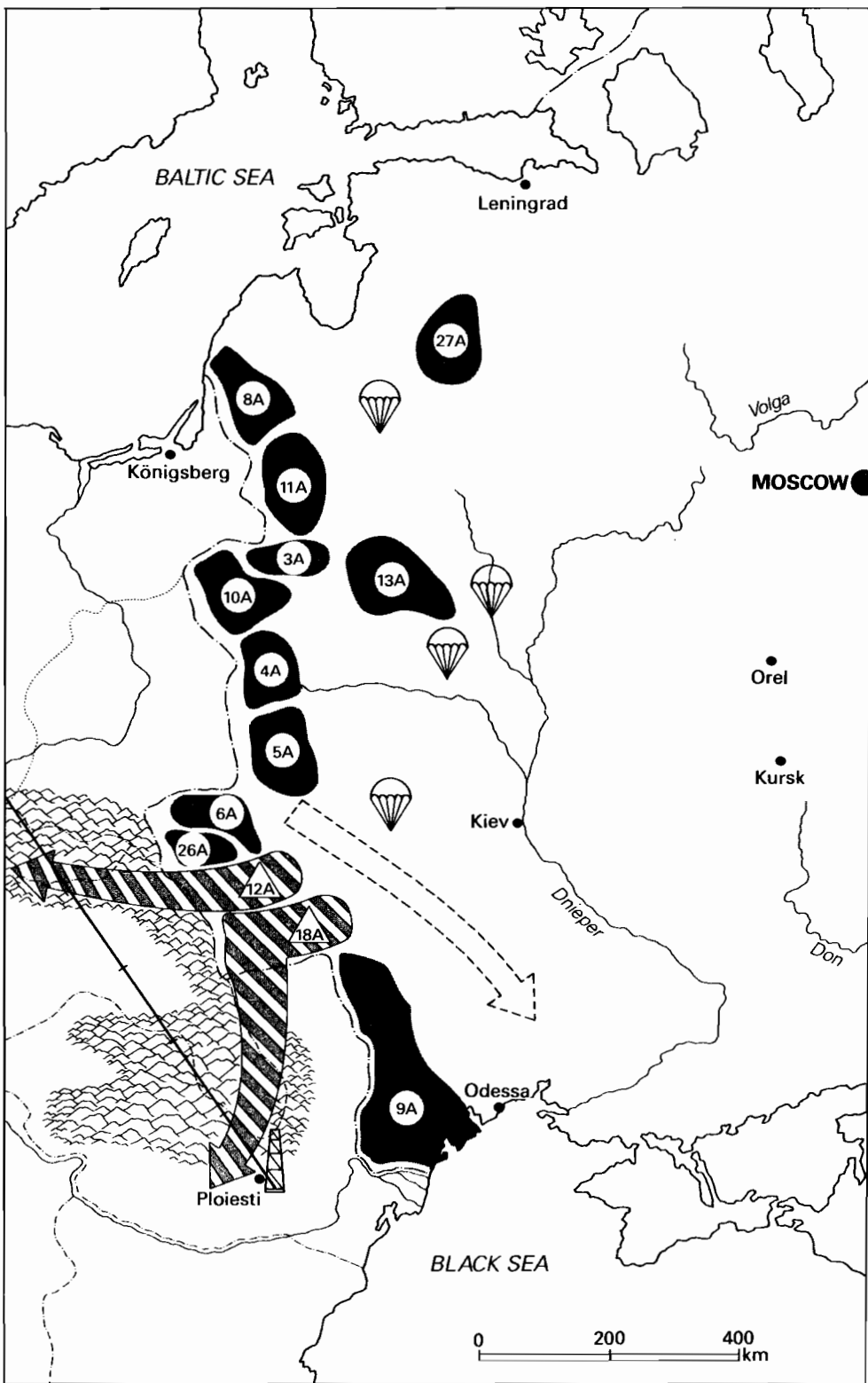
Partisan detachments and bases had been set up in peacetime. They were dissolved in September 1939.



In the fortified regions of the 'Stalin Line', the work of demilitarization and destruction began in autumn 1939.



The combat operations zone of the Dnieper Naval Flotilla. The Flotilla was disbanded in June 1940.

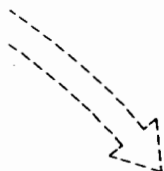


## MAP 2

### The First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army.



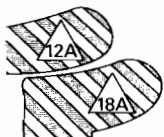
The Soviet invasion armies of the First Strategic Echelon. Behind them, another seven Soviet armies were making their way to the frontier.



The deployment of the First Strategic Echelon rendered the defence of the Soviet Union almost impossible. Even a very low-powered strike by the enemy in this direction would have led immediately to the loss of five Soviet armies, including the 9th, which was the most powerful in the world, and the loss of vast material wealth, highly fertile lands, the undefended bases of the Black Sea fleet, and strategic air bases. It was precisely such a strike which the First German Tank Group delivered in June 1941 . . .



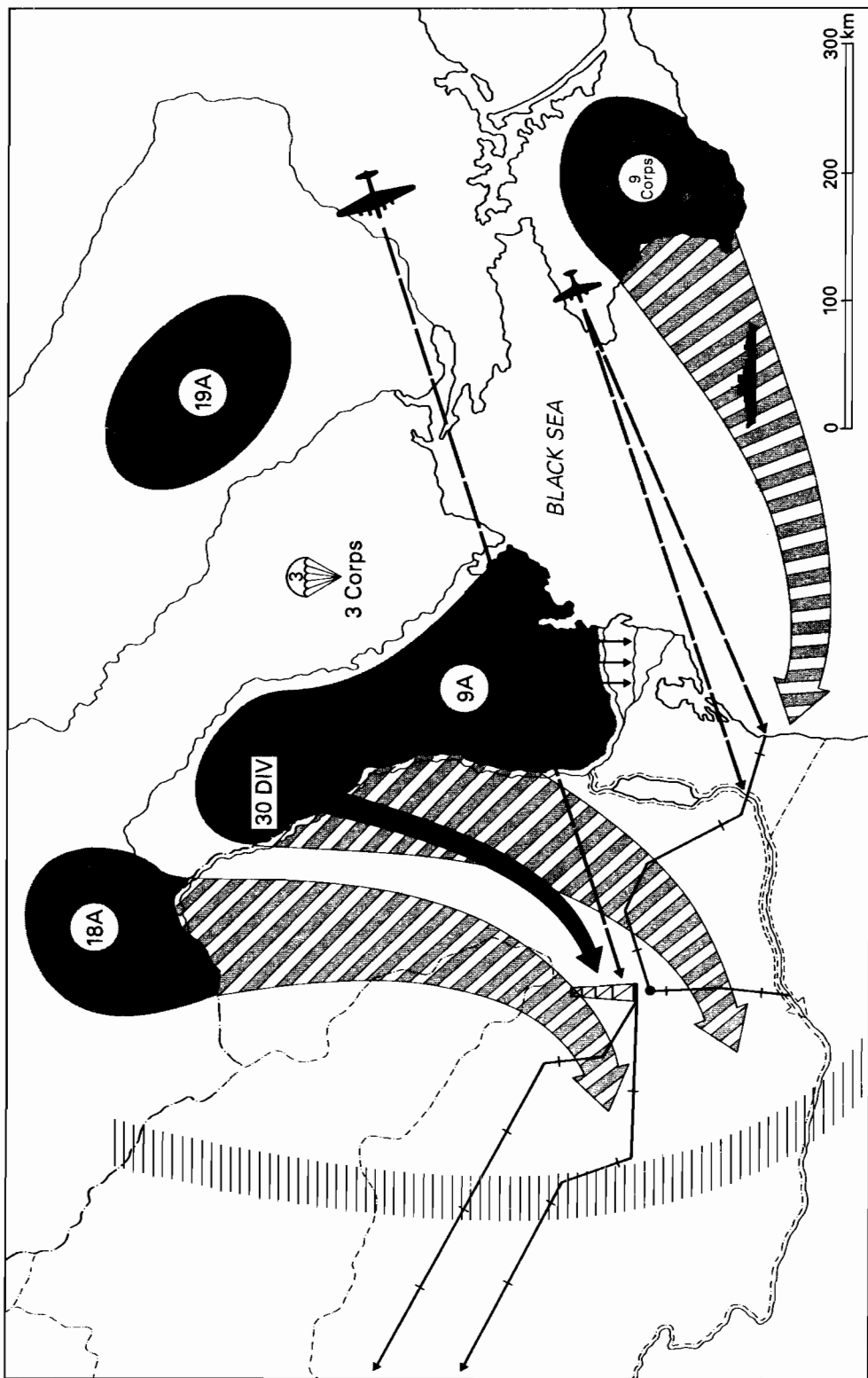
The 9th Army was concentrated not on the German border, but on the frontier with Rumania. A 9th Army strike at Rumania would be a strike at the undefended oil 'heart' of Germany.



The mountain invasion armies. This was the only possible direction in which they could have moved, along undefended ridges. They would have made it possible both to cut Germany's oil 'jugular' and to prevent the movement of German reserves into Rumania.



The 'first wave' airborne corps. Another five airborne corps were secretly being formed deep inside the Soviet Union.



## MAP 3

### How the Red Army was prepared to seize and destroy the Rumanian oil-fields.



The Ploesti oil-fields, Germany's chief source of oil.



The main pipelines for supplying oil to Germany and for loading it on to river- and sea-going tankers.



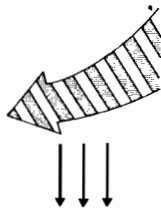
The Soviet Danube Naval Flotilla and the only possible way of using it in an offensive war. In a defensive war, the Flotilla would be unnecessary.



The Third Airborne Corps and the zone of its possible operational use. The Corps was set up in April 1941.

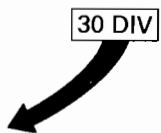


The 9th Army was secretly deployed on 14 June 1941, as TASS stated that the Soviet Union was not preparing for war.

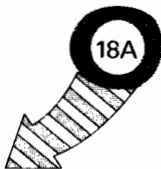


The combat task of the 9th Army, according to the evidence of Air Marshal A. Pokryshkin.

The assault crossing of the Danube by divisions of the 9th Army's 14th Rifle Corps. Previously prepared and carried out in the first days of the war.



The 30th Mountain Rifle Division, part of the 9th Army, and the only place where it could be used for its intended purpose.



The 18th (Mountain) Army, secretly deployed on 13 June 1941, and the only possible direction which its operations could have taken. There are no other mountains in this region.



The 19th Army, the most powerful in the Second Strategic Echelon, was transferred from the Northern Caucasus. It contained mountain rifle divisions which could only have been used in Rumania.



The 9th Special Rifle Corps, in collaboration with the Black Sea Fleet, began intensive training in carrying out a naval assault landing operation on an enemy shore.



The Black Sea Fleet subjected the principal Rumanian oil port of Constanza to an artillery bombardment in the first days of the war.



The 4th Long Range Bomber Corps had Ploesti as its principal target in the event of war.



The 63rd Air Brigade of the Black Sea Fleet was specially trained to raid targets in the oil producing industry including, in the first days of the war, Constanza and the strategic pipelines which cross the Danube.



## CHAPTER I

# The Road to Happiness

*We are the Party of the class which is on the way to the conquest of the world.*

FRUNZE (Report to the military delegates sent to the XI Congress of the RKP (b) (1922))

Marx and Engels foretold a world war and lengthy international conflicts which would last 'fifteen, twenty, fifty years'. The prospect did not frighten them. The authors of *The Communist Manifesto* did not call on the proletariat to prevent war; on the contrary, they saw it as desirable. War was mother to the revolution. The result of a world war, in Engels' words, would be 'general exhaustion and the creation of conditions for the final victory of the working class'. (Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Works*, Ch. 21, p. 351)

Marx and Engels did not live to see the world war, but a successor in their cause was found for them in Lenin. From the earliest days of the First World War, Lenin's party came out in favour of the government of their own country being defeated, so that the 'imperialist war might be changed into a civil war'.

Lenin calculated that left-wing parties in other countries would also come out against the governments of their own countries and the imperialist world war would be transmuted into a world civil war. This did not happen. Without abandoning hopes for a world revolution, as early as autumn 1914 Lenin adopted a minimum programme. If world revolution were not to result from world war, everything possible had to be done to

make a revolution happen in at least one country; it did not matter which one. 'When the proletariat has conquered that country, it will stand against all the rest of the world,' fomenting disorders and uprisings in other countries, 'or coming out against them directly with armed force.' (*About the Slogan of the 'United States of Europe'*)

For Lenin, as for Marx, world revolution remained the guiding star, and he did not lose sight of this goal. But according to the minimum programme, the First World War would only facilitate a revolution in one country. How, then, would the world revolution take place thereafter? Lenin gave a clear-cut answer to this question in 1916: as a result of the second imperialist war. (*The Military Programme for the Proletarian Revolution*)

Perhaps I am mistaken, but having read much of what Hitler wrote, I have certainly found no indications that in 1916 Adolf Schickelgruber was dreaming of the Second World War. But Lenin was. What is more, he was laying down the need for such a war as the theoretical base for the building of socialism throughout the world.

Events developed apace. The revolution in Russia occurred the following year. Lenin hastened there from exile. In the maelstrom of confusion and a total absence of authority, he and his party, small but militarily organized, seized power in a *coup d'état*. In March 1918, he concluded the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement with Germany and its allies. At that time Germany's position was already hopeless. Lenin of course understood this. The peace he signed therefore freed his hands to strengthen, through civil conflict, the communist dictatorship inside Russia, and gave Germany considerable resources and reserves to continue the war in the West, which was exhausting both Germany and the Western allies.

By concluding a separate deal with the enemy, Lenin betrayed Russia's allies. But Lenin also betrayed Russia itself. At the beginning of 1918, the victory of France, Britain, Russia, the United States and other countries over Germany and its allies was already inevitable. Russia had lost millions of soldiers and was fully entitled to be numbered among the victors, alongside

her western allies. But Lenin did not need such a victory. He needed world revolution. Lenin recognized that the Brest-Litovsk peace had been concluded not in the interests of Russia, but in the interests of world revolution, in the interests of establishing communism in Russia and other countries. Lenin admitted that he had placed worldwide dictatorship of the proletariat and world revolution 'above all national sacrifices'. (Central Committee report on the VIII Congress of the RKP (b) (1919)) He even gave away to Germany, without a fight, a million square kilometres of the most fertile lands and the richest industrial regions of Russia's western territories, and paid out a war indemnity in gold. Why?

The reason is that the Brest-Litovsk 'peace' rendered millions of Russian soldiers unnecessary. No longer under the control of any authority, these millions went back to their homes, breaking the foundations of the state system and the newly born democracy on the way. Brest-Litovsk marked the beginning of the ferocious civil war; while brother fought brother, the communists strengthened and extended their power until, after a few years, the entire country was under their control.

Brest-Litovsk was directed not only against the national interests of Russia, but against Germany as well, and in both its sense and spirit it served as a prototype of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Lenin's calculation in 1918 was exactly the same as Stalin's in 1939. Let Germany fight in the West, let Germany and the Western allies exhaust themselves one after the other to the greatest extent possible; we ourselves shall help Germany at any price to exhaust herself to the very limit, and then act.

