Timely Lessons of History: The Manchurian Model for Soviet Strategy

John Despres, Lilita Dzirkals, and Barton Whaley

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PREFACE

The last large-scale combat operation of World War II and of Soviet Armed Forces to date was the invasion of Manchuria. Its exemplary value for modern military emulation has been the practical focus of extensive research and analysis, as well as prolific publication, by leading Soviet authorities since 1960. Yet non-Soviet students of international affairs have had little opportunity to learn of the timely lessons derived from this campaign by its Soviet analysts. To make the illusions, ideals, and interests of Soviet authorities more accessible, this report describes and appraises the peculiarities of their perceptions and evaluations of the Manchurian campaign. In the process, it deliberately assumes the standpoint of a person whose views are based primarily on the Soviet accounts surveyed by the present authors. Some of its assessments of Soviet military achievements may seem accordingly quite novel and even implausible to readers who are more fully informed by Japanese and American versions of the termination of World War II. Thus, while it incidentally criticizes Soviet historiography, the main purpose of the present report is to comprehend the lessons drawn by and to draw further lessons from Soviet military-historical publications on the war of August 1945.

The primary thesis of this report is that Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign reveal an important strain of modern Soviet military thought. It suggests further that published studies of the campaign may have been deliberately used in the 1960s and early 1970s to promote a model of modern, combined-arms operations that has significant implications for Soviet strategy, military development, and foreign policy. The study does not, however, detail the competing arguments, countervailing evidence, or policy implications of this secondary thesis. Instead, it concentrates on distilling the contents of certain Soviet military publications and on identifying the strategic concerns, institutional preoccupations, and political initiatives that were most closely associated with Soviet military interest in the Manchurian model.

Because it is more an analysis of Soviet military thinking than
a history of the Manchurian campaign, this report examines the brief war of August 1945 from the viewpoint of Soviet military authorities in the 1960s and 1970s. The significance of this war as a demonstration of Soviet strength and skill has been discounted by Japanese and American authorities because, as they have argued, Japanese forces had already lost much of their means and will to resist even before the Soviets invaded Manchuria on August 9. This argument and its supporting evidence have had little visible effect on Soviet claims that Japan's surrender was most directly due to the military defeat of the Kwantung Army. Hence, there has been a gross disparity between Soviet and foreign assessments of the most recent, major combat operations by the Soviet Armed Forces.

The introduction first defines the Manchurian model and then sketches its recent origins and potential applications. Three subsequent sections develop a description of the model from several standpoints of Soviet "military science and art," strategic design, operational planning, and tactical implementation. A final section summarizes the model as a whole, appraises its most significant parts, and draws its main implications for Soviet policy toward Europe and Asia.

The research underlying this report was undertaken by The Rand Corporation on behalf of the Director of Net Assessment, Department of Defense, in connection with studies of Sino-Soviet competition. As its initial results clarified the significance of the Manchurian campaign in modern Soviet military thought, the study's scope broadened from military problem-solving in East Asia to the general approach of Soviet strategy toward a potentially multifront environment. The work is based on several published and unpublished studies by the present authors, and draws on recent Rand and other publications related to the development of Soviet military power, institutions, and doctrine.

Although the authors doubt that the Soviets will soon again pursue military objectives similar to those achieved in Manchuria thirty years ago, Soviet leaders' commitments to costly and diversified arms programs—particularly to unnecessarily expensive and potentially offensive general-purpose forces—suggest that they may value highly the capability for doing so. Accordingly, the authors present this study
of the Manchurian model in the hope that it will aid in making such a capability an elusive prospect and impracticable goal for future Soviet leaderships. Thus, they expect it to interest students, officials, and policymakers who concern themselves with the historical images and institutional impulses that affect Soviet strategy and policy.
SUMMARY

DEFINITION

The Manchurian model is an approach to the study, evaluation, and design of Soviet military operations. It is a combination of objective standards and subjective criteria that have been used to examine and appraise Soviet military experience in the final campaign of World War II. More specifically, it is the professional views and values that have been consistently expressed in Soviet military publications on the war against Japan, in other Soviet military-historical writings, and in the doctrines and practices of the Soviet defense establishment. The adoption of this model has led Soviet authorities to treat the Manchurian campaign of August 1945 as the offensive most worth emulating in the era of nuclear weapons. The Manchurian model is a way of forming offensive solutions to modern military problems and a theoretical alternative to strategies based on protracted defensive and counter-offensive operations. Although its actual and potential applications are necessarily uncertain, the Manchurian model is, most simply, the deliberately offensive approach to modern war assumed by Soviet military officers in reviewing the history of their war against Japan.

ROLE

The Manchurian model is an idealization of the Soviet invasion of Manchuria that gained increasing institutional support and professional publicity from the early 1960s through the mid-1970s. Based on the precedent of the Manchurian campaign, it has established criteria for the feasibility and desirability of strategic offensives by combined arms to make them decisive within the initial phase of planned operations. It was most conspicuously studied and commended by leading Soviet officers during the expansion and diversification of Soviet theater forces after Khrushchev's expulsion from office in 1964, and it has been acclaimed by Soviet military authorities as generally applicable "under modern conditions" not merely to the nuclear-free salient of northeast Asia in 1945.
ORIGINS

Soviet military officers have realized that the Manchurian campaign is their major, modern precedent for a quick, cheap, successful offensive. Premised on strategic surprise, the Soviet design for war against Japan concentrated the forces for three combined-arms fronts around Manchuria. Logistical preparations gained momentum in the spring of 1945, by which time Soviet soldiers and civilians had grown weary of the closing war in the West and had acquired little enthusiasm for initiating a new war in the East. To obviate the military costs and political risks of protracted Japanese resistance and a war of attrition, the surprise invasion of Manchuria was planned to yield a prompt and unconditional surrender. In developing its operational plan, the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces considered a variety of military approaches, evaluated alternative objectives, and examined different methods. An early Japanese surrender had been deemed to require the extension of Soviet power into the full depth and around the flanks of Manchuria; although potentially even more desirable, major landings on the Japanese home islands were not considered feasible enough to promise an early, low-cost surrender. Accordingly, the operational plan directed Front and Army Commanders to isolate the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and North Korea and thereby defeat it in a brief campaign. The final plan postulated sudden, simultaneous attacks along separate lines on each front; a surprisingly strong, mobile force in the main effort striking south and east from Mongolia; and a mechanized tank army leading the advance across the Gobi Desert, the Greater Khingan Mountains, and the central Manchurian plain.