While the peace agreement with Germany was being signed on Lenin's orders in Brest-Litovsk, intensive work was being undertaken in Petrograd to prepare the overthrow of the German Government. At that time, the communist German-language newspaper, *Die Fackel*, with a circulation of 500,000, was being published in Petrograd. SPARTAK, the German communist group, had been set up in Petrograd in January 1918, even before the Brest-Litovsk agreement was signed. Two other newspapers, *Die Weltrevolution* and *Die Rote Fahne*,

also saw the light of day, not in Germany, but in communist Russia, again on the orders of Lenin who had signed the 'peace' with Germany. In the twenties, communism was striking deep roots in Germany. Indeed, Lenin set his hand to this precisely at the time when Germany was losing the war in the West and he had extracted a 'peace' agreement from her at her most vulnerable.

Lenin's calculation was exact. The German Empire would not be able to withstand the colossal pressure of a war of attrition; in fact it led to the downfall of the empire – and revolution. Lenin immediately annulled the treaty. Communist states strikingly similar to Lenin's Bolshevik regime arose from the ruins of empires in war-torn Europe. 'We are on the threshold of world revolution!' Lenin exulted. He then threw away his minimum programme. He no longer spoke of the need for a Second World War, as he now believed that world revolution could be accomplished as a result of the First.

Lenin set up the Comintern to be, in the definition of its own name, the world communist party, and gave it the objective of setting up a world Soviet socialist republic.

But world revolution did not follow. Communist regimes in Bavaria, Bremen, Slovakia and Hungary proved to be weak and unviable. When it came to seizing and wielding power, left-wing parties in Western countries displayed fickleness and vacillation, and Lenin could only give them moral support. The entire might of the Bolsheviks was thrown on to the home fronts and into the battle against the peoples of Russia who did not want communism. It took Lenin until 1920 to strengthen his position sufficiently inside Russia. It was only then that Europe became the arena targeted for revolution.

The favourable moment in Germany had already passed. Even so, Germany in 1920 represented an eminently suitable field for waging class battles. She had been destroyed and humbled. All her ideals had been desecrated and humiliated. A ferocious economic crisis raged throughout the land. In March, she was shaken by a general strike in which, according to some sources, more than twelve million people took part. Germany was a powder keg and only one spark was needed to set it off.

The official march of the Red Army (Budennyi's March\*) includes the words 'Let's take Warsaw! Then Berlin!' Nikolai Bukharin, the Soviet communists' theoretician, proclaimed a more determined slogan in the newspaper, *Pravda*: 'Straight to the walls of Paris and London!'

In the path of the Red legions, however, lay Poland. There was no common frontier between the Soviet Union and Germany; in order to ignite revolution it was essential to destroy the barrier dividing them. This was free, independent Poland. Unfortunately for the communists, at the head of the Soviet troops was M. N. Tukhachevsky, a commander who did not understand the essence of strategy. Tukhachevsky's armies were defeated before reaching Warsaw and shamefully retreated. At a critical moment, Tukhachevsky found himself without any strategic reserve and this ensured that the outcome was a spectacular defeat.

Tukhachevsky's defeat did not happen by chance. Six months before the Soviet 'liberation campaign' set out for Warsaw and Berlin, Tukhachevsky had laid down, as a 'theoretical base', that strategic reserves were unnecessary in war. Strategy has simple but inexorable laws. Its main principle is concentration. At the decisive moment and in the decisive place, *overwhelming power* must be concentrated against the enemy's most vulnerable point. In order to concentrate power in this way, it is necessary to have it in reserve. Tukhachevsky, did not understand this, and paid the price. As a result, the revolution in Germany had to be put off until 1923.

The rout of Tukhachevsky's hordes in Poland had very unpleasant consequences for the Bolsheviks. Russia suddenly rose up in a desperate effort to throw off the communist dictatorship. The workers, of Petrograd, the cradle of the revolution, went on strike; they demanded bread, they demanded their promised liberty. The Bolsheviks put down their demonstrations, but a squadron of the Baltic Fleet came out on their side. The sailors from Kronstadt (the principal Soviet naval

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\*Originally, the song was dedicated to Simion Budennyi, legendary hero of the civil war and later Marshal of the Soviet Union.

base, near Petrograd), the same ones who presented power to Lenin and Trotsky, demanded that the communists be thrown out of the soviets, or councils. A wave of peasant demonstrations swept the country; and in the woods of Tambov, a group of peasants formed an anti-communist army which was powerful and well organized, but badly armed.

Tukhachevsky's brutality at Kronstadt became legendary. The monstrous shooting of peasants in Tambov Province is one of the most horrifying pages in history. The author of this page is Tukhachevsky. The twentieth century has known quite a few villains such as Yezhov, Himmler and Pol Pot. By the amount of blood he has spilt, Tukhachevsky has fully earned his place alongside them, for in his time Tukhachevsky was the forerunner of most of these scoundrels!

In 1921 Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy, or NEP. There was nothing new in this plan, which boiled down to little more than good old capitalism. It is accepted that Kronstadt and Tambov were important reasons impelling Lenin to introduce elements of free-marketeering and to loosen the ideological running knot on the neck of society. One must seek more deeply for other reasons.

In 1921 Lenin understood that the First World War had not led to world revolution. According to Trotsky's advice, it was necessary to go over to permanent revolution, dealing blow after blow at the weak links in free society and, at the same time, prepare for the Second World War, which would bring final 'liberation'. Before the actual introduction of the NEP in December 1920, Lenin claimed that 'such a new war is unavoidable . . .' (A speech to the Moscow Council on the first anniversary of the Comintern, 1920) 'We have ended one phase of wars and we must prepare ourselves for the next.' (A speech to the VIII Congress of the Soviets, 1920) For this purpose the NEP was introduced. Peace is a breathing space for war. So said Lenin, so said Stalin and so said *Pravda*. The communists had to put their lands in order to strengthen and consolidate power, to

develop an exceptionally strong war industry, and to prepare the populace for future wars, battles and 'liberation campaigns'.

The introduction of elements of free-marketceering in no way signified that preparations for world revolution and the Second World War had been repudiated. By the following year the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – the USSR – had been formed. The declaration that accompanied the formation of the USSR itemized four republics; it was intended to go on increasing this number until the whole world formed part of it.

The declaration accompanying the formation of the USSR was a *clear and direct declaration of war on the rest of the world*. This declaration is still in force. Nobody has revoked it. Between this declaration and that contained in *Mein Kampf*, there is a difference. Hitler wrote his book later and it represents the view of one individual. *Mein Kampf* literally means *my struggle*. The declaration behind the formation of the USSR is an official document on the principal objective of a vast state, which is to destroy and subjugate all other states in the world.

## CHAPTER 2

# The Main Enemy

*If there is one place where a start can be made to arouse Europe to revolution, that place is Germany . . . and victory of the revolution in Germany will guarantee the victory of world revolution.*

STALIN (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 6, p. 267)

In 1923, Germany was again on the brink of revolution. Lenin was no longer taking part either in governing the USSR or directing the Comintern. Stalin had seized almost all the reins of government, although the fact that he had done so had not yet been grasped by the country, the world, or even by his rivals.

This is how Stalin himself described his role in the preparations which were being made for revolution in Germany in 1923: 'The German Commission of the Comintern, consisting of Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, Trotsky, Radek and a number of German comrades, took a series of specific decisions that direct assistance be given to the German comrades to enable them to seize power.' (Speech to the Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the VKP (b), 1 August 1927)

Boris Bazhanov, Stalin's private secretary, gave a more detailed description of these preparations. The resources which were allotted to them were enormous. The Politburo decided at a secret meeting that nothing would be spared. All communists of German extraction living in the Soviet Union were prepared for action, as were all communists who spoke German. They were sent to Germany to do clandestine work. It was not just



rank-and-file communists who were moved into Germany. Top-ranking Soviet leaders, including Vassily Schmidt, a Soviet People's Commissar, Joseph Unschlikht, deputy chairman of the GRU\* and future head of military intelligence, and Karl Radek and G. L. Pyatakov, then members of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, were all sent to Germany as well. N. Krestinsky, the plenipotentiary representative, or ambassador in Germany, set to work with feverish intensity. The Soviet Embassy in its entirety became the nerve centre for organizing the revolution: instructions from Moscow, a flood of money which was immediately spent on mounds of communist literature, and an avalanche of arms and ammunition all flowed through the Embassy. 'Unschlikht was given responsibility for recruiting, equipping and organizing the armed insurrectionist detachments which would carry out the *coup d'état*. He was given the added responsibility of organizing a German secret-police force and of exterminating the bourgeoisie and the enemies of the revolution after the *coup* had taken place.' (B. Bazhanov, *Memoirs*, Paris 1980; p. 67)

The Soviet Politburo worked out the blueprint for the *coup* in detail and ratified it. The date on which it was to take place was fixed for 9 November 1923. But the revolution did not happen. The reasons for this were many.

First, the great bulk of the German populace chose the golden mean. They favoured the Social Democrats. The Communist Party did not have the support it needed among the masses. What is more, the Party was split into two factions, and as Lenin and Trotsky saw it, the Party leaders were not displaying sufficient determination. Secondly, Germany and the Soviet Union did not share a common frontier. As they had found four years previously, Poland lay between their two countries. Had there been a common frontier, then the Red Army would have been in a position to help the German Communist Party and its indecisive leaders.

The third and perhaps most important reason was that Lenin

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\*The Soviet Secret Police frequently changed its initials; this was another variation of the NKVD or the KGB.

was dying, and for some time previously had ceased either to govern the Soviet Union or lead the world revolution. Lenin's heirs were many – Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov and Bukharin. Alongside these obvious rivals worked the modest Stalin, whom no one saw as an aspirant to power, but who, in Lenin's words, had already 'concentrated unlimited power in his own hands'. (*Political Will*, 1923)

The 1923 German revolution was directed from the Kremlin, but a fierce fight over who should control the world revolution was already under way. Not one of the evident claimants for power wanted to see his opponent in the role of leader of the German and therefore the European revolution. They jostled one another at the helm, issuing conflicting instructions to their subordinates. No one in such circumstances would end as victor. Wisely, Stalin did not join the helmsmen in their scramble for power. Instead, he decided first of all to devote his entire attention to consolidating his personal authority beyond all dispute.

In the years which immediately followed, Stalin demoted from the highest level of the Party all those who aspired to the post of leader, pushing them down to increasing depths until they ended up in the cellars of the Lubyanka jail. Once he had seized power, Stalin removed all obstacles standing in the way of the German revolution. He brought order to the German Communist Party and compelled it to carry out Moscow's instructions without question. He established a common frontier with Germany. He annihilated German social democracy. His position was both simple and based upon principles: it was necessary to fight against the Social Democrats and the pacifists, who were distracting the proletariat from revolution and war. On 7 November 1927, Stalin launched a slogan which said, 'It is impossible to finish with capitalism without first finishing with social democratism in the workers' movement.' (*Pravda*, No. 255, 6/7 Nov 1927) The following year Stalin declared that the communists' main task was to fight against social democracy: 'first of all, the struggle with social democratism along all lines, including and following from this the exposure of bourgeois pacifism'. (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 11, p. 202) Stalin's attitude towards those who openly favoured war with, for example,

the German Nazis, was just as simple and understandable. The Nazis had to be supported: leave it to the Nazis to eliminate the Social Democrats and the pacifists; let the Nazis start another war and destroy every state in Europe, every political party, every parliament, every army and every trade union. In 1927 Stalin already foresaw that the Nazis would come to power and he considered that this would be a positive event. 'It is precisely this fact which will lead to an exacerbation of the internal situation in the capitalist countries and to the workers coming out in favour of revolution.' (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 10, p. 49)

Stalin supported the Nazis. Zealous Stalinists, such as Herman Remmele, who was a member of the Politburo of the German Communist Party, was quite open in his support of the Nazis, then eager for power. The part which Stalin played in the Nazis' seizure of power in Germany was considerable. As Leon Trotsky said in 1936: 'Without Stalin there would have been no Hitler, there would have been no Gestapo!' (*Bulletin of the Opposition (BO)*, Nos. 52-53, October 1936) Another statement he made in November 1938 reveals Trotsky's shrewdness and his knowledge of the point at issue. 'Stalin finally untied Hitler's hands, as well as those of his enemies, and thereby pushed Europe towards war.' He said this at a time when Chamberlain was rejoicing that there would be no war, Mussolini was regarding himself as a peacemaker and Hitler still had no intention of issuing a directive to attack Poland, even less France. At the moment when Europe was heaving a sigh of relief in the belief that there would be no war, Trotsky already knew both that war would quickly come and who would be to blame for it.

On 21 June 1939, intensive negotiations directed against Germany were then taking place between Britain, France and the Soviet Union. There was nothing to indicate that any surprises or complications might possibly be in store. 'The Soviet Union,' Trotsky said at the time, 'will move up to the German frontiers in all its massed strength just at the moment when the Third Reich becomes involved in the conflict for a new repartition of the world.' And indeed it was to happen precisely like that. Germany would fight in France, while Stalin, 'with all his massed strength', would crush the neutral countries on his

western frontiers, thereby bringing himself nearer to the German border. On that same day of 21 June 1939 Trotsky made an even more extraordinary prophecy – that in autumn 1939 Poland would be occupied and that Germany intended to attack the Soviet Union in autumn 1941.

Trotsky made one minor error in being only a few months out as to when the war would begin against the Soviet Union. We shall see later that Stalin also made the same mistake.

Today, when we read some fifty years later the general pronouncements and predictions which Trotsky made, we can appreciate their accuracy. But this raises the question, how did he know all this? There is nothing secret about Trotsky. He had been one of the leaders of the communist *coup d'état*. He was the creator of the Red Army and its leader. He had been the Soviet representative at the negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. He was the first head of Soviet diplomacy. He was, along with Lenin, a recognized leader of the Soviet Union and leader of the world revolution. So he already knew very well what communism was, what the Red Army was and who Stalin was. Trotsky said that all his predictions were based on overt Soviet publications and in particular on the statements of George Dimitrov, the secretary of the Comintern.

Trotsky was the first person to understand Stalin's game, which was not understood by Western leaders, nor in the beginning even by Hitler. The game was quite simple. Trotsky himself became its victim and for that reason understood it. Working in league with Zinoviev and Kamenev, Stalin, creating a new group to activate prejudice against his fellow-revolutionary, removed Trotsky from power. Next, working in league with Bukharin, Stalin removed Zinoviev and Kamenev. Then Stalin kicked out Bukharin as well. Stalin followed this up by using Henrik Yagoda to remove Felix Dzerzhinsky's generation of Chekists. Then, using Nikolai Yezhov as leverage, he discarded Henrik Yagoda and his generation in their turn. With the help of Lavrenty Beria, Stalin finally ousted Yezhov and his generation. Stalin continued to play the same game in the international arena and Trotsky saw this too. For Stalin, German Nazism was an instrument which would break a path for the revolution

through the solid ice – an icebreaker. German Nazism could begin the war and the war would lead to revolution. Let the icebreaker break Europe! Hitler could do what it did not suit Stalin to do. Stalin stated in 1927 that the second imperialist war was quite unavoidable, just as unavoidable, in fact, as the entry of the Soviet Union into that war. However, he did not want to take part in it himself from the first day. ‘We shall move, but we shall be the last to move, in order to throw our weight on to the scales and tip the balance.’ (Stalin, Vol. 7, p. 14)

In Europe Stalin needed crises, wars, destruction and hunger. Hitler could achieve all this for him. The more crimes Hitler committed in Europe, the better it would be for Stalin and the more reason he would have one day to send the Red Army into Europe as her liberator. Trotsky understood all this before the Second World War began and before Hitler became Chancellor. ‘Let them come to power,’ said Trotsky in 1932, explaining what Stalin’s attitude was to the German Nazis, ‘let them compromise themselves, and then . . .’