The Manchurian campaign was planned and expected to be unprecedentedly successful. Its operational plan was based on cautiously high estimates of Japanese strength and on strategic designs to optimize the effectiveness of Soviet strength through concentration, concealment, and deception. Rather than relying on a gross quantitative superiority in manpower, the plan depended on qualitative advantages due to the greater mobility, firepower, and modern combat skill of Soviet forces. Because the Soviets had anticipated greater resistance than was encountered in the initial attack, both on the ground and in the air, in practice the campaign was even more successful than planned.
To stage the campaign against the Kwantung Army, the Soviet Armed Forces secretly mounted a strenuous, short-term effort to expand and reinforce the Far Eastern theater of operations. During the three months following the war with Germany, the Far East force of 40 standing divisions was doubled through the transfer of four armies from the European theater of operations, selected and allocated for the suitableness of their accumulated strength and skills. Most of these transferred forces were concentrated in Mongolia, on the Transbaikal Front, for the main effort. By August, the Soviets had positioned in the Far East an experienced combat force of over a million men, 26,000 guns and mortars, 5000 armored vehicles, and 5000 aircraft.

The Soviet offensive was a combined-arms, joint operation that incorporated Soviet air and naval forces as well as Mongolian ground forces. Its theater embraced over 5000 kilometers (about 3000 miles) of front, and its operational objectives ranged from 300 to 800 kilometers deep. In the first hours of August 9, three Soviet fronts began unexpected attacks on and forced marches through narrow breakthrough sectors, whose total width was about 300 kilometers--only 7 percent of the total front. Within six days, Soviet armies had largely enveloped and paralyzed the Kwantung Army.

LESSONS

By Soviet accounts, the surprise, strength, speed, and depth of the Manchurian offensive determined its successful outcome. Yet, military authorities admit that the Kwantung Army's technological and numerical inferiorities, its lack of air power and antiair defenses, and the paucity of Japanese minefields and antitank armament facilitated the Soviet invasion of Northeast China. Soviet military histories nevertheless record their planners' and commanders' anxieties about the possibility of being drawn into protracted combat by successive Japanese retreats and counterattacks.

Soviet memoirs portray the campaign as exceedingly hard to command because of its far-flung and dispersed operations; incorrect maps; incomplete intelligence on the enemy; acute shortages of fuel, water, and even food; and its fragile troop control network. Still, Soviet
military scholars and commanders publicly concur that the concept and design of the campaign were correct; the problems encountered have rather been attributed to improper planning of details, to inadequate preparations, and to equipment that was unsuited to the stringent natural demands of the theater and physical requirements of the plan.

Besides acclaiming its strategic design, operational plan, tactical implementation, and its actual execution, Soviet military analyses of the Manchurian campaign have recognized certain key strategic factors that ensured its success. By all their assessments, the Soviet forces' quantitative superiority in total military manpower was at most a minor factor. Rather, it was by exploiting their superiority in numbers of modern weapons, their freedom of movement in the air, and their well-secured surprise that major gains were quickly achieved at low cost. Finally, Soviet accounts admit that the lack of prepared defenses in depth facilitated overfulfillment of the Manchurian model's original plan. Yet they neglect or discount the cumulative effects of Anglo-American operations on the Kwantung Army's ability to resist and on the Emperor's inclination to surrender. Nonetheless, without yielding any credit to the United States, Soviet military authorities have acknowledged actual limits and potential threats to the success of their most splendid offensive in history. Had the Kwantung Army prepared defenses in depth, better alerted its air defenses, and mobilized a greater share of its potential strength, Soviet forces would have advanced less rapidly, suffered greater losses, and achieved a more dubious outcome. Thus, one unstated lesson that is merely implicit in Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign is that the cost-effectiveness of plans based on the Manchurian model varies inversely with the alertness, strength, and skill of prospective opponents.

The strategic design of the Manchurian campaign has been distinguished and endorsed by Soviet military authorities for its procedures as well as for its substance. Its successful implementation and execution have enabled the Commander of Soviet Forces in the campaign and, previously, Chief of the General Staff Marshall Vasilevskii to promote it as an unparalleled example of collective leadership. A practical lesson strongly suggested by the publicity given to the
campaign is that more valuable strategic results derive from policy-planning procedures that allow greater military participation and influence than had prevailed before the Manchurian campaign, under Stalin, and before the adoption of the Manchurian model, under Khrushchev.

The Soviet deception effort was both systematic and substantial. It developed Japanese misperceptions of Soviet military preparedness and plans and thereby diverted Japanese defense efforts away from the area of the main effort. To accomplish this result, the Soviets employed extensive military and discrete diplomatic means. The stocks and movements of prepositioned supplies and equipment were effectively camouflaged. Invasion plans were restricted to a few top commanders and chiefs of staff who used field disguises and pseudonyms. Forward reconnaissance and deployments were strictly limited before the time of attack. Intense patterns of normal "defense" activities, communications, training, and construction were established well beforehand. Carefully simulated concentrations, false movements, and misinformation were presented to effective sources of Japanese intelligence, and special plans for final deployments at night on the eve of attack were worked out and rehearsed in advance. In short, the achievement of surprise was the deliberate result of Soviet designs to aggravate inevitable Japanese mistakes and weaknesses.

The modern significance of this historical case has been explicitly affirmed or commended by Soviet analyses of the campaign's strategic design. Indeed, one of the most important lessons drawn from this campaign is that "it is possible to attain complete strategic surprise in executing the first operations at the beginning of the war." It is not only of theoretical interest, but, as main authorities assert, "this experience can be of practical interest for planning modern operations." Moreover, by the data and testimony of Japanese authorities, this case demonstrates that less-than-complete surprise can be gained at limited cost and used to great advantage. Thus, it successfully illustrates a variety of principles and techniques that Soviet officers have professional interests in implementing by more modern means.

As the last major combat operation of the Soviet Armed Forces, the Manchurian campaign has also been treated as a major test and
demonstration of various forces' performance in a strategic offensive. Authorities of the main armed services, technical branches, and combined-arms staffs have analyzed the experience to criticize, advocate, and arbitrate competing claims for past credit and future roles. The mixture of professional interests that motivated this public historical inquiry was evidently latent in the planning and conduct of the campaign itself. Opportunities and requirements to develop new forces in a centralized military organization ultimately depend on the allocation of roles, missions, and resources to the various armed services and technical branches. Thus, Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign have been ingredients in the development of institutionalized competition, innovation, and modernization within the Soviet military establishment. Simultaneously, they are the products of a collective, general commitment to develop strategic offensive capabilities by combinations of arms whose total effects are designed to exceed the sum of their parts. Detailed consideration of the separate arms and branches by combined-arms authorities and by institutional advocates has reflected both common commitments to the Manchurian model and specialized differences of opinion on practical matters.