From 1927 onwards, Stalin made every effort to support the Nazis who were then striving for power, although he did not of course do so publicly. After 1933, Stalin would do everything possible to push the Nazis towards war. When they entered the war, Stalin would order communists living in democratic countries temporarily to become pacifists, to demoralize the armed forces of the Western countries, to open the way for the Nazis and to capitulate to them with demands that the ‘imperialist war’ should be stopped, while at the same time undermining the war effort of their own countries and governments.

When he moved his icebreaker – German Nazism – against democratic Europe, Stalin had already passed the death sentence on it. Stalin had been planning to liquidate the Nazis for five years before they took over in Germany. ‘Smash fascism, overthrow capitalism, establish Soviet power and free the colonies from slavery.’ (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 11, p. 202)

Fascism was the hangman of Europe. Stalin supported the hangman, but even before the hangman had begun his work, Stalin had prepared the same fate for the hangman as awaited the hangman’s victims.

### CHAPTER 3

## Why Arms for the Communists?

*The people perish for want of steel.*  
Gounod's *Faust*

In 1933, the German colonel (later general) Heinz Guderian visited a Soviet locomotive engineering works at Kharkov. Guderian saw that, in addition to locomotives, the yard was producing tanks as a side product. The tanks were being produced at the rate of 22 a day.

When assessing the output of side products at one Soviet plant in peacetime, it must be remembered that in 1933 Germany was producing no tanks at all. In 1939, Hitler came into the Second World War with 3,195 tanks, that is, less than the Kharkov locomotive engineering works, working on a peacetime footing, produced in six months. When assessing the significance of an output of 22 tanks a day, it must also be borne in mind that in 1940, even after the Second World War had begun, the United States had *in all* only about 400 tanks.

What of the quality of the tanks which Guderian saw at the Kharkov engineering works? They were tanks which had been created by that American tank genius, J. W. Christie. Nobody, apart from the Soviet tank makers, appreciated Christie's achievements. One of Christie's American tanks was bought in the United States and sent to the Soviet Union under false documentation; the tank was described as an agricultural tractor. The 'tractor' was then produced in large numbers in the Soviet Union as a Mark BT – initials for the Russian words

'high-speed tank'. The first Mark BTs had a speed of 100 kilometres per hour. In the present day, there is not a tank crew anywhere which would not envy such a speed.

The shape of the hull of the Mark BT tank was simple and efficient. No tank at that time, not even those being produced for the United States Army, had a similar form of armament. The best tank in operation during the Second World War was the T34, a direct descendant of the Mark BT. The shape of its hull was a further development of the ideas of the great American tank builder. The principle of mounting its front armour plating in a sloping position was used, after the T34, on the German Panzer tank and then on all other tanks subsequently produced elsewhere in the world.

In the 1930s, practically all tanks in all tank-producing countries were designed and produced with the engine at the rear and the transmission system at the front. The Mark BT was an exception to this rule. The engine and the transmission system were both in the rear. It would take another quarter-century before the rest of the world understood the advantages of this structure.

The Mark BT tanks were continuously being improved. Their radius of action on one fuelling was increased to 700 kilometres. Fifty years later this is still a dream for the majority of tank crews. In 1936, Mark BT tanks produced in series were fording deep rivers underwater and along the river beds. Even now, at the end of the twentieth century, not all tanks used by the probable enemies of the Soviet Union have the same capability. Installation of diesel engines on the Mark BT tanks began in 1938. This was done elsewhere only ten or twenty years later. Finally, the Mark BT tank carried a weapons system which was very powerful for that time.

Having said so many positive things about the numbers and quality of Soviet tanks, one must note one minor drawback. It was impossible to use these tanks on Soviet territory.

The basic characteristic of the Mark BT tank was its speed. The quality so dominated all its other characteristics that it was even used in the name it was given.

The Mark BT is an aggressor tank. In all its characteristics, it

is remarkably similar to the small but completely mobile cavalry warrior who emerged from the countless hordes of Genghis Khan. This great world conqueror vanquished all his enemies by delivering lightning strikes with great masses of exclusively mobile troops. Genghis Khan destroyed his enemies not, in the main, by force of arms, but by swift manoeuvre in depth. Genghis Khan did not need slow, sluggish knights, but hordes of light, fast-moving troops, capable of covering vast distances, fording rivers and moving deep into the rear of enemy territory.

That was just what the Mark BT tanks were like. By 1 September 1939, more of them had been produced than any other tank of any other type by any other country anywhere else in the world. The mobility, speed and radius of action were bought at the price of lighter and less thick, though still efficient armour. Mark BT tanks could only be used in an aggressive war, only in the rear of the enemy and only in a swift offensive operation, in which masses of tanks suddenly burst into enemy territory, bypassing his centres of resistance and racing into the depth of his heartland, where there were no enemy troops, but where his towns, bridges, factories, aerodromes, ports, depots, command posts and communications centres were situated.

The strikingly belligerent qualities of the Mark BT tank were also achieved by means of using a unique system of tracks and suspension. On unmade roads, the Mark BT operated on heavy caterpillar tracks, but once on a good road, the tracks were discarded and it then shot ahead on wheels, like a racing car. It is, however, well known that speed is not compatible with cross-country performance. The choice is therefore between, on the one hand, a high-speed car which will go only on good roads, or on the other, a slow-moving tractor, which will go anywhere. The Soviet marshals favoured the high-speed car. Thus, the Mark BT tanks were quite powerless on Soviet territory. When Hitler began Operation Barbarossa, practically all the Mark BT tanks were cast aside. It was almost impossible to use them off the roads, even with caterpillar tracks. They were never used on wheels. The potential of these tanks was never realized, but it certainly could never have been realized on Soviet territory. The Mark BT was created to operate on foreign territory only and,



what is more, only on territory where there were good roads, as already observed.

Let us glance at the Soviet Union's neighbours. Then, as now, there were no good roads in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, China, Mongolia, Manchuria, or Northern Korea. Zhukov used Mark BT tanks in Mongolia, where the terrain is as flat as a billiard table. However, he used them only with caterpillar tracks and was dissatisfied with them. Off the roads, the tank tracks often raced round without gripping the surface, while the wheels, because of the comparatively great pressure they had to bear, whether they were off the road or even on unmade roads, simply spun round and sank into the earth while the tank remained stationary.

To the question, where could the enormous potential of these Mark BT tanks be successfully realized, there is only one answer: in central and southern Europe. The only territories where tanks could be used, *after* their caterpillar tracks were removed, were Germany, France and Belgium. To the question as to which is more important for the Mark BT tanks, the wheels or the caterpillar tracks, Soviet textbooks of that period give a clear-cut answer: the wheels. The most important characteristic of the Mark BT, speed, is attained on wheels. Caterpillar tracks are only a means for reaching foreign territory. For instance, Poland could be crossed on caterpillar tracks which, once the German autobahns had been reached, could then be discarded in favour of wheels, on which operations would then proceed. Caterpillar tracks were regarded as an auxiliary device which was supposed to be used only once in war, then to be discarded and forgotten. It is exactly like the parachutist who uses his parachute for the sole purpose of landing in enemy territory. Once there, he throws the parachute away so that he can operate without being burdened by a heavy load which he no longer needs. It was precisely this attitude which was adopted towards caterpillar tracks. Those Soviet divisions and army corps which were equipped with Mark BT tanks did not have on their complement any vehicles whose purpose it was to recover the caterpillar tracks which had been thrown away and bring them back. After the Mark BT tanks had discarded their tracks, they had to finish the war on wheels.

Some types of Soviet tanks were named after communist leaders, like the 'KV', for Klim Voroshilov,\* and the 'JS', for Joseph Stalin. Most Soviet tanks, however, were given a designation which contained the index letter 'T'. Sometimes, in addition to 'T', the index included the letter 'O' (which stands for the Russian word for 'flame-throwing'), 'B' (the initial letter of the Russian word for 'high speed') or 'P' (indicating 'amphibious'†).

Then in 1938, the Soviet Union began to work intensively on the production of a tank which bore the highly unusual index number of A-20. What does 'A' mean? There is not one Soviet textbook which gives the answer to this question and to date it remains undeciphered by many experts. For a long time I sought an answer and finally found it at Factory No. 183. This plant produced locomotives, but had other, less 'peaceful' production on the go at the same time. People with great experience at this plant say that the original meaning of the index letter 'A' in this case stood for '*Autostradnyi*' – motorway. Personally I find this explanation convincing. The Mark A-20 tank was the latest development in the Mark BT family. The main characteristic of the Mark BT figured in its name, so why should the main characteristic of the Mark A-20 not be expressed in the same way? The purpose, I suggest, of the Mark A-20 was to reach the motorways on its caterpillar tracks and, once there, to discard the tracks, and convert itself into the king of speed.

At the end of the twentieth century the Soviet Union does not have one kilometre of highway which can be even remotely described as a motorway. Fifty years ago, and for long after that, there were no motorways in Soviet territory. Nor were there motorways in any of the countries which bordered the Soviet

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\*Voroshilov was first a Marshal of the Soviet Union, one of Stalin's closest allies; he later became Chairman of the Supreme Soviet.

†The Soviet Union was the only country in the world which produced amphibious tanks in massive numbers. In a defensive war, there is no need for a tank to pass over water. Therefore, when Hitler set Operation Barbarossa in motion, Soviet amphibious tanks had to be discarded because they were unsuitable for defensive warfare. Their production, like the production of the Mark BT tanks, stopped immediately.

Union in 1938. One year later, however, in 1939, Stalin partitioned Poland under the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact and thereby established a common frontier with a country which *did* have motorways. That country was Germany.

It is said that Stalin's tanks were not ready for war. That was not so. They were not ready for a *defensive* war on their own territory. They were, however, designed to wage war on others.

As it was for Soviet tanks, so it was for Soviet aircraft in both quality and numbers. Communist falsifiers of the facts say nowadays that the Soviet Union did of course have many aircraft, but the majority were inferior. They were obsolete planes and they therefore could be disregarded. Let us consider only the contemporary Soviet aircraft—the MIG-3, the YAK-1, the PE-2, the IL-2; in doing so we shall in no way find ourselves discussing antiquated flying machines.

Alfred Price was a British airman who, throughout his lifetime, flew 45 types of aircraft and logged more than 4,000 flying hours. This is what he thought of these 'antiquated flying machines':

The most heavily armed fighter in service in September 1939 was the Russian Polikarpov I-16, a progressive development of an aircraft which had first entered service in 1934 and fought in the Spanish Civil War . . . In terms of armament . . . it had never been surpassed. The I-16 Type 17, which appeared in 1938, carried two synchronized 7.62 ShKAS machine guns on top of the engine cowling and two 20mm ShVAK cannon in the wings. The ShKAS had a rate of fire of 1,600 rounds per minute after synchronization and a muzzle velocity of 2,700 feet per second; the ShVAK had a rate of fire of 800 rounds per minute and a muzzle velocity of 2,600 feet per second. In both cases these figures were better than those for any comparable weapon and they conferred upon the Type 17 a weight of fire of more than double that of

the Messerschmitt 109E-1 and nearly three times that of the Spitfire 1. The hefty punch of this tubby Russian fighter was years ahead of its time . . . Those who believe that the Russians were backward peasants prior to the Second World War and advanced after it only because they were able to make use of German expertise might care to ponder these points. (Alfred Price, *World War II Fighter Conflict*, London 1975; pp. 18–21)

To this it must be added that in August 1939, Soviet fighters were the first aircraft in the world to use rockets as armaments in combat conditions. What is more, Soviet aircraft builders had created a plane, unique in the world, which had an armoured fuselage. The IL-2 was virtually a flying tank, with super-high-powered weaponry by any standard, including eight heavy rocket shells.

What does all this mean? Why was it that from the very first day of the war the Soviet Air Force yielded mastery in the air to the enemy? The answer is simple. Most Soviet pilots, including fighter pilots, had not been trained to fight air battles. So what had they been trained to do? They had been trained to strike at ground targets. The regulations of the Soviet fighter and bomber Air Force (BUIA-40 and BUBA-40) pointed Soviet pilots towards staging one grandiose, lightning offensive operation, in which the air force would catch the enemy air force napping with one blow and seize supremacy of the air. Even in 1929, the Soviet magazine, *War and Revolution*, published a basic article entitled 'The Initial Period of War'. This drew the conclusion, to be repeated in Soviet Air Force regulations, including those of 1940 and 1941, that 'it is highly advantageous to take the initiative and be first to attack the enemy. Once the air force has taken the initiative in attacking the airfields and hangars of the enemy, it can then count upon having supremacy in the air.' (*War and Revolution*, No. 9, pp. 19–20 (1929)) The Soviet air theoreticians did not have in mind some general enemy, but a clearly defined one. Alexander Lapchinsky, the chief Soviet air strategist, illustrated his books with very detailed maps of standard bombing targets. These included the railway

junction at Leipzig, at the Friedrichstrasse in Berlin and its railway station, and other such places. In explaining how Soviet territory had to be defended, Lapchinsky said 'a determined ground attack attracts enemy air forces towards itself like a magnet and serves as the best means of defending the country from them. The air defence of the country is not a manoeuvre from depth, but a manoeuvre into depth.' (*Vozdushnaya Armiya*, Alexander Lapchinsky, Moscow 1939; pp. 176-7) It was precisely for this purpose in 1941 that the entire Soviet Air Force was concentrated on the very frontiers of the country. For example, the field aerodrome of the 123rd Fighter Regiment was only two kilometres from the German frontier. In battle conditions an aircraft, in order to save fuel, takes off towards the enemy. Aircraft of the 123rd Regiment, like many others, were thus compelled to gain height after takeoff by flying *over* German territory.

Both during the war and after it, the Soviet Union built quite a few aircraft which were, at the same time, excellent and surprisingly simple. The greatest achievements of the Soviet Air Force, however, were not in building aircraft which would destroy enemy planes in the air. They lay in the building of aircraft which would destroy planes and other enemy targets on the ground. The IL-2 was in just such a category. Airfields were its most important targets. When he had created this aggressor aircraft, Sergei Ilyushin stipulated one minor defensive detail. The first model of the IL-2 had two seats. From one, the pilot flew the aircraft and attacked his targets, while seated behind him in the other the air gunner protected the rear of the aircraft from enemy fighter attack. Stalin personally telephoned Ilyushin and ordered him to discard the rear gunner and his machine gun, and to produce the IL-2 as a one-seater aircraft. Stalin, it seemed, needed the IL-2 for a situation in which not one enemy fighter would succeed in taking off. After Operation Barbarossa had been launched, Stalin rang up Ilyushin again and ordered him to produce the IL-2 as a two-seater aircraft, as before. In a defensive war even aggressor aircraft need to have some defensive armaments.

1927 was the year when Stalin took his place, finally and permanently, at the summit of power. From then onwards, he concentrated his attention not only on consolidating his dictatorship, but also on the problems of the whole communist movement and world revolution.

1927 was the year in which Stalin finally drew the conclusion that the Second World War was inevitable; that there had to be a decisive conflict with social democratic pacifism which was delaying its start; and that the Nazis, striving for power, had first to be supported and then destroyed.

The same year also marked the beginning of the industrialization of the Soviet Union. This was done through a series of five-year plans, the first of which began in 1927.

When the first five-year plan began, the Red Army had 92 tanks. When the plan was completed, it had more than 4,000. Even so, the military bias in the first five-year plan was not very noticeable. Most attention was paid to the industrial base which was to be created and which would subsequently produce arms, rather than to arms *per se*.

The second five-year plan continued the development of the industrial base. It produced coke ovens and open-hearth furnaces, great electrical power stations and oxygen plants, rolling and blooming mills, mines and pits. The production of arms was not yet the important issue. Even so, Stalin was not losing sight of it. 24,708 military aircraft were produced during the first two five-year plans.