SIGNIFICANCE

Soviet military assessments of the Manchurian campaign have endorsed its importance primarily for general strategic design and operational planning, secondarily for operational and tactical problem-solving in the conditions of East Asia, and only incidentally for tactical problem-solving under alternative natural and military conditions. Certain of their claims for radically innovative methods simply express professional pride in having efficiently applied lessons learned and resources freed from combat in the West. But the Manchurian model amounts to much more than military pride in past glories. The Manchurian model and its professional promotion through analytic histories of the Manchurian campaign have reinforced Soviet military interest in conventional offensive strength. The thorough consideration that Soviet authorities have given to lightning, combined-arms campaigns is largely attributable to the enormous losses that were suffered in the
protracted operations of World War II and that could be caused by large-scale nuclear operations in the future. Interest in the Manchurian model also reflects the immediate institutional concerns of military officers, impulses to achieve greater authority in strategic decision-making, aspirations for more and better career opportunities, and projections that greater offensive strength may be needed to maintain or expand positions abroad. Indeed, important geopolitical and traditional factors in Soviet strategy have made the Manchurian model increasingly relevant as international relations have evolved since 1960.

The Manchurian model's strategic design for prewar mobilization, cover, and deception includes special maneuver and masking (maskirovka) operations to disguise the main dimensions of actual strength even though the fact of a build-up might be inevitably disclosed. That is, the conditions for a surprise attack would be created and protected by active as well as passive security measures, notwithstanding the loss of complete strategic surprise. Indeed, to optimize the effective combination of strength and surprise, certain combat and other resources would be committed to implement masking plans. In practice, the optimal amount of investment in securing surprise would depend on the vigilance or gullibility of prospective opponents; on the discipline and skill of the security services, engineering troops, transport units, border guards, and others with important roles to perform; and on the expected returns foregone due to the diversion of resources from marginal combat and support functions. To ensure the achievement of surprise as efficiently as possible, the techniques commended by analyses of the Manchurian campaign would merit serious consideration had they not been already adopted by peacetime plans. In sum, Soviet strategic designs based on the Manchurian model would deliberately seek to maximize the combined power of a planned offensive's physical strength and psychological surprise by all available means.

Complementary plans for combat operations based on the Manchurian model would aim to achieve decisive results immediately, so that hostilities could be terminated after a single phase of war. Such plans would specify especially quick and dense concentrations within narrow breakthrough sectors; sudden advances and bombardments in an unexpected
time, place, and manner; and fast, uninterrupted advances on the key control points and communications centers of opposing forces. To limit the scale, duration, and costs of conflict, operational plans would place a premium on disorienting, dividing, and disabling armed resistance by disrupting opponents' plans and organization, thereby obviating the need to destroy their main forces. Hence, operational plans generated by the Manchurian model tend to rely on the widespread employment of special forces, rapid maneuvers by advance detachments, and sustained advances by mechanized ground armies.

This general approach to offensive design and operational planning yields certain tactical requirements that are especially difficult and demanding. To implement it, Soviet tactical doctrine and force development must create usable solutions to the operational problems posed by the Manchurian model. Tactical innovations by combined arms would, for example, be needed to effect all-round security on the march, both in the mobilization and exploitation phases; to reinforce credible appearances of false formations and mistaken indicators of main axes; to prepare for meeting engagements from the march; to secure some specific forms of long-range air support; and to isolate or cripple key command, supply, and weapon facilities deep in the rear.

The Manchurian model and its application to a potentially multi-front environment thus implies a high institutional priority for realizing the offensive strength of ground forces and their supporting branches. Favoring the case for short, offensive wars under modern conditions, the model has fostered certain arms and limited others. Technically, it has justified longer range ground combat capabilities, more mobile means of resupply, more mechanized engineering support, ground-mobile air defenses, and modern, vehicle-mounted communications systems. Operationally, its prescriptions for unexpected, sudden, and uninterrupted movements by compact forces along separate axes over varied terrain have raised new demands for regular maneuvers, prepositioned materiel, and rapid troop transfer. For fast and deep penetration, the model puts a premium on air rebasing, air transport, naval landing, and airborne interdiction capabilities. These technical and operational requirements have particularly enhanced the peacetime
development of mechanized infantry, airborne troops, rear services, cross-country artillery, combat engineers, marines, air transport, and tactical air forces. To the extent resources are limited and fungible, these competing demands have diverted modernization efforts, on the margin, away from the previously dominant arms, that is, tanks, rocket artillery, medium bombers, and fighter interceptors. For a strategically offensive surge capability in Soviet Asia, the application of the Manchurian model has required exceptionally expensive military structures, forces-in-being, and civil mobilization assets to provide the requisite trained reserves, transport fleets, and rear services. And, for military manpower policy it could have provided arguments for an enlarged pool of active, regular cadre and trained reservists in case of orders for simultaneous build-ups on several fronts. In sum, it is a model that generates great peacetime requirements for modern weapons, specialized troops, ready forces-in-being, a large trained reserve, and ample rear support organizations.

Given their past experience, Soviet officers have had good reasons to seek more cost-effective solutions to conflicts in which they have had to participate. But the course of Soviet military development based on the Manchurian model aggravates the security conditions for continental neighbors and political competitors in both East Asia and Western Europe. Aside from the peacetime problems of coexisting with such a heavily armed adversary, the unknown dangers of conflict and crisis are potentially still more serious. In particular, the institutionalized implementation of the Manchurian model makes it hard for opponents to distinguish between precautionary and threatening moves and to deter the latter without stimulating excessive amounts of the former. Yet, for those who doubt that Soviet intentions are inherently and permanently benign, there are more or less cost-effective counters to military manifestations of the Manchurian model. Imitating the design of the Manchurian campaign, however, would be among the more risky and costly ways of frustrating its modern successors.
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The principal author, John Despres, has general responsibility for the conceptualization as well as the contents of this final report. Coauthors Liliita Dzirkals and Barton Whaley are primarily responsible for the research reported in Secs. IV and II, respectively.
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I. NATURE, ORIGINS, AND APPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

DEFINITION OF THE MANCHURIAN MODEL

The Manchurian model is an approach to the study, evaluation, and design of Soviet military operations. It is a combination of objective standards and subjective criteria that have been used to examine and appraise Soviet military experience in that final campaign of World War II. More specifically, it is the professional views and values that have been consistently expressed in Soviet military publications on the war against Japan, in other Soviet military-historical writings, and in the doctrines and practices of the Soviet defense establishment. The adoption of this model has led Soviet authorities to rate the Manchurian campaign of August 1945 as the offensive most worth emulating in the era of nuclear weapons. The Manchurian model is a way of forming offensive solutions to modern military problems and a theoretical alternative to strategies based on protracted defensive and counteroffensive operations. Although its actual and potential applications are necessarily uncertain, the Manchurian model is, most simply, the deliberately offensive approach to modern war assumed by Soviet military officers in reviewing the history of their war against Japan.

MODERN ORIGINS OF THE MODEL

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

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1 The concept of the Manchurian model is the present authors' term for Soviet offensive thinking and not a term that Soviet authors use.

2 In the September 1960 issue of the Ministry of Defense Military Historical Journal, at a time when Soviet advisers were being withdrawn from China, the newly appointed Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Zakharov, drew attention to the Manchurian campaign as a model for modern operations. Evidently the General Staff had, half a year earlier, implemented the instructions of the Central Committee CPSU
The published results of these studies have shown that the Manchurian campaign is the main Soviet precedent for strategically decisive, offensive operations. The outstanding features of this campaign, aside from the relatively light casualties incurred by Soviet forces, were the size, suddenness, speed, and depth of its initial operations. The campaign is unique among Soviet military campaigns for having achieved major war objectives entirely within its "initial phase," the period of greatest concern in modern Soviet military doctrine. Such stunning success has thus made it an exceptionally attractive model for modern military emulation, given the dilemma posed by the traumatizing paralysis suffered before World War II and by the potentially apocalyptic outcome of the initial phase of a modern nuclear war.

The profusion of military studies on this campaign apparently express and reinforce both Soviet ground forces officers' traditional interest in strategic offensive operations by combined-arms and professional military opposition to the "single-variant" doctrine for predominantly nuclear operations imposed by Khrushchev and his followers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. High-level promotion of the Manchurian model has coincidentally seemed to exploit Sino-Soviet hostility to advance Soviet ground forces' institutional interest in "to begin intensive intelligence activity against China," according to Oleg Penkovskiy, The Penkovskiy Papers, Doubleday & Co. Inc., New York, 1965, p. 73.

3 See the chronological chart (Fig. 3, p. 74) and the Bibliography for a listing of the various works surveyed in this study. Lilita I. Dzirkals, "Lightning War" in Manchuria: Soviet Military Analysis of the 1945 Far East Campaign, The Rand Corporation, P-5589, January 1976, presents a detailed survey of the lessons for modern military strategy and tactics that are promoted in the Soviet military literature on the campaign.

4 L. N. Vnotchenko, Pobeda na Dal'nom Vostoke [Victory in the Far East], Voenizdat, Moscow, 1966, pp. 266–267. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, perhaps modeled on this campaign, was an even cheaper and quicker success, but its objectives were much less ambitious, and the campaign entailed much less combat. The "initial phase of war" is a recurrently used phrase in Soviet military doctrine that has even served as the title of a book edited by the Chief of the General Staff Academy (beginning in 1968) and Chief of Staff of Soviet Forces in the Far East for the Manchurian campaign, General S. P. Ivanov.
large, modern, and offensive combined-arms capabilities. With the introduction of nuclear weapons and intercontinental vehicles into their armed forces during the 1950s, Soviet and American authorities alike grew increasingly uncertain that these developments obviated the need for large standing armies. But Khrushchev's announcement in 1960 that the Soviet Armed Forces would again be reduced by 1.2 million men, mostly from the ground forces, over the following five years temporarily halted this reconsideration. Subsequently, however, Khrushchev's policies were resisted, only partly effected, and finally reversed by Minister of Defense Marshal Malinovsky and his newly appointed Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Zakharov, two previously close collaborators. Their grievances against Khrushchev's cost-saving cuts in the ground forces and unsuccessful policies toward the United States and China were evidently shared by a variety of military and political officials. The departure of the Chief of Staff, Marshal Zakharov, and the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces, Marshal Chuykov, from deputy ministerial posts during the year before Khrushchev's expulsion was accordingly rectified by their reappointment to the same or similar posts shortly afterward.

Khrushchev's policies were effectively reversed when his successors allowed military authorities greater institutional initiative, autonomy, and resources in pursuing long-term programs. Unmistakable military opposition to Khrushchev's strategic designs was finally expressed in public by Marshal Zakharov's denunciation of "hare-brained scheming and superficiality" that "can be very expensive and wreak irreparable harm." Moreover, within the Soviet military establishment, a costly array of strategic weapons programs, ground-force expansions,

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manpower conscription reforms, regional development plans, and major new maneuver schedules began to receive serious and sympathetic consideration. It was in this context that the two main studies of the Manchurian campaign attributable to Marshal Zakharov's initiative five years earlier were finally prepared for publication.  

POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

Increasingly abundant military publications on the Manchurian campaign complemented Colonel General Pavlovskii's promotion in 1967 from Commander of the Far East Military District to Army General and Commander in Chief of Ground Forces, a Deputy Minister of Defense, and a position that had been left vacant since before Khrushchev's demise. Having just established the basis for a large, costly build-up in East Asia, he was selected to conduct the first, theater-scale, combined-arms maneuvers in the Soviet Union since World War II where no use of nuclear weapons was presumed. At the same time, a revised law on universal military service was decreed that (1) reduced by one-third the terms of required service, (2) increased by one-half the number and skills of inductees, and (3) accelerated by one-half the flow of trained servicemen into the pool of active reservists.  

By the end of 1967, the institutional and legal basis for an expansion of Soviet ground-force strength was largely established.

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7 Marshal Zakharov stated:

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

"Kampaniia Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil na Dal'nem Vostoke" [The Far East Campaign of the Soviet Armed Forces], Voeno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 9, September 1960, pp. 7, 10.

8 See Herbert Goldhamer, The Soviet Soldier: Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level, Crane, Russak & Co., New York, 1975, for a survey and analysis of the extensive institutional changes in the military educational, training, and reserve establishments associated with the reform and expansion of Soviet military conscription in 1967.
Within the next few years, publications on the Manchurian campaign mounted as new and potentially offensive surge capabilities of Soviet general-purpose forces were repeatedly displayed. First, there was the mobilization by maneuver in Europe preceding the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, and next there were the large-scale exercises in Soviet Asia to reinforce the war scare against China in the summer of 1969. The successive build-ups and demonstrations of Soviet ground-force strength in Europe and, especially, in Asia suggested that this branch of the military had regained its status and influence within the Soviet defense establishment and was following strategic designs based on the Manchurian model. (See Fig. 1.)

Pointing to the quick success of the Manchurian offensive while border incidents and force build-ups mounted in Soviet Asia, Marshal Zakharov cited its exemplary demonstration of "the resolution of major strategic tasks in the shortest possible time."9 Less belligerently two years later, another military authority publicized the logistical and combat operations of the Manchurian campaign as interesting and usable models for modern military training and instruction.10 Analyses by senior Soviet marshals as well as by their juniors have treated

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

10The Front and Army operations, as well as the actions by the Navy, the Flotilla, and the country's antiair defense forces are instructive as the initial operations at the start of a war. . . . The experience in preparing and executing these operations is of definite interest and can be utilized for troop training and education in modern conditions.