Then came the third five-year plan, which should have been completed in 1942. This was the plan to turn out actual military products in enormous quantities and of very high quality.

Industrialization was bought at a high price, however. Stalin let the standard of living of the populace fall to a very low level. Vast reserves of gold, platinum and diamonds were sold to foreign markets. Churches and monasteries, imperial repositories and museums, were pillaged. Icons and valuable books were put on the foreign market. Paintings by the great masters of the Renaissance, collections of cut diamonds, and treasures from museums and libraries were all given over to export. Similarly, Stalin forced timber and coal, nickel and

manganese, oil, cotton, caviar, furs, grain and much more on to the export market.

Then, in 1930, he began his notorious collectivization programme. The peasants were driven by force into collective farms, so that all their crops could be taken from them without payment. In communist jargon this was called 'transferring resources from agriculture to heavy industry'. The result of collectivization and the hunger which followed it was ten to sixteen million dead. Stalin, meanwhile, went on, throughout this period, selling five million tons of grain every year abroad.

Why was collectivization needed? For industrialization. Why industrialization? Not, in any way, to raise the standard of living of the nation. Life during the NEP, and before industrialization and collectivization, had been perfectly tolerable. Had Stalin been interested in the standard of living of the people, then he needed neither industrialization nor collectivization. He needed simply to preserve the NEP. Living standards now, however, reached an awesomely low level. Robert Conquest has recently published a book, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1987), on these fearsome five-year plans, complete with pictures showing skeleton-like children. They portray a situation as bad as, if not worse than, those we have witnessed in communist Ethiopia or Pol Pot's Cambodia in recent times.

Industrialization and collectivization were intended to produce arms in vast quantities. Why did the communists want arms? To defend the people? The answer is no. If Stalin had sold only four million tons of grain a year instead of five for his motorway tanks, parachute silk and Western military technology, millions of children would not have died. Weapons are used in all countries to defend the population from appalling calamities – above all, their children, who are a nation's future. In the Soviet Union, it was the other way round. In order to obtain arms, the populace, children included, were subjected to fearful disaster. Just one statistic will serve to underline its scale. In World War I Russia lost in all 2.3 million people. In *peacetime*, however, Stalin was responsible for the destruction of approximately five to seven times more people for the sake of acquiring motorway tanks and offensive aircraft. The

communist turned out to be many times more terrible than the imperialist war.

The growth in Soviet military might was in no way dictated by an external threat, for it began before Hitler came to power. The annihilation of millions of children for the sake of obtaining armaments was going on whilst Stalin was making strenuous efforts to suppress western pacifists and at the same time raising up the Nazis. It may be objected that while Stalin sacrificed millions of people, he nevertheless created arms to defend the survivors. This is not valid. We have already seen, and shall see again, that the arms created were in no way suitable for the defence of his territory nor the protection of his people; indeed, he would be compelled either to use them in a way for which they were not intended, or to discard them altogether.

For precisely what, then, were these vast arsenals of arms intended, if not for the defence of the Soviet territory or populace?



## CHAPTER 4

# Why Stalin Partitioned Poland

*We are doing something which, if it succeeds, will overturn the whole world and liberate the entire working class.*

STALIN (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 13, p. 41)

On 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany suddenly attacked the Soviet Union. That is a historical fact. It is, however, a very strange fact. Before the Second World War, Germany did not have a common frontier with the Soviet Union. Consequently, Germany could not then have *made* an attack, still less a sudden one.

Germany and the Soviet Union had been separated by an uninterrupted buffer of neutral states. Before a Soviet–German war could take place, one condition above all others was necessary. The buffer of neutral states had to be destroyed. But who exactly destroyed this buffer; and why?

The buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union consisted for most of its length of at least two countries. Only at one point was it formed by one country: Poland. Poland was the shortest, most direct, most level and most convenient route lying between the Soviet Union and Germany. It was the narrowest part of the dividing wall. It is not hard to understand that it is precisely through here that any potential aggressor, intent on a Soviet–German war, would have to try to force a corridor. On

the other hand, if either the Soviet Union or Germany did not want such a war, they would have to use all the strength of their armed forces, all of their national wisdom and all the force of their international authority to keep the enemy off Polish territory. If the worst came to the worst, war would have to be waged in Poland itself, so as to prevent an approach towards either frontier.

Hitler had declared his warlike intentions quite openly. Stalin was quick to call him publicly, a cannibal. Hitler of course could not attack Stalin, since they did not share a common frontier. So Hitler proposed to Stalin that they make a joint effort to breach the wall that divided them. Stalin accepted this proposal with delight. He knocked down the Polish wall with enormous enthusiasm and forced a corridor in Hitler's direction. Hitler's motives towards Poland, as laid out in *Mein Kampf*, are understandable. But how can Stalin's actions be explained?

The first explanation, according to Soviet propagandists, is that, after having torn Poland to pieces and drowned it in blood, USSR moved her frontier westwards, that is, strengthened her security. This is a strange explanation. The Soviet frontier was indeed moved westwards by 200–300 kilometres, but at the same time Germany moved its frontier some 300–400 kilometres eastwards. As a result of this, the security of the Soviet Union was not enhanced; on the contrary, it was diminished. But this apart, there was an entirely new factor. This was the common Soviet–German frontier and hence the direct possibility of war, including a war of surprise attack.

The second explanation is that by stabbing Poland in the back at a time when she was engaged in a desperate struggle with the Nazis, USSR tried to *delay* the outbreak of the Soviet–German war. This is like saying that USSR started a fire in her neighbour's house in the expectation that it would not spread to hers.

The third explanation is that the unwillingness of France and Britain to sign a treaty with the USSR left Stalin with no option but to come to terms with Hitler. But why should France and Britain defend the Soviet Union, when the Soviet Union had proclaimed that its main aim was to overthrow democracy

everywhere, including in France and Britain? The West did not care whether Hitler went east or not. The countries of Eastern Europe certainly did. If Hitler turned eastwards, they would be his first victims. Therefore the Eastern European countries were the natural allies of the Soviet Union. An alliance should be sought with them against Hitler. But Stalin did not seek such alliances. In cases where treaties did exist, the Soviet Union did not carry out her obligations. Stalin could have remained neutral, but chose instead to stab in the back those countries engaged in a struggle with fascism.

Once he had forced a corridor through the dividing wall, Hitler thought that he had done enough. He then turned his attentions to Western Europe, Africa, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. What ought Stalin to have done, faced as he was with a breach in the wall some 570 kilometres wide and time in hand? He should have hastily reinforced his defences. The old frontier was a powerful line of fortified regions. It should have been strengthened and improved without delay. In addition to this, a second line of defence should have been built, and a third, and a fifth, and more. Mines should have been laid at once on roads, on bridges and in fields. Anti-tank ditches should have been dug and given anti-tank artillery cover. But none of this happened. Some time later, in 1943, the Red Army was preparing to repel an enemy attack in the Kursk Salient. Within a short period of time, Soviet troops succeeded in creating six continuous defensive strips – one behind the other – on a vast front, to a total depth of 250–300 kilometres. Each kilometre was saturated with trenches, dugouts, communication trenches, concealment shelters and gun positions. The average density of anti-tank and anti-infantry mines per kilometre was as high as 7,000, while the density of anti-tank weaponry reached the exceptionally high level of 41 guns in every kilometre, not counting field and anti-aircraft artillery, and tanks, dug into the ground. Thus a truly impenetrable defence was set up from scratch in a very short space of time in the open field.

In 1939 conditions which favoured defence were considerably better than in 1943. There were impassable forests, rivers and marshes. There were few roads and a lot of time. Nevertheless, at that moment the Soviet Union stopped producing anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. Instead of rendering the area impassable, it was immediately made more passable. Roads and bridges were built in it, and the railway network was extended, strengthened and improved. Previously existing fortifications were demolished and covered with earth.

Ilya Starinov, a GRU colonel involved in this process, described what he saw :

The situation was becoming absurd. When we were faced by weak armies of comparatively small countries, our frontiers were really well and truly safe. When Nazi Germany became our neighbour the defensive installations put up by the engineers along the former frontier were abandoned and even partially dismantled. (I. Starinov, *Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, p. 186)

The military engineering directorate of the Red Army indented for 120,000 delayed-action railway mines. In the event of an invasion by the German Army, this quantity would have been quite sufficient to paralyse the entire railway network behind enemy lines, upon which the Germans would have been totally dependent. But instead of the number of mines ordered, only 120 arrived. (Starinov, *op. cit.*) Yet the mine is a very simple, very cheap and very effective weapon. The production of mines in the Soviet Union was enormous, but it was curtailed after the passage had been forced through the wall.

One breach in the wall was enough for Hitler. It was not enough for Stalin. Hitler, with Stalin's help, destroyed the authority of the state in only one country forming part of the dividing buffer. Stalin, without anybody's help, achieved this in three other countries, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, attempted to do the same in a fourth, Finland, and actively prepared to repeat the performance in a fifth country, Romania, after having seized a vast tract of Romanian territory. Only ten months after

the 'non-aggression' pact was signed and by Stalin's own efforts, the dividing buffer from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea had been completely shattered. There no longer remained any neutral countries between Stalin and Hitler and thereby the conditions needed for attack were created.

During this short space of time, all of Stalin's western neighbours had become his victims. The appearance of Soviet troops in Lithuania meant that they had moved on to the real German frontier. Previously, the Soviet-German border passed through Polish-occupied territory. Now, Soviet troops had moved on to the frontier with East Prussia.

Communist historians have tried, though without any success, to devise answers to the question as to why Stalin agreed to help Hitler force a corridor through Poland. The question as to why Stalin smashed the entire buffer is one which they prefer not to raise. But Stalin himself gave a clear and precise answer to *that* unasked question :

History states [wrote Stalin] that when one country wants to go to war with another, even one which is not a neighbour, then it begins to seek frontiers across which it would be able to reach the frontiers of the countries it wishes to attack. (*Pravda*, 5 March 1936)

Did the Red Army intend to stop on the borders once it had reached them?

Here is S. K. Timoshenko, Marshal of the Soviet Union, on the subject:

In Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the power of the landowners and capitalists, so hateful to the workers, has been abolished. The Soviet Union has grown significantly and has moved its frontiers westwards. The capitalist world has been compelled to yield and give ground. But it is not for us fighters of the Red Army to give ourselves airs or rest on our laurels! (*Order of the People's Commissar of Defence*, No. 400, 7 November 1940)

This is neither a speech nor a Tass report. It is an order of the Red Army. To the west of the Soviet borders lay only Germany and countries allied to her. Could the frontiers be moved further westward, at the expense of Germany?

## CHAPTER 5

# The Pact and its Results

*Stalin was more cunning than Hitler, more cunning and more perfidious.*

ANTON ANTONOV-OVSEENKO  
(*The Portrait of a Tyrant*, New York 1980;  
p. 296)

Outwardly everything seemed equitable, a part of Poland for Hitler and a part for Stalin. However, just one week after the signing of the Pact, Stalin played his first dirty trick. Hitler began the war against Poland, while Stalin stated that his troops were not yet ready. He could have told Ribbentrop that before the Pact was signed, but he did not do so.\* Hitler began the war and found himself on his own. The result? He, and he alone, was branded the perpetrator of the Second World War.

Once he had begun the war against Poland, Hitler immediately found himself at war with France, that is, at war on two fronts. Every German schoolboy knew how a war on two fronts would turn out in the end for Germany.

Britain at once declared war on Germany. France could be dealt with, but Britain was an island. In order to reach it, long and serious preparations were necessary. A powerful fleet, roughly equal in strength to the Royal Navy, was also needed, as

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\*Known as the 'Non-Aggression Pact', which, by dividing Poland between the Soviet Union and Germany, was instrumental in the start of World War II.

well as supremacy in the air. The war was thus already changing into what would become a long, drawn-out conflict.

Standing behind Britain was the United States which could, as it did in World War I, throw its inexhaustible power on to the scales at the most vital moment. The whole of the West became Hitler's enemy. Hitler could count on Stalin's friendship only so long as he was in a position of strength. In a protracted war against the West, Stalin would, of course, be obliged to dissipate this strength.

As far as Stalin was concerned, Poland had been partitioned, not in the Chancellery in Berlin, but in the Kremlin in Moscow. In effect, Stalin got the war he wanted, with a western nation destroying others around it, while Stalin remained neutral, biding his time. When, later, he got into serious difficulties, Stalin at once received help from the West.

In the end, however, Poland, for whose liberty the West had gone to war, ended up with none at all. On the contrary, she was handed over to Stalin, along with the whole of Eastern Europe, including a part of Germany. Even so, there are some people in the West who continue to believe that the West won the Second World War.

Hitler committed suicide; Stalin became the absolute ruler of a vast empire hostile to the West, which had been created with the *help* of the West. For all that, Stalin was able to preserve his reputation as naive and trusting, while Hitler went down in history as the ultimate aggressor. A multitude of books have been published in the West based on the idea that Stalin was not ready for war while Hitler was. In my view, the man who is ready for war is not the one who loudly proclaims himself prepared for it, but the man who wins it – by dividing his enemies and knocking their heads together.

Did Stalin intend to observe the Pact? Let Stalin speak:

The question of conflict must not be considered from the point of view of justice, but from the point of view of the



demands of the political factor, from the point of view of the political demands of the Party at any given moment. (Speech to a session of the executive committee of the Comintern, 22 January 1926)

War can turn each and every agreement upside down. (*Pravda*, 15 September 1927)

The Party, in congresses at which Stalin spoke, correctly understood its leaders and gave them the appropriate, full authority:

The Congress stresses in particular that the Central Committee is given full powers at any moment to break all alliances and peace treaties with imperialist and bourgeois states and equally to declare war on them. (Resolution of the 7th Party Congress)

Incidentally, this Party decision has never been rescinded.

According to Stalin, 'A great deal depends upon whether we succeed in delaying the war, which is unavoidable, with the capitalist world, until that moment when the capitalists start fighting among themselves.' (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 10, p. 288) And: 'The decisive battle can be considered imminent when all the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently entangled with each other, when they are fighting sufficiently with each other, and when they have weakened each other sufficiently for the conflict to be beyond their strength.' (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 6, p. 158)

Stalin needed a situation in which 'the capitalists will fight each other like dogs'. (*Pravda*, 14 May 1939) The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact created just that situation. Quotations like these could be glimpsed in *Pravda*: 'Not only must they be taken by the throat, they must be destroyed.' (Marx, Vol. 2, p. 343) *Pravda* was transported with delight. 'The foundations of the earth are trembling,' it wrote. 'The ground slips from under the feet of peoples and nations. Glows are afire in the sky and the thunder of guns shakes seas and continents. Powers and states

are blown away just like chaff in the wind. How excellent it is, how extraordinarily wonderful, when the world is shaken to its very foundations, when powers perish and greatness falls.’ (*Pravda*, 4 August 1940) ‘Every such war brings us closer to that happy time when murders among the people will no longer happen. (*Pravda*, 18 August 1940)

These sentiments spread from the very top down through the ranks of the Red Army and the Party. Lieutenant-General S. Krivoshein described a conversation he had with Peter Latyshev, his deputy. Krivoshein was commanding the 25th Mechanized Corps at the time. Shortly before, he had been in charge, along with General Guderian, of the joint Nazi–Soviet parade in Brest-Litovsk to mark the partition of Poland. ‘We have concluded a treaty with the Germans’, he said, ‘but this means nothing. Now is the most wonderful time to solve all world problems once and for all, and in a constructive way.’ (*Ratnaya Byl’*, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1962, p. 8) Krivoshein turned everything into a joke after the event. It is interesting that jokes of this kind were circulating in his Corps and indeed throughout the Red Army. Nobody seriously discussed whether the Corps and the entire Red Army had been prepared for defence.