NOTE: Since divisional units rather than manpower or other resources are quantified, the graph does not reflect significant growth over time or differences between the regions in the average strength and cost of Soviet ground-force units. Average strength levels of divisions have consistently been higher in Eastern Europe, but the costs of a division, of given strength, have been much higher in the Far East than elsewhere. Modernization and training have affected all regions' forces, but the new growth and status of military districts in the East undoubtedly accelerated their qualitative improvement as well. Motorized rifle divisions accounted for almost all the new ground-force divisions; their mechanized infantry forces grew most in manpower, tank, and artillery strength, while tank divisions lost tank strength in favor of more modern weaponry and new sorts of combat vehicles. Airborne divisions also gained more modern mobile firepower.

Fig. 1—Regeneration of Soviet ground forces (replenishment and redistribution of Soviet Armed Forces' divisional strength), 1967-1973
the lessons of the campaign as both current and durable in their relevance. Marshal Vasilevskii, who served most of the war as Chief of the General Staff and was Commander in Chief of the Far East Forces in this campaign, distinguished it from the other campaigns of World War II for the "current relevance of many of the military issues that educated the Soviet Armed Forces in preparing and waging the campaign."11 Marshal Malinovsky, who, despite his failing health, played a key role in fostering Soviet military expansion plans in the mid-1960s, professed that it was Soviet military might and art (quite apart from the peculiarities of the Far East theater) that brought about the quick and complete defeat of the enemy. In Marshal Malinovsky's estimation, the significance of the campaign resided particularly in "the fact that the enemy did not put up prolonged resistance."12 These judgments have resonated with general acclamation from other Soviet military authorities as well.

Perceptions of the Manchurian campaign as the most modern, proficient, and effective operation in Soviet combat history are not peculiar to the officers who designed, planned, and commanded it. Although the number of Soviet divisions committed was moderate in terms of strategic

11 A. Vasilevskii, "'Final,'" Voennno-istoricheskiy zhurnal, No. 6, June 1967, pp. 80-81.

12 The concluding campaign of World War II, executed by the Soviet Armed Forces in the Far East, was a new stride in the development of Soviet military art. Many moments of the preparation and conduct of this campaign are very typical for the beginning period of a war, and therefore their experience has current significance. The peculiarity of the theater, which greatly influenced the methods of waging military actions, and also the fact that the enemy did not put up prolonged resistance to our troops, by no means lessens, but even increases the significance of this experience. For in the final analysis, the quick defeat of the Japanese forces and the liquidation of their capability to put up resistance is the result of our Armed Forces' might and the high level of Soviet military art.

offensives in the West, total Soviet manpower strength was exceeded only by the immediately preceding Berlin offensive. However, the number of enemy divisions engaged and, more important, the number of Soviet losses suffered were relatively much smaller. Moreover, Soviet military and political authorities concur that the military campaign was a strategic success.\textsuperscript{13} (See Table 1.) Thus, it is logical for them to treat this short, cheap war in the East (rather than the protracted campaigns of attrition in the West) as especially relevant "under modern conditions."

Because of its historical associations, the Manchurian model's attractiveness to Soviet military authorities is reinforced by the great disparity between the traumatic losses they suffered in defeating Germany and the swift advances won so easily against Japan. Accordingly, the picture of war projected in Soviet accounts of the Manchurian campaign is an appealing alternative to the much more grossly destructive scenes portrayed by histories of war in the West. It is a vision of bold, keen strokes designed to minimize the costs, maximize the gains, and terminate the hostilities of World War II. As such, it is among the less distasteful and more positive images of war presented either in Soviet literature or in military writings outside the USSR.

This relatively favorable view of the Manchurian campaign gains a certain authority and credibility from the scholarly appearances of the prestigiously sponsored, military-historical studies devoted to it. These apparently objective works display the standard historiographic devices: footnoted references to documents in archives, judiciously precise qualifications to general assertions, and great masses of fascinating data.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, particularly when compared with accounts of protracted and costly attrition against German forces, the Manchurian

\textsuperscript{13}This assumes that Soviet authorities truly believe what they have generally alleged; that is, U.S. operations against Imperial Japan, including the nuclear bombing of two Japanese cities on the eve of the Manchurian campaign, were ineffectual in bringing about its surrender.

\textsuperscript{14}In Soviet parlance, these military histories are a part of "military science" because of their ostensibly technical orientation and objective analysis. To a Soviet military officer, this distinguishes them from purely patriotic or primarily political propaganda.
Table 1

EFFECTIVENESS OF SOVIET OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Soviet Division Equivalents (Index: Moscow = 100)</th>
<th>Enemy Divisions</th>
<th>Percent Defeated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moscow counteroffensive</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalingrad counteroffensive</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kursk counteroffensive</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensive in the Western Ukraine</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byelorussian operation</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vistula operation</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin operation</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchurian operation</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a In column 1, the Soviet tables do not provide a composite figure for the Kursk counteroffensive; the two related operations are listed separately, that is, Orel operation, 69; Belgorod-Kharkov, 61.

campaign has been "scientifically" reinforced as the Soviet's most plausibly desirable precedent for modern war.

However unexcelled in Soviet history, the campaign's attractiveness as a model for future operations must be affected by assumptions about the possible use of nuclear weapons. Evidently, the published literature on the campaign neither presumes nor precludes the use of nuclear weapons in modern military operations.15 Nevertheless, its

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15 Soviet military accounts of the 1945 campaign often mention, with ritual denunciation, the United States' nuclear incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the eve of Soviet entry into the war against
implications for conducting combat operations "under modern conditions" must anticipate the possibility of nuclear as well as conventional combat. So, while they present a relatively attractive image of modern war, Soviet military analyses of the Manchurian campaign suggest no great confidence (nor, for that matter, any particular doubt) that a major campaign could be fought and won before the losing side resorted to using nuclear weapons. Indeed, their reticence on the subject is ambiguous, suggesting discrete uncertainties, internal differences, and deliberate suspensions of judgment. Thus, the historical precedent requires improvisation to derive a modern formula for a nuclear-free offensive. For such possible applications, Soviet military literature on the Manchurian campaign does not consider whether or how nuclear deterrent and war-preparation measures could ensure that combined-arms operations would remain limited to nonnuclear combat.