Leonid Brezhnev himself has spoken of the way in which Soviet communists believed in the Non-Aggression Pact and the manner in which they intended to observe it. He described a meeting of Party agitators which was held in Dnepropetrovsk in 1940:

‘Comrade Brezhnev, we have to interpret non-aggression and say that it has to be taken seriously, and that anyone who does not believe in it is talking provocation. But people have little faith in it. So what are we to do? Do we go on interpreting it or not?’

It was quite a delicate moment. There were 400 people sitting in the hall, all waiting for me to answer. I had very little time to think.

‘You have got to go on interpreting it,’ I said, ‘and we shall go on interpreting it until not one stone of Nazi Germany

remains upon another.’ (Leonid Brezhnev, *Malaya Zemlya*, Moscow, 1978, p. 16)

It occurred to Stalin that the situation in which ‘not one stone of Nazi Germany remains upon another’ would come about in 1942. But the rapid fall of France and Hitler’s refusal to land in Britain (Soviet military intelligence knew about this at the end of 1940) rearranged all the cards which Stalin held in his hand. The liberation of Europe was brought forward from the summer of 1942 to the summer of 1941. The new year of 1941 was therefore greeted with the slogan, ‘Let us increase the numbers of republics in the Soviet Union!’

Wielding our spades, in Forty-One, we’ll find  
The wealth of Earth, which lies in virgin layers;  
Uranium, by cyclatron enlivened,  
Becomes a simple fuel for every day.  
Each year for us is victory, a battle,  
For coal, for sweeps of metallurgy galore,  
To sixteen coats of arms, perhaps, are added,  
New coats of arms – of these will have still more . . .  
(*Pravda*, 1 January 1941)

They were not thinking about defence. They were not preparing for it, nor had they any intention of preparing for it. They were fully aware that Germany was already at war in the West and for that reason would not begin a war in the East. They knew full well that war on two fronts would be suicide for Hitler.

On no occasion before the war did *Pravda* ever call on the Soviet people to strengthen its *defences*. Indeed, *Pravda*’s tone was quite different:

Our country is large; the globe must revolve for nine hours before the whole of our vast Soviet land can enter the new year of our victories. The time will come when not nine hours, but all the twenty-four hours on the clock will be needed for this to happen . . . Who knows where we shall be

greeting the new year in five or ten years' time – in what latitude, on what new Soviet meridian? (*Pravda*, 1 January 1941)

The nearer the date of the Soviet invasion of Europe approached – July 1941 – the more explicit *Pravda* became:

Divide our enemies, meet the demands of each of them temporarily and then destroy them one at a time, giving them no opportunity to unite. (*Pravda*, 4 March 1941)

Hitler decided that it was not worth his while waiting any longer. He was the first to go, without waiting for the blow of the 'liberating' dagger to stab him in the back. He had begun the war in the most favourable conditions which could possibly have existed for an aggressor; but given the nature of Stalin's grand plan, he could never have won it. Even in the most unfavourable conditions, the Red Army was able to 'liberate' half of Europe and has held it in subjugation to this day. We must wonder how would it have turned out had the best German forces left the Continent in the early stages of the war to go off to Africa and the British Isles, leaving the Red Army to move in behind their backs to destroy Germany's only source of oil.

## CHAPTER 6

# When Did the Soviet Union Enter World War II?

*In the event of a general conflict, only one country can win. That country is the Soviet Union.*

HITLER, 1937 (In conversation with Lord Halifax, Obersalzberg, 19 November 1937)

Everything in the Soviet Union relating to the beginning of World War II is concealed by the impenetrable darkness of state secrecy. Among the many secrets is one which is especially well kept: the date on which the Soviet Union entered the war.

In order to conceal the truth, communist propaganda has put about the false date of 22 June 1941. Communist writers have thought up a multitude of legends about 22 June. I have even heard it said that the USSR was bent on a 'peaceful' life when it was set upon. If the inventions of Soviet propaganda are to be believed, the Soviet Union did not enter World War II of its own volition, but was forcibly dragged into it.

In order to make this sound plausible, Soviet propaganda has been compelled to buttress this date with special props. On the one hand, the 'pre-war period' was devised to include the two years preceding 22 June, while on the other, we have the invented figure of '1,418 days of war'. Counting back from the day when the war in Europe ended, one inevitably comes to rest, according to forged Soviet computations, on 'that fateful Sunday'.

It is, however, easy to debunk the myth of 22 June. All that is

needed to do this is to tap gently on one of the supports, that of the 'pre-war period', for example, for the entire structure to collapse, along with that 'fateful' date and the 1,418 days of the 'great motherland war'.

The 'pre-war period' never existed. It was invented. Suffice it to recall that during this period all the European neighbours of the Soviet Union fell victims to Soviet aggression. Moreover, the Red Army certainly had no intention of restricting or stopping its 'liberation campaigns' into the West at that point (Order No. 400, dated 7 February 1940, of the People's Commissar for the Defence of the USSR) although by then only Germany lay to the west of the Soviet Union.

In September 1939, the Soviet Union declared itself neutral and, during the 'pre-war period', seized territories with populations totalling 23 million people – not bad going for a neutral state.

The Red Army and the NKVD perpetrated fearful crimes in these captured territories. Soviet concentration camps were crammed with imprisoned soldiers and officers from a number of European countries. Officer prisoners, and not only the Poles, were shot in their thousands. This is not the action of a neutral state.

Here is a strange state of affairs. Germany attacked Poland, which means that Germany was the instigator of, and participant in, the European and then the World War. The Soviet Union did the same thing in the same month, but it does not judge itself to have been an instigator of the war. Nor does it consider itself even to have then been a participant in the war.

A Polish soldier killed in battle on Polish territory against the Red Army is considered a participant in World War II, as well as its victim, while the Soviet soldier who killed him is regarded as 'neutral'. If in the same battle a Soviet soldier is killed, then it is judged that he has been killed not in wartime but in peacetime – in the 'pre-war period'.

Germany seized Denmark and this was an act of war, even although no great battles were fought. The Soviet Union also seized, without firing a shot, three Baltic states markedly similar to Denmark in geographical position, in size of population, in

culture and in traditions. But the actions of the Soviet Union are not judged to be acts of war.

Germany seized Norway. This was a further act of aggression. But before this happened, the Soviet Union had carved up neighbouring Finland. The list of crimes committed by Germany in the war begins on 1 September 1939, while the list of the Red Army's crimes begins for some reason only on 22 June 1941. Why?

During the 'pre-war period', the Red Army lost hundreds of thousands of its soldiers in bitter battles. German Army losses in the same period were considerably less. If one judges from losses alone, Germany had more grounds than the Soviet Union for considering itself neutral in 1939 and 1940.

The official formula used to give a name to these actions of the Soviet Army in the 'pre-war period' is 'strengthening of western frontier security'. This is not true. The frontiers were secure, at a time when the neighbours of the Soviet Union were the neutral states of Europe, while there were no common frontiers with Germany, and when Hitler in consequence was totally unable to launch a general attack, and certainly not a surprise attack, on the Soviet Union. Stalin, however, systematically destroyed several neutral states of Europe, thereby establishing a common frontier with Germany. This was not a way of enhancing the security of the Soviet frontiers.

If we use the formula 'strengthening of western frontier security' to describe aggression against six neutral European states – Poland, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Romania – why do we not use the same formula in relation to Hitler? Did he not enhance the security of his frontiers by occupying neighbouring countries?

It might be objected that in the 'pre-war period' the Soviet Union did not wage one continuous war, but a series of wars and invasions separated by intervals. But Hitler also waged a series of wars separated by intervals. Why do we use other criteria when judging him?

It is alleged that the Soviet Union did not formally declare war on anybody in the 'pre-war period', therefore it cannot be considered a participant in the war. But Hitler did not always

formally declare war. According to the statements made by Soviet propaganda, nobody formally declared war on anybody on 22 June 1941 either. So why is this date accepted as the divide between war and peace?

Soviet propaganda begins its history of the war from the moment when foreign troops appeared on Soviet territory and thus presents the Soviet Union as an innocent victim. Let us stop imagining it as an innocent victim. Let us remember instead those who were really innocent, and who perished in the 'pre-war period' on the bayonets of the army of 'liberators'. Let the history of the war be written, not from 22 June, but from the moment when the communist hordes, without any declaration of war, took belligerent action in an already weakened Poland, whose army was trying in a heroic but unequal struggle to stop Hitler's drive to the east. Let the history of the war be written, not just from that day, but from the day on which Stalin himself took the decision to start it.

At dawn on 1 September 1939, the German Army entered Poland. In the twentieth century, war in Europe automatically means world war. So the war in fact quickly laid hold upon both Europe and almost the whole of the rest of the world.

By a strange confluence of circumstances, it was precisely on that very same day of 1 September that the Fourth Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a law establishing general liability for military service. Throughout the whole of the Soviet Union's history, there had never been such a law. While Hitler was frightening children (and grown-ups), and was looked upon as a monster and an ogre, the Soviet government had in fact got by without any general military-service liability law. Yet as soon as the Non-Aggression Pact was signed, an act was needed to establish a general obligation to perform military service. September 1939 was the beginning of the phoney war in the West. In the same month, a no less phoney peace began in the East.

Why did the Soviet Union need to impose the general



obligation to military service? The communists will answer with one voice that it was needed because the Second World War began that day; they did not want to take part in it, but were simply taking precautionary measures. Marshal of the Soviet Union, K. A. Meretskov, was one of the many who asserted that the law was of great significance and was passed 'in the conditions of World War II which had already begun'. (*Na Sluzhbe Narodu*, IPL, Moscow, 1968 p. 181)

Let us imagine the Polish-German frontier on that tragic morning – darkness, mist, shooting and the roar of engines. There were few in Poland who understood what was happening, whether it was a provocation or an unauthorized clash which had somehow been self-generated. But at the same moment, the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR – including shepherds from the mountainous pastures high above the cloud level and distinguished reindeer breeders from nomad camps in the Arctic – were assembled in Moscow. *They* already knew that it was neither provocation, nor a clash, nor a Polish-German war, nor even a European war, but the beginning of the Second World War; and they immediately met in emergency session to pass the appropriate laws. Yet how can it be explained why these same deputies did not react with identical swiftness when a similar thing happened on the Soviet-German frontier in 1941?

On that morning of 1 September, it was not only the Polish government and the governments of western countries who did not know that a new world war had begun. Hitler himself did not know it. He began the war against Poland in the hope that it would only be a local action, like the seizure of Czechoslovakia had been. This is not just Goebbels' propaganda. Soviet sources say the same thing: 'Hitler was convinced,' wrote Air Colonel-General A. S. Yakovlev, who was a personal adviser of Stalin's at the time, 'that Britain and France would not go to war over Poland.' (*Tsel' Zhizni*, IPL, Moscow, 1968, p. 212)

Thus Hitler did not know that he was beginning World War II; the comrades in the Kremlin knew it all too well. But it is, of course, a long way to Moscow. Some deputies needed a week, others as much as twelve days to reach the capital. This

means that, in order to discuss the war which had begun in Europe, someone gave the signal to the deputies to gather in the Kremlin *before the war began*. Indeed, I believe that someone gave this signal *even before the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was signed*.

An attempt to establish the *exact* date on which the Second World War began, and the time when the Soviet Union came into it, inescapably leads us, in fact, to the date of 19 August 1939.

Previously, Stalin had often spoken at secret meetings about his plan to 'liberate' Europe. This was first to involve Europe in war, while he himself remained neutral. Then, when the adversaries had exhausted each other, he would throw the whole power of the Red Army into the balance. (Stalin, Vol. 6, p. 158; Vol. 7, p. 14) The final decision to carry this plan in effect was taken at a session of the Politburo held on 19 August 1939. News about this Politburo meeting and what it had decided reached the Western press immediately. Havas, the French news agency, published a report on the proceedings. Yet how could a record of them fall into the hands of the Western press?

There is no sure answer. It *might* have passed along one of several paths. One of the more probable is this: one or more Politburo members, frightened by Stalin's plans, decided to stop him. They could not protest openly. The only way, therefore, of compelling Stalin to renounce his plans might have been to publish his plans in the West. Members of the Politburo, especially those who controlled the Red Army, the war industry, military intelligence, the NKVD, propaganda and the Comintern, were perfectly able to do it.

Such a scenario is not as fantastic as it might first appear. Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were, in 1917, members of the Politburo, published the plans of Lenin and Trotsky in the bourgeois press in order to disrupt the October Coup. We still do not know how the document found its way to the West, but there were a variety of ways it could have got there.

Stalin reacted to the Havas agency message with lightning speed and in a highly unusual manner. He published a denial in *Pravda*. It is a serious document and must be read in full:

## THE FALSE REPORT ISSUED BY THE HAVAS AGENCY

The editor of *Pravda* has put the following question to Comrade Stalin. What is Comrade Stalin's attitude to the message issued by the Havas agency on 'Stalin's speech', allegedly made by him 'in the Politburo of 19 August', at which ideas were supposedly advanced to the effect that 'the war must be continued for as long as is needed to exhaust the belligerent countries'?

Comrade Stalin has sent the following answer:

'This report issued by the Havas agency, like many more of its messages, is nonsense. I of course cannot know in precisely which nightclub these lies were fabricated. But no matter how many lies the gentlemen of the Havas agency might tell, they cannot deny that

- a) it was not Germany which attacked France and Britain, but France and Britain which attacked Germany, thereby taking upon themselves the responsibility for the present war;
- b) after hostilities began, Germany made peace proposals to France and Britain, while the Soviet Union openly supported these German peace proposals, for it considered, and continues to consider, that only as early an end to the war as possible can bring relief in a fundamental way to the condition of all countries and all peoples;
- c) the ruling circles in Britain and France rejected out of hand both the German peace proposals and the Soviet Union's efforts to end the war as quickly as possible.

Such are the facts. What can the nightclub politicians of the Havas agency provide to counter these facts?' J. STALIN (*Pravda*, 30 November 1939)

Let the reader make up his own mind as to whether the Havas agency report or Stalin's denial is nonsense. Stalin himself, in my view, would hardly have wished to repeat this in his own words in a subsequent period. It is interesting to note that copies of the *Pravda* issue of 30 November 1939 practically no longer

exist in the Soviet Union. I was astonished to discover that there was no copy to be found in the special repository of the GRU archives. It had long since been destroyed. I succeeded in finding a copy only in the West.

The unconcealed mendacity of Stalin's refutation, and his uncharacteristic loss of composure, support the Havas agency version. In this case a nerve of unusual sensitivity was touched and this is why there was such a response to it. During the decades of Soviet power, the Western press wrote a great deal about the Soviet Union and Stalin personally. The Bolsheviks and Stalin himself were accused of every mortal sin. It wrote that Stalin had been an *agent provocateur* for the police, that he had murdered his wife, that he was a despot, a sadist, a dictator, an ogre, a butcher and much more besides. But not once did Stalin become involved in controversy with the 'bourgeois hack writers'. Why then, on only this one occasion, did the normally taciturn and composed Stalin lower himself to indulge in cheap insults? There can only be one answer. The Havas agency had revealed some of Stalin's best-kept secrets. It did not matter to him what future generations might think about his refutation. (They do not, incidentally, think anything of it at all.) What was important to Stalin at that particular moment was that he should keep his plan secret for the next two or three years until the countries of Europe had become weak through involving themselves in a mutually destructive war.