Japan. Paradoxically, they deny that this application of force contributed significantly to Japan's prompt, subsequent surrender, giving almost all of the credit to their own Manchurian campaign. The only direct reference to problems of nuclear warfare under modern conditions contained in this literature, to the knowledge of the authors, noted that the Soviet military engineers' experiences in supplying water to mechanized armies in the desert could serve as useful models for solving similar problems under nuclear conditions. (Colonel General of Engineers A. Tsirlin, Chief of Engineering Troops on the Transbaikal Front during the campaign, "Organizatsiia vososnabzhenia voisk Zabaikal'skogo fronta v Khingano-Mukdenskoii operatsii" [Organization of the Troops' Water Supply on the Transbaikal Front during the Khingans-Mukden Operation], Voeno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 5, May 1963, pp. 36-48.) Major Soviet works on the campaign emphasize the seriousness of Japanese threats to use biological warfare and of Soviet epidemiological precautions, perhaps reflecting Soviet concern with similar or even more severe risks for a conventional campaign "under modern conditions."

Hypothetical plans for combined-arms operations could be designed to allow for variable restrictions on the use of nuclear munitions. Rather than plan to destroy all defending forces by physical means, conventional operations would aim to inflict swift, paralyzing strikes, to overcome the opponents' will to resist, without offering lucrative targets for direct nuclear counteraction. Only in the event conventional strikes failed to paralyze resistance or the other side initiated nuclear operations would plans for nuclear escalation be invoked. Such plans would be quite consistent with the doctrinal ambiguities and strategic uncertainties implicit in Soviet military analyses of the 1945 campaign.
From 1965 to 1972, as the military build-up against China grew substantially, Soviet authorities promoted general officers who seemed best prepared to build bases, train forces, and implement an armed strategy against China. They simultaneously displayed growing interest in the 1945 campaign. In 1966, besides publishing the two major historical works dedicated to detailing, analyzing, and celebrating the Manchurian campaign, Soviet authorities ratified a revised treaty with Mongolia, allowing their Armed Forces the right to station troops for mutual security "training" in the areas where the main effort of the Manchurian campaign had been based. Publicly, new priorities were established in 1967 to accelerate the development of a civil mobilization base in Soviet jurisdictions where the main build-up against China had been planned. To increase Soviet strength in East Asia, the three military districts adjacent to China came to acquire the only full Army Generals in command of Military Districts within the USSR. Simultaneously in Moscow, the principal service chiefs and Deputy Ministers of Defense, Army Generals Tolubko of the strategic rocket forces and Pavlovskii of the ground forces, achieved their high posts by serving most recently as Commanders of the Far East Military District. Hence, the initiation, publication, and dissemination of military studies on the 1945 campaign seem to have supported the growth of major new bases, forces, and support structures in Soviet East Asia.

The Manchurian model, therefore, appears to have been applicable both to the modernization of Soviet combined-arms institutions and to the expansion of their forward-based forces, particularly in Asia.

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Besides general claims for its relevance to military operations "under modern conditions," Soviet military histories of the Manchurian campaign also note lessons that are especially pertinent to the natural and logistical conditions of East Asia and similar environments. Soviet military authorities emphasize the extreme diversity and natural hostility of the Far East theater. Ranging from deserts and mountains in the west, through tundra in the north, and forested mountains in the east, the Manchurian campaign was based in an environment that is naturally suited for testing weapons and improving tactics because it poses such a wide variety of harsh physical challenges. Thus, the Manchurian model was most directly applicable to the reconstruction of bases and reconstitution of forces in the Soviet Far East.\(^1\)

The Manchurian model is an idealization of the Soviet invasion of Manchuria that has gained increasing institutional support and professional publicity from the early 1960s through the mid-1970s. Based on the precedent of the Manchurian campaign, it has established criteria for the feasibility and desirability of strategic offensives by combined arms to make them decisive within the initial phase of planned operations. It was most conspicuously studied and commended by leading Soviet officers during the expansion and diversification of Soviet theater forces after Khrushchev's expulsion from office in 1964, and it has been acclaimed by Soviet military authorities as generally applicable "under modern conditions," not merely to the nuclear-free salient of Northeast Asia in 1945. The specific lessons of current significance that Soviet authorities appear to have learned from the Manchurian campaign are the subject of the following sections.

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\(^{1}\) Within a year of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Marshal Zakharov yet again advertised this offensive model for Soviet defense planning as tensions mounted over the China border: "The profound study of the experience of the Soviet-Japanese war has great significance for the strengthening of the security of the Far Eastern borders of our Homeland" (Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal, 1969, p. 25). Because of its practical implications for possible combined-arms offensives, the "profound study of the experience" is at least as significant for the security of the Soviets' neighbors, East and West, as it is for the welfare of people in their "Homeland."
II. STRATEGIC DESIGN FOR A SURPRISE OFFENSIVE.1

Means must correspond to ends. . . . In the final analysis, victory is the most expensive, but a victory achieved at the cost of little blood and minor means is three times as valuable.

Marshal Zakharov, 19672

Surprise is the harbinger of victory.

Marshal Zakharov, 19693

The strategic design of the Manchurian campaign has been distinguished and endorsed by Soviet military authorities for its procedures as well as its substance. Its successful implementation and execution have enabled Marshal Vasilevskii, Commander of Soviet Forces in the campaign and, previously, Chief of the General Staff, to promote it as an unparalleled example of collective leadership.4 A practical lesson strongly suggested by the publicity given to the campaign is that more valuable strategic results derive from policy planning procedures that allow greater military participation and influence than had

1This section relies on non-Soviet accounts, mainly American and Japanese, to complement, correct, or confirm analyses made by Soviet authorities.


4The 1945 campaign in the Far East, as no other during the last war, convincingly demonstrated that the development of strategic design and operational plans is not the prerogative of individual persons, no matter how high the position they occupy, but rather the result of intensive creative activity of a large collective: the Supreme High Command, the General Staff, the top echelons of the different armed services, the central boards of the [Ministry] of Defense and Rear Services of the Red Army, the command and staffs of the Fronts, the Navy, and the Armies. [1967, p. 80]
prevailed before the Manchurian campaign, under Stalin, and before the adoption of the Manchurian model, under Khrushchev.

Both in designing the Manchurian campaign and in promoting the Manchurian model, Soviet military authorities have displayed considerable knowledge of political as well as professional concerns. Indeed, their interest in a strategic offensive model for conventional, combined-arms operations reflects their appreciation of political demands that modern war be deliberately limited in costs, casualties, and duration. To optimize a strategic design, their general approach to modern war aims to maximize the combined effectiveness of strength and surprise\(^5\) so as to minimize the losses incurred in pursuing valuable objectives. Professional military planners, however, had to persuade their Supreme Commander, Stalin, that the Manchurian campaign would be optimally planned and conducted as a surprise offensive.