If we are to accept Stalin's arguments and if the Havas agency report did simply consist of lies 'fabricated' in a 'nightclub', we must express our admiration for the Havas agency journalists. If they really did invent their report, then they did so on the basis of a deep knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, of Stalin's character, and of a detailed, scientific analysis of the military and political situation in Europe; indeed, they understood the situation far better than Hitler and the leaders of the Western democracies. If the report *was* invented, then this was an occasion when an invention corresponded entirely to the facts.

Many years later, when the Havas agency report and Stalin's refutation of it had long been forgotten, thirteen volumes of Stalin's essays were published in the Soviet Union. These works

include his speeches made at secret sessions of the Central Committee. In 1939 the Havas agency journalists did not have any access to these speeches. But the publication of Stalin's works confirmed that Stalin's plan was simple and one of genius, and that it was exactly as the French journalists had described it. As early as 1927, Stalin expressed the view at a closed session of the Central Committee that in the event of war it would be essential to remain neutral until the 'warring sides have exhausted each other in a mutual conflict which is beyond their strength to sustain'. This view was often repeated subsequently at closed sessions. Stalin considered that in the event of a war breaking out in Europe, the Soviet Union had to become a participant in it, but it must be the last to enter, right at the end of the game in which the adversary had already been weakened to the point of exhaustion.

Although they both had different attitudes towards Stalin, two of his successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, interestingly both confirmed that it had been Stalin's intention to exhaust Europe in war, while preserving his own neutrality, and *then* to 'liberate' it. Stalin's predecessors said the same thing. When he was laying the foundations of his plan in the narrow circle of his comrades in arms, Stalin simply quoted Lenin and emphasized that it was Lenin's idea. But Lenin had not been original either. He in his turn scooped his ideas from the inexhaustible supply of ideas provided by Marx. There is an interesting letter written by Friedrich Engels on 12 June 1883 to Edouard Bernstein: 'All these layabouts of various kinds,' he wrote, 'must first of all fight like dogs among themselves, destroy and compromise each other, and in that way they will be preparing the ground for us.'

Stalin differed from both his predecessors and successors in that he spoke less than they, but acted more.

It would be very important to know, were it possible, what Stalin actually said in the Politburo meeting of 19 August 1939. Even although we cannot know the words he spoke, we see his actions and these show far more clearly what he had in mind. It

was only four days after this meeting that the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was signed in the Kremlin. The most outstanding achievement ever attained by Soviet diplomacy, it was Stalin's most brilliant victory in his extraordinary career. 'I have deceived him. I have deceived Hitler,' cried Stalin joyfully after the Pact had been signed. (Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, Chasidze Publications, 1981) Stalin had indeed deceived Hitler in a way that nobody had deceived anyone else throughout the whole of the twentieth century. Only a week and a half after the Pact had been signed Hitler had a war on two fronts. That is to say, from the very outset of hostilities Germany fell into a situation in which it could only lose the war; or, to put it another way, on 23 August 1939, the day the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was signed, Stalin had won the Second World War even before Hitler came into it.

It was only in the summer of 1940 that Hitler realized that he had been taken in. He tried to take on Stalin again, but it was too late. Hitler could hope for brilliant tactical victories only, but Germany's strategic position was catastrophic. Germany again found itself between two millstones. On the one side there was Britain on her inaccessible island, with the United States behind her. On the other side was Stalin. Hitler turned his face to the west, realizing that Stalin was quite clearly preparing an attack and that he could cut Germany's oil artery in Romania at one blow, paralysing the whole of German industry, and the entire German Army, Air Force and Navy. Turning his face to the east, Hitler first got strategic air raids and then invasion from the west.

It is said that Stalin won only thanks to the help and co-operation given by Britain and the United States, and herein lay his greatness; while being the West's most virulent enemy, Stalin knew how to use it in order to protect and reinforce his own dictatorship. Stalin's genius, as we've seen, lay in knowing how to divide his adversaries and then knock their heads together. Even in 1939, the free press in the West was already sounding a warning about such a course of events, when Stalin was playing a game of neutrality in words whilst, in deed, playing a very much more dangerous one.

## CHAPTER 7

# 'Extending the Foundations of War'

*The national liberation of Germany lies in the proletarian revolution seizing Central and Western Europe, and uniting it with Eastern Europe in the form of the Soviet United States.*

TROTSKY (BO, No. 24, p. 9)

After Napoleon had been expelled from Russia, the victorious Russian Army entered Paris. Not finding Napoleon there, the Russian Army went home, singing songs on its way. For Russia the aim of the war had been to rout the armies of the enemy. If no one else was threatening Moscow, then the Russian Army had nothing further to do in Western Europe.

The difference between Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union lies in their respective war aims. In 1923 Mikhail Tukhachevsky, who had already gained renown for his monstrous brutality in mass exterminations in central Russia, northern Caucasus, the Urals, Siberia and Poland, was formulating the theoretical basis for the aim of war. According to Tukhachevsky, the aim of war was 'to guarantee for oneself the free use of violence and for this purpose it is necessary in the first instance to wipe out the forces of the enemy'. (*Revolutsia i voina*, Moscow 1923, *Collected Works* No. 22, p. 188) The rout of the enemy armies and their general destruction do not mark the end of war and coercion, but only the creation of conditions for 'the free use of violence'. 'Every territory occupied by us becomes Soviet territory after its occupation, where the power of the workers and peasants will

be established.' (Marshal of the Soviet Union M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. 1, p. 258)

In his work, *Questions of Modern Strategy*, Tukhachevsky draws attention to the fact that Soviet military staff 'must give timely instructions to the political administration and other appropriate agencies to prepare revolutionary committees and other local administrative machinery for these or other regions'. (*op. cit.*, p. 196) In other words, Soviet military staff were to prepare 'liberation' operations in great secrecy, but while they were doing this they were also to alert the political commissars and the 'appropriate agencies' that they should prepare in good time the communist administrative machinery for the 'liberated' regions. The Red Army would bring freedom to its neighbours on its bayonets, along with ready-made organs of local authority.

To this process of Sovietizing all seized territories as rapidly as possible by methods of unrestrained coercion and terror, together with the barbaric exploitation of all resources needed to continue aggression, Tukhachevsky gave a 'scientific' name: he called it 'extension of the basis of war'. Tukhachevsky even inserted this term into the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. (*Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, Moscow 1928, Vol. 12, pp. 276-277)

In a speech on 30 March 1941, Adolf Hitler proclaimed to his generals what the objective of the war in the East was to be. It was to defeat the enemy armed forces, to wipe out the communist dictatorship, to establish 'real socialism' and to make out of Russia a base for continuing the war. Were Tukhachevsky's aims any different? Was he not promulgating the same ideas in 1923?

When he was preparing a military operation, Hitler took care to set up administrative machinery for new territories even before they had been invaded; Tukhachevsky too proposed to do exactly the same thing.

Tukhachevsky would have made a good *Gauleiter*, but he was no strategist. A scrutiny of his 'battering-ram' strategy reveals its complete lack of substance. It is the method adopted by a chessplayer who concentrates his attention on destroying all his



opponent's pieces *en masse*, beginning with the pawns. Carried away by his theory, Tukhachevsky quickly and inevitably found himself without reserves in any serious clash. His defeat on the Vistula certainly did not happen by chance. All his life he tried, with dim-witted obstinacy, to improve his method, fallacious in principle, by using a theoretical base to shore up his ignorance. Communist historians assure us that, once he had liquidated Tukhachevsky, Stalin completely rejected his methods. This was not the case. Stalin only spurned Tukhachevsky's unacceptable strategic method, which was known to lead to defeat, but he retained his ideas about 'the extension of the basis of war' and allowed others to develop them further.

Apart from Tukhachevsky and others like him, Stalin did have real strategists. The first and most brilliant of these was undoubtedly Vladimir Triandafillov, the father of operational art.\* It was in 1926 that, in a book entitled *Range of Operations in Modern Armies*, he expounded the first approximate formulation of the 'operations in depth' theory. Triandafillov developed his ideas further in a subsequent book entitled *Character of Operations in Modern Armies*. Even today these books remain the foundation of the Soviet art of war. Triandafillov found people who understood his strategic ideas, which were truly ones of genius, and promoted them to the General Staff. Among these was A. M. Vasilevsky, the future marshal of the Soviet Union. G. K. Zhukov put Triandafillov's ideas into practice in all his operations, beginning with Khalkhin-Gol.

Triandafillov understandably could not easily relate to Tukhachevsky, even although Tukhachevsky was his immediate superior. Triandafillov was not afraid of Tukhachevsky and he exposed the poverty of the 'battering-ram' strategy by showing

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\*Until the early twentieth century, all military art was divided into two levels: strategy and tactics. Soviet military thinking then developed an intermediate level and called it 'operational art'. Half a century later, Western military thinkers now accept this term.

that a good chessplayer must not devote all his attention to destroying pawns. The good chessplayer delivers a blow 'in depth', thereby rendering his opponent's pawns useless. A good chessplayer will create a threat not in one but in at least two sectors, thereby compelling his opponent to divide his attention and reserves, while the player himself strikes a blow at another sector, where his opponent has no reserves at all.

When he rejected Tukhachevsky's military method, Triandafillov fully accepted and developed his theory on forcible and rapid Sovietization of 'liberated' territories; 'the Sovietization of entire states must be dealt with within a short period of two to three weeks. Where larger countries are concerned, Sovietization of very large areas must be managed in three to four weeks . . . When organizing revolutionary committees, it will be very difficult to count on local forces. Only a part of the technical apparatus and only the more junior executive officials will be available on the spot. All executive officials and even some of the technical personnel will have to be brought in along with the Army . . . The number of such officials needed to carry on Sovietization in recaptured areas will be enormous.' (*Kharakter Operatsii Sovremennykh Armii*, V. K. Triandafillov, Moscow 1929, pp. 177-8)

Triandafillov drew attention to the fact that it would be mistaken to divert Red Army fighting units to tasks of 'Sovietization'. It would be no bad thing to have special units for this. The Red Army does battle with the enemy and inflicts defeat upon him, while these special units go to work in the rear establishing power, and a happy life for the workers and peasants. Hitler latterly took the same viewpoint. The Wehrmacht would crush the enemy, while the SS would set up the New Order. Of course, in critical situations – and war consists of these – the Wehrmacht divisions were thrown into the battle to suppress the partisan movement, while the SS divisions were thrown into tank battles on the forward edge of the battle area. That, however, was not what either the Wehrmacht or the SS was built for.

Triandafillov understood the art of war in terms of the exact sciences, in which by means of mathematical calculation he worked out simple formulae for offensive operations involving

armies of millions operating in great depth. The formulæ covered every stage of an offensive. They even included a calculation as to how many Soviet political leaders would be needed for every administrative unit in captured territories. They are formulæ as sharp and elegant as any geometric theorem.

The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact opened the gates to Sovietization. Stalin had everything ready and not only in theory. Soviet staff had worked out operations in great secrecy, but they did not neglect to give instructions to the political commissars and the 'appropriate organs' that they be fully prepared for Sovietization.

On the night of 16–17 September 1939 I. A. Bogdanov, a brigade commander in the NKVD, issued an order to the Chekists in which he said that 'at dawn on 17 September 1939, the armies of the Byelorussian Front will go over to the offensive. Their task will be to help the workers and peasants of Byelorussia who have risen in rebellion.' Thus the revolution in Poland had begun; the workers and peasants would be up to dealing with it themselves, while the Red Army and the NKVD would only render them assistance. The results are well known. The massacre of Polish officers at Katyn also comes into this category of 'assistance'.

Stalin was not afraid of Hitler, as the communists try to make it appear. If Stalin had feared Hitler, he would have kept the Polish officers safe and, when the German invasion took place, thrown them into battle at the head of tens of thousands of troops to fight as partisans on Polish soil. Defence against Hitler, however, did not enter into Stalin's plans. Stalin not only did not use this Polish potential, he even dissolved his own partisan detachments which had been formed earlier to be used in the event of war.

The Sovietization of Finland was prepared in even greater detail. At the very moment when 'the Finnish militarists began their armed provocations', Stalin already had up his sleeve a

Finnish communist 'president', a 'prime minister' and an entire 'government', including a leading Chekist, for a 'free democratic Finland'. 'People's representatives' also turned up in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bessarabia and in Bukovina, all demanding that these countries be annexed to the 'fraternal family of nations'. Chairmen of revolutionary committees, people's jurors, deputies and many more were all found with surprising speed.

Sovietization thus gathered strength, while Stalin added to his reserves of Party administrators for new campaigns. On 13 March 1940, the Politburo took a decision to entrust the People's Commissariat for Defence with the practical task of grading the entire *nomenklatura*, or governing establishment of the Party, and of giving them military ranks. The entire Party changed from being semi-military into a purely military one. 'Officials of Party committees,' it was decided, 'would be obliged systematically to undergo military retraining so that, whenever they might be called into the RKKA [*Rabache-Krest'yanskaya Krasnaya Armiya* – the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] or the RKKF [*Rabache-Krest'yanskii Krasny Flot* – the Workers' and Peasants' Red Navy], they would be able to devote themselves to duties appropriate to their qualifications.' (Politburo Decree, dated 13 March 1940, 'Military Retraining and Regrading of Party Committee Officials and the Procedure to be Followed on their Mobilization into the RKKA') The words, 'devote themselves to duties appropriate to their qualifications', are of particular interest. What qualification does a big shot in the Party have, apart from being qualified to act as secretary of a Party regional committee? Yet here we had plans being made to use them as secretaries of regional committees (and town committees and district committees), even after they had been called up to the Army.

From May 1940 until February 1941, 99,000 political workers in the reserve, who included '63,000 senior workers of Party committees', were regraded, that is they had to sit examinations and appear before boards. The retraining of the Party establishment went ahead at an intensified pace. And retraining was not all. On 17 June 1941 another decree was issued. Yet another

3,700 of the Party *nomenklatura* received orders to place themselves at the Army's disposal. Were preparations under way for a new Sovietization?

Not only did the Party bosses Sovietize the Baltic states, the western Ukraine, western Byelorussia, Bessarabia and Bukovina, but they also had a hand in the 'appropriate organs'. Working behind the backs of the 'people's representatives' and the 'servants of the people', the NKVD assisted the workers and peasants, who had risen in rebellion 'to reinforce the power of the proletariat', as it is put in Soviet propaganda parlance.

The frontier guards of the NKVD were the first to cross the borders. 'Operating in small groups, they seized and held river crossings and road junctions.' (*VIZH\** 1970, No. 7, p. 85) In the 1939-40 Winter War against Finland, a detachment of NKVD frontier guards infiltrated secretly into Finnish territory, made a dash through the tundra and, in a surprise attack, seized the town of Petsamo and its harbour. In the war with Japan some five years later, using frontier guards, '320 assault detachments were formed, each consisting of between 30 and 75 men armed with machine guns, sub-machine guns, rifles and grenades. Separate detachments had a strength of between 100 and 150 men . . . The training which was carried out was based upon previously worked out and precisely defined plans of surprise attack . . . The surprise element in the operations was to play a paramount role in the attainment of success.' (*VIZH* 1965, No. 8, p. 12)

The NKVD frontier troops operated in exactly the same way in the war with Germany. In those places where German troops had not crossed the border, Soviet frontier troops went over it on their own initiative. They had been prepared. An example of this method of operating occurred on 26 June 1941. Soviet frontier motor-launches made a landing in the area of the town

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\*An official military-historical magazine from the Ministry of Defence.

of Kiliya on the Romanian frontier. The landing established a bridgehead, on which the members of the assault landing-force gave fire support to the members of the NKVD reconnaissance patrol who had preceded them with a landing on the bank. (*Chasovye Sovetskikh granits*, Moscow 1983; p. 141) Interestingly; at the time of the *German attack* these elite and highly trained NKVD troops, stationed on bridges at the frontier, had made no preparations either to repel an attack or defend the bridges. They yielded them to the enemy almost without a fight. When they had to capture the western part of a frontier bridge, however, these frontier troops revealed excellent training, and displayed both courage and bravery, all in the spirit of the Romanian assault described above. When they had to defend the eastern part of the bridge, these same soldiers showed a total *lack* of preparedness. It was simply that no one had trained them to do this. No one had ever put them through any defensive exercises.

The chief strength of the NKVD, however, did not lie in its frontier troops. Apart from them, the NKVD consisted of a great number of regiments and divisions of operational, convoy and security troops. All of these worked very hard at destroying 'hostile elements' and at 'purging the territory'. In the Soviet – Finnish war of 1939–40, there were eight NKVD regiments engaged in this activity, as well as individual battalions, companies and formations of frontier troops. An operation carried out in 1944 in the rear of the Byelorussian Front may serve to illustrate the scale of these 'purges' of the area behind the front. Five NKVD frontier regiments, seven NKVD regiments of operational troops, four cavalry regiments, detached battalions and reconnaissance aircraft all took part in the operation. The total strength involved was 50,000 troops. The area covered was 30,000 square kilometres. (*Ibid*, p. 181) The NKVD operated on no less a scale even before Hitler attacked, though information on operations carried out in 1940 in the Baltic states, the western Ukraine, Byelorussia, Bukovina and Bessarabia has never been published.

In 1940, the volume of NKVD operations exceeded that of 1944 and 1945, and of many subsequent years. 1940 was, of course, the year of Katyn. Polish officers were also exterminated in at least two other places, where the victims were no fewer than in Katyn. Lithuanian officers were exterminated at the same time, as were Latvian and Estonian officers; and not only officers. There were teachers, priests, policemen, writers, lawyers, journalists, peasants, entrepreneurs and people from all strata of society, exactly as in the Red Terror against the Russian people. The scale of the NKVD operations grew; but suddenly something changed. From February 1941, the NKVD's military sub-units covertly began a secret build-up near the state frontiers.

Communist professors are now doing their best to play down the Red Army's power at the outset of World War II, and to overstate the strength of the Wehrmacht. This is done by manipulating statistics; while they take into account all divisions of the Wehrmacht and the SS in Germany, in the Soviet Union only the divisions of the Red Army are counted. The elite, highly trained, fully equipped and armed NKVD divisions, however, are conveniently left out of the calculation. The communists have proclaimed that 47 ground and six naval frontier detachments, each with a complement of about one regiment, and 11 regiments of NKVD operational troops, totalling about 100,000 men, were stationed close to the frontiers. This is the truth. But not all the truth. When the Germans invaded, not only NKVD regiments, but separate NKVD battalions of impressive strength, as well as entire NKVD divisions, were stationed directly on the frontiers. For example, the 4th NKVD Division, commanded by Colonel F. M. Mazharin, was on the Romanian frontier, while sub-units of the 57th NKVD Regiment of this division were stationed directly at frontier bridges. The 8th NKVD Motor Rifle Division was close to the frontier. The 10th NKVD Division was in the Rava-Russkaya region, while the 16th NKVD

Cavalry Regiment, which formed part of this division, was directly dispersed among posts along the frontier. The 21st NKVD Motor Rifle Division was on the Finnish frontier. The 1st NKVD Division, commanded by Colonel S. I. Donskov, was there as well. The 22nd NKVD Motor Rifle Division first appears in German operational summaries on the seventh day of the invasion of Lithuania.

Some of these NKVD units were incredibly close to the borders; sometimes literally only a few metres away from the frontier itself. For example, the 132nd NKVD Independent Battalion was in the Tiraspol fortification of the Brest-Litovsk fortress, though not for defensive purposes; the fortress had not been prepared for war. It had been intended, in the event of war, to leave only one infantry battalion there with ordinary troops. Sitting alongside, in the same barracks, for defensive purposes was the 17th Frontier Detachment (a regiment); the 132nd NKVD Battalion was not in fact a frontier battalion at all, but a *convoy* battalion. This had been used to deport 'enemies' from western Byelorussia and here it was now stationed on the western bank of the river Bug. The battalion was doing nothing for the time being. It was a long, hard road back to the Soviet Union. First the river Bug had to be crossed to the old citadel in the boats of the Chekist officials. Then there was a multitude of gates to pass through, and minor bridges and ditches to cross. Next came the river Mukhavets, but once over that, there were even more ditches, banks and barriers. There were no enemies in the fortress and it was therefore a long way to town, so the battalion was resting – for the time being. In the other direction was the Tiraspol fortification, a fortress island on Polish territory, or rather, to be more exact, on German, as it was no longer part of Poland. And all the battalion had to do to reach German territory was to cross a small bridge.

On a wall in the barracks of the 132nd Independent Battalion someone wrote an inscription: 'I am dying, but I shall not surrender. Farewell, Motherland! 20. VII. 1941.' These 'heroes' had good reason not to surrender. The SS would have already worked out who the Cheka officials intended to deport from the other side of the state frontier.



I found, as we have seen, NKVD convoy battalions and regiments, and indeed convoy divisions, right on the frontier. The 4th NKVD Division straddled the frontier bridges across the river Prut. Was it there perhaps to blow them up, should the situation become exacerbated? By no means. The bridges were mined. Afterwards the mines were removed and an NKVD division was placed alongside the same bridges. According to one piece of information, the 4th NKVD Division was a kind of security division: by making an analogy with the SS, the meaning of the word 'security' becomes altogether more sinister in this context. Other information, however, indicates that the 4th NKVD Division operated like a convoy division. Indeed Colonel Mazharin, who commanded the division, was an old GULAG wolf, who spent all his career in convoy work. But whom did the Gulag security intend to escort across the frontier bridges?

## CHAPTER 8

# Why Howitzer Artillery for the Chekists?

*We shall destroy the beast in his lair.*

L. BERIA

(Commissar General for  
State Security, People's  
Commissar for Internal  
Affairs, February 1941)

The communist punitive machine had two principal mechanisms, the organs and the troops. What is understood here by 'troops' is not, of course, Red Army troops, but special formations of the VChK (*Vserossiiskaya Chrezvychainaya Komissiya* – the All-Russian Special Commission, or Cheka), the OGPU (*Ob'edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*) and the NKVD.

While the Red Army fought on external fronts, these special divisions waged war on internal fronts. At the time when the communist dictatorship was being established, the punitive troops played an incomparably more important role than the punitive organs. Equipped with armoured cars, armoured trains, three-inch cannon and machine guns, they waged a real war against their own people.

In 1923, the Chief Directorate was set up to co-ordinate the operations carried out by all punitive troops. Although the punitive machine changed its name from time to time as easily as a snake changes its skin, the name of the Chief Directorate remained unchanged. This organization, and the troops under

its command, perpetrated fearful atrocities against the Russian and indeed all other nations who populate the Soviet Union. In the times of collectivization alone, the punitive troops exterminated millions of people, and handed over more than ten million of them to that other directorate of the NKVD, the GULAG, responsible for prisons and labour camps.

As the communist dictatorship grew in strength, the organs came to occupy an increasingly important place in relation to that held by the punitive troops. The informer's pen, the interrogator's thumbscrew and the executioner's Nagan revolver became the main weapons of terror. Of course, the numbers of the punitive troops did not grow any less, but their role became largely a secondary one, involving round-ups, searches, arrests, deportations, and the protection of punitive and 'correctional' establishments. The punitive troops also protected leaders, the national frontiers and communications. The image of the punitive fighter also changed. It was then no longer a sailor with the face of a criminal in an armoured car, but a soldier wearing a sheepskin coat, his face turned into the Arctic wind, rifle in hand and with his faithful dog at his side. The punitive soldiery no longer had armoured cars. They were no longer needed.

1937 was not, as the communists assure us, the beginning of the terror, but rather the year when it reached its peak. A year later, it had undergone a change in character, in that it had changed from being a general terror into a selective terror. It was during 1937 and 1938 that the terror even spread to the communist leaders themselves. By the time that stage had been reached, the Chekists no longer needed their machine guns. The communists, who had by then come under the blows of the axe of terror, did not offer any particular resistance.

After the Great Purge had been successfully concluded in December 1938, the terror within the country abated sharply; many prisoners were released by the GULAG, and preparations were made to release many more. In this situation, what was to happen to the troops of the NKVD and the Chief Directorate which co-ordinated their activities?

Any doubts as to whether they would in fact be abolished were quickly dispelled. The Soviet Union had embarked upon a new

phase of its existence, for immediately after the Great Purge had ended and Nikolai Yezhov had been removed from power, the Chief Directorate controlling the NKVD frontier and interior troops ceased to exist under a decree issued on 2 February 1939 by the Council of People's Commissars.

On the same day, no fewer than six independent chief directorates were created inside the NKVD to take charge of the troops and deal with military matters. These were:

- The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD  
Frontier Troops
- The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD  
Security Troops
- The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD  
Convoy Troops
- The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD  
Railway Troops
- The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD  
Military Supply
- The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD  
Military Construction, given the  
acronym of *Glavvoenstroï* of the NKVD.

The Soviet punitive machine then underwent a sharp change in character as the Government decided that the punitive troops should be given a position of primacy over the organs. The beginning of 1939 marked the start of a breathtaking increase in the punitive troops' power. Once again their armament included armoured trains, the latest BA-10 armoured cars, howitzers, and finally tanks and aircraft.

Punitive troops of all types and functions began to grow rapidly in numbers. The NKVD troops became so numerous that a special post had to be created to control them, and Lieutenant-General I. I. Maslennikov was appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Troops.

The strange thing, however, was that punitive troops were no longer needed on Soviet territory. There were clearly no plans for another purge in the Soviet Union in 1939, as the country

had been brought to its knees and was by then totally subjected to Stalin.

The NKVD troops developed in many directions, one of which was the formation of their retreat-blocking service in 1939. The task of retreat-blocking detachments is to bolster the resolve of troops in battle, particularly an offensive battle. Having deployed behind the troops, the retreat-blocking detachment encourages the advancing soldiery with bursts of machine-gun fire directed at the backs of their heads, delays the troops if they are retreating, returns the obedient soldiers to the battle and shoots the disobedient ones on the spot.

Such detachments had been used during the Civil War. Indeed, quite a few rascals who distinguished themselves in this field were cited in Soviet publications as 'heroes of the Civil War'. Here is a typical example: 'Vypov, I. P. — leader of a machine-gun team of the retreat-blocking detachment of the 38th Infantry Division' (*VIZH*, 1976, No. 12, p. 76) The retreat-blocking soldiers' life is not one of service, but a holiday. Enemy artillery does not worry them. They fight not against a stray enemy, but against their own demoralized men. Decorations shower upon them from the horn of plenty. Our hero has two Orders of the Red Banner.

As part of the secret build-up of Soviet forces in the country's western regions before the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was signed, a detached motorized infantry regiment of the NKVD became an integral part of each army. This regiment consisted not of battalions, but of retreat-blocking detachments.

Apart from the regiments which made up the armies, there were also detached NKVD motorized rifle regiments which formed part of the fronts. For example, in June 1941, there were nine regiments, an independent detachment and a detached battalion of the NKVD behind the Southern Front alone. (*VIZH*, 1983, No. 9)

In addition to NKVD motorized rifle regiments, independent retreat-blocking detachments of the NKVD were also created. These immediately became part of the corps and armies which

were then being formed. One of these, for example, was the 241st Detached Retreat-Blocking Detachment, which became part of the 19th Army.

Major-General P. V. Sevast'yanov has stated that the NKVD's retreat-blocking service worked with great precision and sureness of touch. In order to perform their allotted service of stopping any retreat, the NKVD troops always took up position behind the fighting troops in every situation. 'Companies of frontier troops immediately deployed behind us' (*Volga-Neman-Dunai*, Moscow Voenizdat, 1961, p. 82) In General Sevast'yanov's words, his infantry were having to fight German troops without tanks, while the Chekists, who did have tanks, stood behind them.

We can find quite a few indications in Soviet sources which show that the NKVD's retreat-blocking service was active from the very first hours of the war, which means that it had been deployed even before the Germans invaded. Their presence is acknowledged in Colonel-General Leonid Mikhailovich Sandalov's account of June 1941: 'I shall leave the Army retreat-blocking detachment here,' he writes. 'The Army retreat-blocking detachments were stopping them and sending them to the nearest units of the 28th Rifle Corps.' (*Perezhitoe*, Moscow, 1966)

That the NKVD's retreat-blocking service was revived before the German attack and indeed before the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is direct evidence that the war had been decided upon in the Kremlin long before it actually began.

The NKVD expanded its operations in other directions as well. From the beginning of 1939, the strength of the NKVD frontier troops sharply increased. Since Lenin's time, the Soviet Union had had six frontier districts. Now their number increased to eighteen, while at the same time the military strength in each new district grew in relation to what it had been in the old districts. We have already had occasion to observe the aggressive tendencies of the Soviet frontier troops, which always served as

the basis on which the OSNAZ (*Osobogo Naznacheniya* – special purpose) formations were set up.

In August 1939, before the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was signed, a rapid growth occurred in the number of NKVD OSNAZ troops. OSNAZ formations were the most aggressive strike formations in the Soviet punitive machine. In the Civil War OSNAZ units were notorious for their brutality, which was extreme even by Cheka standards. After the Civil War had ended, OSNAZ was sharply cut back so that only one NKVD OSNAZ division remained in the Moscow region. This division was under the command of NKVD Kombrig\* Pavel Artem'ev.

At the beginning of August 1939, G. K. Zhukov was preparing his surprise strike against the Japanese. A detached OSNAZ battalion of the NKVD numbering 502 men was placed at Zhukov's command. Although the battalion was small, it consisted of specially picked stranglers whose hands were more than accustomed to murder. The main task of this OSNAZ battalion was 'to purge that area of the rear which lay closest to the front'. (*Chasovye Sovetskikh Granits*, IPL, Moscow 1983, p. 106) OSNAZ did its work splendidly and Zhukov was highly satisfied.

Immediately after this, the formation of OSNAZ battalions began on the Polish frontier. A dispatch from the political department of the frontier troops in the Kiev district, dated 17 September 1939, mentions that OSNAZ battalions had already been set up.

During the 'liberation' of Poland, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland, the OSNAZ battalions were the first to cross the frontiers. Their task was first to knock out enemy frontier posts by surprise attack, and then, by operating ahead of the advancing troops, to capture bridges, cut communications, wipe out small groups of the enemy and terrorize the population. Once the Red Army units had caught up with the OSNAZ battalions, these then turned to the tasks of

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\*Brigade-Commander – term used before 1940. *Kombrig* and similar terms were abandoned after 1940, and the English equivalent rankings were used.

purging the territory and of exterminating undesirable elements. We can find mention of the NKVD's OSNAZ battalions in the same official history of the frontier troops. (Documents Nos. 185 and 193) Here are the fruits of their work: 'About 600 prisoners were escorted across the frontier; these included officers, landowners, priests, gendarmes and policemen . . .' (Document No. 196) In a contemporary version of this document this sentence comes to an abrupt halt at its semi-colon, and we are not told who were taken as 'prisoners'. A document dated 19 September 1939 describes the situation at one particular small NKVD frontier post. It was the third day of the 'liberation campaign' in Poland. This liberation is explained nowadays as a Soviet attempt to secure its borders against Hitler. Why then drive 'landowners and priests' across the frontier into the Soviet Union and declare them prisoners? These 600 prisoners formed only one drop in a very great stream which poured not simply through one frontier post, but through all of them, having begun its flow on the very first day of 'liberation'.