THE POLITICAL BASIS FOR A-surprise OFFENSIVE

In first considering the Manchurian campaign, Stalin had apparently been bothered by general war-weariness and by the lack of popular support for yet another campaign, this time against an unthreatening and rapidly waning power. Nationalist sentiment, which had generated intense hostility against Germany, had not been greatly aroused against Japan, except perhaps among Russians in the Far East. Nevertheless, the Russians were aware that, when Hitler launched his surprise invasion of Russia in mid-1941, important Japanese officials had been eager to exploit the situation by seizing eastern Siberia and thereby helping to destroy the Bolshevik regime and the Soviet army. To the Soviets' relief, the Japanese had chosen instead first to eliminate American, British, and Dutch power in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia. As the Battle of Stalingrad visibly turned the tide of war in the West, so Japanese apprehensions about Soviet intentions increased after 1942 and the Soviet Union grew more openly hostile to the Axis' eastern partner.

\(^5\)Surprise is the unpreparedness of an adversary attributable to its failure to foresee and plan for a particular form of attack. It may be due to false assumptions, misperceptions, incorrect estimates, poor projections, or bad planning.
Given this state of growing tension through 1944, neither Stalin nor the General Staff imagined that great strategic or operational surprise would be possible. On the contrary, Stalin was quite willing to consider that the Japanese would initiate the war, preferably, however, at a time of his choosing. Although Stalin had valued the initiative, he initially discounted the military advantages the Japanese would gain and the Soviets would lose by yielding the strategic initiative. Instead, he weighed most heavily the political advantages that would flow from presenting the Soviet Union once again as the victim of hostile aggression.

Stalin apparently adhered to this position from 1941 through October 1944 when he told his Anglo-American Allies (and his own General Staff) that he did not believe the Japanese would passively permit the, then, forthcoming Soviet build-up in the Far East. He remarked that "If they do attack, they will at least solve what will be my most difficult problem with my own people. It will be obvious who is the aggressor." Still, Stalin counted on tight conventional security measures to avoid giving the Japanese such advance warning that they could preempt before the Soviet forces had achieved a reasonably strong defensive build-up and deployment.

The idea of launching their attack as a strategic surprise was not formally accepted until the completion of detailed operational planning, February through June 1945. It originated within the General Staff, was embodied in its draft plan completed in early June, and was then presented to Stalin who concurred "without demur." However, by late 1944, when the General Staff was first ordered by Stalin to begin preliminary planning for offensive operations against Japan, surprise had already become an established part of the operational planners' repertoire.

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7 For details on the design, implementation, and execution of special operational deception plans in major offensives against Germany as well as in the Manchurian campaign, see in particular Major General
The proximate cause for designing strategic surprise into the Manchurian plan was that Stalin had assigned highest priority to the campaign's swift completion. His motives were, initially, to avoid a protracted, unpopular war and, later, to achieve political and territorial gains before a final U.S.-British victory over Japan. Given this requirement for speed, the General Staff could not simply repeat the strategy of successive, indecisive offensives that had finally defeated Germany at an enormous cost to the Soviets. Alternatively, strategic surprise offered a way to achieve a deliberately low-cost breakthrough that, when coupled with rapid exploitation, could lead to quick victory.

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

In practice, the General Staff developed a plan for the strategic deception of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and the Kwantung Army to secure a poorly prepared opponent for its well-prepared offensive. As a result, it achieved a certain amount of surprise in all dimensions—a high degree of overall strategic surprise, very high operational surprise, and moderate tactical surprise.8


8The surprise achieved in this (or any) military campaign is not an either-or matter but a question of degree. Surprise is the product of a victim's ignorance, preconceptions, and gullibility as well as of an attacker's ability to deceive. In Soviet military doctrine, the attacker's success in concealing his intent and timing yields strategic surprise; misdirecting the opponent's calculations of the time, strength, direction, speed, and manner of possible attacks generates operational surprise; and tactical surprise derives from the unexpected weapons, techniques, and skills that are actually employed in combat. Matsulenko, 1975, pp. 3-5, 179.
TECHNIQUES AND CALCULATIONS OF SOVIET DECEPTION PLANNING

Intent

Since V-E Day on May 8/9, 1945, Stalin had been formally bound by Russia's Allies to wage war on Japan and invade Manchuria by August 10, but the Japanese knew only that Stalin intended to attack sometime in the future. At this juncture the Japanese government invited the Soviet Union on June 24 to become a party to negotiating a conditional surrender between Japan and the Anglo-American Allies. The Japanese clearly signalled that, in return for his good offices, they were prepared to pay Stalin a high territorial and political price. Stalin quickly seized this opportunity for secret bargaining and strategic deception to explore his diplomatic options and to influence Japanese perceptions about Soviet intentions and schedules for invading Manchuria.

Through both his Foreign Minister in Moscow and the Soviet Ambassador to Japan, Stalin managed to arouse Japanese beliefs that he was indeed seriously interested in negotiating with them. The overall effect of this secret diplomacy was to reinforce, in the weeks before the planned attack, official Japanese illusions that Stalin was prepared to negotiate tolerable terms for an end to the war. The Japanese government expected on August 8 that the Soviets would soon deliver a specification of terms, an ultimatum perhaps but not a declaration of war.9

Although surprise of intent was at least partly achieved in this manner, it is doubtful that it had great material effect. The Japanese military potential was by then so denuded by combat with the Americans, British, and Chinese that an overriding strategic decision had already been taken in Tokyo to concentrate on defense of the home islands. Consequently, even had the central authorities correctly estimated the imminence of the Manchurian operation, it is unlikely that they would have reinforced the Kwantung Army. The commanders and staffs of the

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9It is doubly ironic that this illusion was both the one that the Japanese had tried to foster with the Americans immediately before December 7, 1941, and the one that Hitler had successfully induced in Stalin immediately before the Nazi invasion of Russia.
Kwantung Army, moreover, were effectively insulated from or immune to the psychological effects of Soviet diplomatic deception. Thus, strategic surprise was only minimally due to the Soviets' concealment of their intent. 10

**Time**

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

At the Teheran Summit Conference in late 1943, Stalin had committed the USSR, by agreement with its allies in the war, to attack Japan as soon as possible after the defeat of Germany. Not only did he make this promise to the Americans and British, but he also ordered the Soviet army immediately to start stockpiling munitions in Far Eastern depots—a process that continued until the invasion.