It was foreseen that, after the new frontier with Germany had been established, new usurpations would follow. Far from dissolving the previously created OSNAZ battalions of the NKVD, Stalin set up new battalions, and not only battalions. He created regiments, divisions, and even an NKVD OSNAZ corps under the command of NKVD Komdiv\* Shmyrev, Commissar Chumakov, and Chief of Staff NKVD Colonel Vinogradov. References to this top secret corps may sometimes be found in official Soviet documents. (*Pogranichnye Voiska SSSR 1939-41*, Nauka, 1970, Document No. 39)

The movement of all types of NKVD troops towards the Soviet Union's western frontier in February 1941 cannot be explained as a defence against German invasion. Had it been so, then surely

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\*See previous page.



the formation of new punitive battalions, regiments and divisions should have been halted in favour of something more appropriate to defence, such as the formation of a corps of sappers to mine the entire western territory of the Soviet Union or cover it with anti-tank ditches and trenches.

But Stalin was not engaged in anything like this. Stalin needed punitive troops, not sappers. That is why one more military chief directorate was set up in the NKVD at the beginning of 1941. This time it was a purely military one, the Chief Directorate of Operational Troops of the NKVD. At its head, Stalin placed Pavel Artem'ev, an OSNAZ veteran who had commanded the 1st OSNAZ Division of the NKVD, and who had already risen to the rank of NKVD lieutenant-general.

The new chief directorate immediately set in motion a vast deployment of troops. The basic military unit was an NKVD motor-rifle division consisting of a tank regiment (or battalion), two or three motor-rifle regiments, a howitzer artillery battalion, and other sub-units. The total strength of each division was more than 10,000 Chekists.

The NKVD motor rifle divisions spread immediately to the western border of the Soviet Union. NKVD punitive divisions armed with tanks, howitzers and other heavy weapons were simply not needed on Soviet territory. Neither were they required in the territories which had recently been seized. Here the NKVD's terror machine got by without tanks, although in extreme cases they sought help from the Red Army.

The NKVD divisions were intended to be used in the rear in wartime, not in the front. That these divisions had heavy weapons indicates that it was planned to use these divisions against a strong enemy. But there was no strong enemy, nor could there be one, in the rear of the Red Army on Soviet territory.

A strong enemy could only appear in the rear of the Red Army in the event of the Red Army crossing the frontier and driving forward. Hitler did not allow this to happen. He struck the first blow, and thus rendered all the NKVD's Soviet rifle divisions redundant. The NKVD's Chief Directorate of Operational Troops proved to be quite unnecessary in the defensive war

which followed. Four days after the war had begun, Stalin moved NKVD General Artem'ev from the Chief Directorate of Operational Troops, leaving it without a leader. No more NKVD motor-rifle divisions were formed after 1941, and the existing divisions were re-formed as ordinary rifle divisions of the Red Army. The NKVD's 21st Motor Rifle Division, for instance, under NKVD Colonel M. D. Panchenko, was changed into the 109th Rifle Division of the Red Army; the NKVD's 13th Motor Rifle Division became the 95th Rifle Division of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (and later the 75th Guards Division); and the NKVD's 8th Motor Rifle Division became the 63rd Rifle Division of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (later the 52nd Guards Division). In all, 29 divisions were transferred from the NKVD to the Red Army. (Major-General V. Nekrasov, *VIZH*, 1985, No. 9) In the defensive war that had been forced upon him, Stalin needed ordinary infantry, not punitive troops.

In 1944 the Red Army, with the NKVD in its wake, arrived in Central Europe and established workers' and peasants' power, social justice and other blessings. But even in 1939 Stalin was already setting up the machinery for establishing that happy life. Hitler simply prevented this machinery being used until 1944.

The Soviet terror machine was enormous and was intended not just for Eastern Europe but Europe in its entirety. It had to be sharply reduced in size after Hitler invaded because it no longer served any immediate purpose.

The creation of machinery with which to Sovietize Europe began before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Pact was signed after a final decision had been taken to establish a happy life in Europe. The Pact was only a tactical move which would allow Europe to be brought down to the levels which had existed there in 1918, thereby opening the gates to the OSNAZ formations and the motor-rifle divisions of the NKVD.

## CHAPTER 9

# Why the Security Zone was Dismantled on the Eve of War

*Mines are a powerful thing, but this is a resource for the weak, for those who are defending themselves. We do not need mines as much as we need the means of clearing them.*

Marshal of the Soviet Union  
GRIGORY IVANOVICH KULIK,  
early June 1941

A country which is preparing its defence deploys its army deep inside its own territory, and not on its very frontier. The object is to prevent the enemy from destroying the main defending forces with one surprise attack. A defending side will normally build a security zone in the frontier areas in plenty of time; a zone where the terrain has been saturated with traps, engineered defences, obstacles and minefields. The defending side will deliberately avoid constructing anything related to industry or transport in this zone; nor will it keep any heavy military formations or large quantities of supplies there. On the contrary, timely preparations will have been made to blow up all bridges, tunnels and roads in this zone.

Once inside the security zone, the aggressor loses speed of movement, and his troops sustain losses before they even encounter the main forces of the defender. Only small but highly mobile detachments of the defending side operate in the security zone. These detachments spring ambushes, launch

surprise attacks and then quickly withdraw to previously prepared positions. Light detachments create the impression that they are the main force, compelling the aggressor to stop, deploy his forces and waste his shells on areas where there is nothing to hit. The light detachments, meanwhile, secretly withdraw to prepare new ambushes.

While the aggressor is waging an exhausting battle with the light detachments of the covering force, the main defending forces have time to prepare themselves to confront the aggressor from positions which favour defence.

The deeper the security zone is, the better. As he breaks into a deep security zone, an aggressor involuntarily reveals the main direction of his thrust, and loses the advantage of surprise. Since he does not know how deep the security zone is, he cannot predict when he will encounter the defender's main forces; thus, the initiative has passed to the defending forces.

Throughout the centuries, and indeed the millennia, Slavonic tribes have created powerful security zones of enormous length and vast depth. Among the many defence obstacles they employed, the most important and effective was the forest barrier. This consisted of a strip through the forest in which the trees were felled at a point in the trunk just higher than a man's height, in such a way that the felled part of the tree stayed attached to the stump. The tops of the trees were then piled in a criss-cross manner on the side from which the enemy was expected to approach, and were pressed to the ground with stakes. The thin branches were chopped off, and the thick ones sharpened. At those places where it was unlikely that the enemy would appear, the barrier was usually only a few dozen metres deep. But on the routes along which the enemy would probably approach, the depth of the forest barrier could amount to forty to sixty kilometres of impassable obstacles reinforced by palisades, stakes, concealed pits, terrible traps capable of breaking the legs of a horse, and snares of the most ingenious construction.

Forest barriers in Old Russia stretched for hundreds of kilometres; the Great Forest Barrier Line, constructed in the sixteenth century, was more than 1,500 kilometres long.

Fortresses and citadels were built behind these lines, which were carefully protected by light mobile detachments. As the enemy tried to penetrate the barrier, these detachments would launch surprise attacks before withdrawing along secret passages. Every attempt to pursue them ended badly for the enemy. False passages were made through the barriers, and these led the enemy into a zone of traps and ambushes.

It is interesting to note that, when the frontiers of Tsarist Russia moved southwards, the old barriers were not destroyed, but were fully preserved and fortified, while a new line of fortifications, fortresses, and fortified towns was constructed, and in front of them a new forest barrier was built. By the end of the seventeenth century, any enemy who tried to attack Moscow from the south would have had to overcome eight of these forest barriers, which had been made to a total depth of 800 kilometres. This was beyond the capability of any one army to penetrate. But even if anyone had decided to try to overcome all these barriers, he would never have been able to make a surprise attack. The aggressor would have been worn down by enormous effort and by constant raids effected by light mobile detachments. Even supposing that he overcame all this, he would find the Russian Army, fully mobilized, fresh and ready for battle, awaiting him at the end of the road.

Security zones still retain their importance in the twentieth century. The Red Army understood full well what a security zone was, having had enormous experience of operating in them. During the 1920 campaign to 'liberate' Warsaw and Berlin, the Red Army found itself in a security zone prepared by the Polish Army. Chief Marshal of Artillery N. N. Voronov noted how

the Polish troops destroyed everything in the wake of their withdrawal, railway stations, railway lines, and bridges. They burned villages, crops, and haystacks. We moved forward with great difficulty. We had to ford every small river by wading or by improvised means. Having to carry our ammunition made our progress even more difficult. (*Na Sluzhbe Voennoi, Voennizdat 1963, p. 34*)

After such an experience, the Red Army itself created strong security zones on its own frontiers, particularly its western borders. Special government commissions inspected the country's western regions and determined which zones an enemy would find easiest to cross, and which would afford him most difficulty. Teams of bridge-protection guards, trained in demolition work, were made ready to blow up all the bridges in the western regions. The 60-metre long railway bridge at Olev, for example, could have been blown up by the duplicated explosion system in two and a half minutes. (I. Starinov, *Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, p. 24)

Heavy pipe-lines, depots, water pumps, water towers, high embankments and deep cuttings were all prepared to be blown up. (*Ibid*, p. 18) By the end of 1929, 60 teams of demolition sappers, totalling 1,400 men, had been trained in the Kiev Military District alone. These had at their disposal '1,640 fully prepared sophisticated charges and tens of thousands of safety-fuse detonator sets, which were ready literally for instant use.' (*Ibid*, p. 22) Similar activity was also going on in other military districts.

In addition to the teams of demolition sappers which had been set up in the western regions of the country, railway-blocking battalions were formed. One of their tasks was to destroy the main railway junctions in the event of a retreat and to create defence obstacles on the main arterial routes by destroying roads and laying delayed-action land mines lest the enemy should try to rebuild the roads. There were four such battalions in the Ukraine in 1932. (*Ibid*, p. 175)

Railway points crossings, communications equipment, telegraph wires and in some cases even the rails were got ready to be removed. (M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannyye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. 1 pp. 65-67)

The Soviet security zone underwent continuous improvements. The number of targets prepared for demolition steadily grew. New defence obstacles were created: forest barriers; artificial reservoirs in front of defensive constructions; preparations were even made to flood some areas.

In the autumn of 1939, the Soviet Union had a great stroke of

luck. Under the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, it annexed new territories between 200 and 300 kilometres deep. The security zone that had already been set up thus grew considerably in depth. Nature herself could have created these new territories for the express purpose of equipping it as a security zone. They had forests, hills, bogs, deep rivers with marshy banks and, in the western Ukraine, fast-flowing mountain rivers between steep banks. In short ‘the terrain favoured defence and the creation of defence obstacles.’ (Marshal of the Soviet Union A. Eremenko, *V Nachale Voiny*, Moscow Nauka 1964, p. 71) As if that were not enough, the network of roads was still at a primitive stage of development. Of 6,696 miles of railway lines, only 2,008 had double tracks, but the capacity of even these was limited. It would have been quite easy, were the need to arise, to make these railway lines quite unusable.

It was at this point that the Red Army had spectacular confirmation of the value of security zones to a defending side. In the autumn of that year, the Soviet Union invaded Finland. The attack was no surprise, however, for the Finnish forces were far from the frontier behind their own security zone when it arrived.

The failures of the Red Army on this occasion were not simply the results of miscalculations by the Soviet command. More important was the fact that the Finnish Army was prepared for defence, and ready to make sacrifices. The Finns had erected their security zone in front of their main line of defence. This zone – some 40–60 kilometres deep (*Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, p. 504) – was strewn with minefields and defence obstacles. Snipers, sappers and light mobile detachments were extremely active.

The result was that it took the Red Army 25 days to overcome the security zone. They emerged from it facing the main line of defence having suffered great losses, with low morale and without ammunition, fuel or supplies. Space for manoeuvre was severely restricted. One step off the road might be the last one would ever take. The rear units fell behind and found themselves under constant threat of repeated raids by Finnish light detachments, who knew the locality extremely well and who had secret paths through the minefields.

All the Soviet commanders who fought there expressed their admiration of the Finnish security zone. Foremost among them was K. Meretskov, who commanded the 7th Army. (*Na Sluzhbe Narodu*, Moscow IPL 1968, p. 184) After he had finally overcome the Finnish security zone and had assessed its worth, Meretskov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. So how did he make use of his experience in order to reinforce the Soviet security zone which had been set up along the Soviet Union's western frontiers?

Meretskov ordered that:

1. The security zone which had previously been constructed along the Soviet Union's western frontiers should be dismantled, the teams of demolition sappers disbanded, the explosive charges removed, the mines rendered harmless, and the defence obstacles razed to the ground;
2. No security zone should be set up in the new lands;
3. The main forces of the Red Army should be moved right up to the frontiers, without a security zone to protect them;
4. The strategic resources of the Red Army should be brought from the heart of the country and concentrated directly on the frontier;
5. A vast works programme should begin at once to build a network of roads and airfields in western Byelorussia and in the western Ukraine: single-lane roads were to be made into dual-lane roads, the capacity of the roads was to be increased; and new roads leading directly to the German border were to be built.

The results of this ludicrous policy became clear when Poland was partitioned in 1939. Bridges across what were now frontier rivers remained intact, even though nobody used them. There were six such bridges in the zone of the Soviet 4th Army alone. For understandable reasons, the Germans never raised the issue of destroying them, although no one needed them in peacetime. But the Soviet leaders did not raise the issue of destroying them either. The moment the war began, all these bridges were



captured by the Germans, allowing a great number of German troops to cross them and catch the Soviet 4th Army napping. This army suffered a crushing defeat, opening the way into the rear of the powerful 10th Army, which suffered a quite unprecedented rout as a result. Encountering no further obstacles in his path, Guderian began his drive for Minsk.

‘Why, in particular, were so many bridges across the Bug left intact in the 4th Army zone?’ enquires L. Sandalov, former chief of staff of the 4th Army. (*Perezhitoe*, Voenizdat 1966, p. 99) Why indeed? The German command hoped to use the bridges in an aggressive war, so it was clearly not in their interests to destroy them. But what was the Soviet Command hoping for?

The decision to leave the bridges intact is usually explained as a piece of incompetence on the part of the Soviet commanders. But it was Sandalov, whose most striking quality was his exceptional prudence and attention to detail, who was responsible for these bridges. It is interesting that no one has blamed him for doing nothing about these bridges, nor has anyone put him up against a wall for it. On the contrary, in June 1941 he began his rapid rise in rank from colonel to colonel-general, and distinguished himself in many operations.

The German troops advanced further without encountering difficulties, capturing bridges across the Dvina, the Berezin, the Niemen, the Pripyat’ and even the Dnieper. A failure to prepare these bridges for demolition could be judged as criminal negligence. But the matter is more serious. They had been prepared for demolition, but were cleared of mines after the common Soviet–German frontier had been established. The mines were cleared everywhere. This means that it happened not because of a whim of individual idiots, but because it was state *policy*. ‘Our country,’ wrote Colonel Ilya Starinov, ‘was now directly adjoined to the West, which contained the powerful military machine of Nazi Germany.’

The threat of invasion hung over England . . . When I learnt that preparations were being made to dismantle the defence obstacles in the frontier zone, I was simply stunned. Even