At the end of September 1944, four months after the Allies opened the second front in Western Europe and the Soviet summer offensive had succeeded, Stalin told the General Staff to begin preparing estimates for the movement of troops to the Far East, explaining simply that "Apparently they will be needed soon." The consequent General Staff estimate, which was completed about the beginning of October, scheduled the transfer of troops to start "early" in 1945, but the unexpected

10 This account of Soviet efforts to manipulate Japanese perceptions of their intent comes only from Japanese documents. Soviet writers have not publicized their diplomatic deception efforts. Especially useful were the Japanese monographs prepared by U.S. Army Forces Far East, Headquarters, Military History Section (published by the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C.). See, for example, Small Wars and Border Problems, Japanese Studies on Manchuria, Vol. XI, Part 1 (authored by Takushiro Hattori, Teizo Kubo, and Nizo Yamaguchi), 1956; Record of Operations against Soviet Russia, Eastern Front (August 1945), Japanese Monograph No. 154 (authored by Genichiro Arinuma et al.), 1954; and Study of Strategic and Tactical Peculiarities of Far Eastern Russia and Soviet Far East Forces, Japanese Special Studies on Manchuria, Vol. XIII (authored by Saburo Hayashi), 1955.
requirement for forces on the Russo-German front during the winter of 1944/45 delayed this schedule.

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

At exactly midnight on May 8/9, Germany's surrender was effected and May 9 became V-E Day. Henceforth, August 9 would be Manchuria D-day for the few who knew what Soviet commitments had been established at Yalta. However, weather was a consideration. July and August were generally considered undesirable months to initiate ground operations in Manchuria, while September, October, and November were thought best. Japanese authorities shared these professional assessments with their Russian counterparts.

By June 13 the General Staff's timetable called for the last troop units to reach the Far East between August 1 and 5. And by June 18, the timetable specified that D-day be between August 20 and 25. The target date was subsequently moved forward until, finally, on August 3, Marshal Vasilevskii reported to Stalin that all fronts and units were ready and in position to go into action as early as August 7. Given this circumstance, together with the suddenly and unseasonably improved weather, Vasilevskii urged that the battle be joined no later than August 9-10, that is, one or two days earlier than the most recently projected D-day of August 11. Stalin soon approved this revised schedule and immediately notified Vasilevskii, although he did not actually sign the order until 1630 hours on August 7 Moscow time, that is, 15½ hours after the Americans dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima.
Until the very hour of the Soviet invasion, on August 9, the Japanese government, Imperial Army General Staff, Kwantung Army HQ, and their respective intelligence services expected that even if the Russians attacked they would and could not do so before September at the earliest. The fact that troops working on deep defensive lines were deployed forward on warning increased rather than reduced the effectiveness of strategic deception because it exposed Japanese forces to a well-prepared attack while they were moving, vulnerably, toward defensive fortifications. Thus, given adroit Soviet reinforcement of their enemy's own preconceptions, the Japanese were very surprised by the early timing of the Soviet invasion.  

Direction

The choice of direction or axis of the main Soviet attack was of major concern to both the Soviet and Japanese planners. The former sought to mislead Japanese expectations as to the main source and angle of attack while the latter sought to detect Soviet deployments and plans.

The Japanese correctly foresaw Manchuria (rather than Inner Mongolia, Korea, or the Japanese home islands) as the main theater of Soviet action. Since late 1940 the Kwantung Army had considered the potentially most dangerous Soviet axis of attack to be a drive from the Transbaikal toward central or southern Manchuria, even though that axis crossed the Greater Khingan Range. This assessment was based not on secret intelligence but rather on simple geographical and logistic calculations: The proximity of urban, rear staging areas and of strategic reserves in European Russia made the Transbaikal the most defensively secure and offensively efficient base in the Soviet Far East.

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Moreover, Zhukov's victory at Khalkhin-Gol in 1939 had already demonstrated to the Japanese the Soviet ability to mount a large-scale attack from Mongolia. Hence, when the invasion finally materialized, the Kwantung Army was not completely surprised that a blow was staged from that quarter. However, the Army was utterly stunned by the sudden strength and sustained speed generated by Marshal Malinovsky's Transbaikal Front.  

Strength  

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

The gross maldistribution of Japanese defenders confirms the success of this operational deception. (See Table 2.)

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13 Japanese intelligence had identified and located only 7 of the 12 ground armies (plus the Soviet-Mongol Group) in the Far East. All those identified had been established by 1941. This was very old intelligence. The Japanese failed to detect either the arrival of four entirely new armies or the formation of another, together with the Soviet-Mongol Group. Moreover, they also failed to detect the transfer of the 16th Army from the west (Transbaikal Front) to the north (Second
Table 2
JAPANESE MISALLOCATIONS CAUSED BY SOVIET DECEPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fronts</th>
<th>Japanese Estimates</th>
<th>Actual Deployment</th>
<th>Combat Troops (Percent)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>

Deployment of Opposing Combat Troops on D-Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fronts</th>
<th>Soviet Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Japanese Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transbaikal Front</td>
<td>416,000</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>72,000</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d Far Eastern Front</td>
<td>239,000</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Far Eastern Front</td>
<td>404,000</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>169,000</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,059,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>267,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central reserves</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>143,000</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: These data on Soviet manpower strength are derived from Soviet sources and refer only to troops in combat units. The distribution of Japanese strength opposite Soviet fronts is based on a Kwantung Army self-assessment that adds up to less than half of the Soviet estimates of its overall strength. This disparity is itself a measure of the general failure of Japanese mobilization and the possible success of Soviet strategic deception.

This table was compiled from scattered data in "Kampaniia Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil na Dal'inem Vostoke v 1945 g." [The 1945 Far East Campaign of the Soviet Armed Forces], Voенно-исторический альманах, No. 8, August 1965, Tables 1 and 2; U.S. Army Forces Far East, Headquarters, Military History Section, Record of Operations, Japanese Monograph No. 155 (1954), Table 1, and Japanese Monograph No. 154 (1954), Maps 1-6. (The number and percentage of Soviet troops on the 2d Far Eastern Front are slightly inflated, because the few divisions diverted to the operations on Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands have not been deducted.)
LESSONS FOR THE MODEL

The Manchurian campaign is exceptional in Soviet experience because strategic and operational surprise was won from an enemy that was continuously receiving and correctly evaluating a substantial amount of authentic intelligence.\textsuperscript{14} The Soviet deception campaign was moderately sophisticated; it employed most of the ruses or channels that could have been used to supply credible disinformation to the enemy, and it adroitly directed these misleading data to the most receptive and influential Japanese institutions and individuals. Significant surprise was thereby effected in each of its main dimensions, but in varying degrees. With respect to Soviet intentions, it was moderate; for the timing of the attack, it was very high; for the direction, strength, and method of attack, it was fairly high; and the overall intensity of strategic surprise was quite high. Yet, the strategic success of Soviet deception planners in the Manchurian campaign was won from an opponent that was unusually vulnerable to deception due to its primitive intelligence services and its gullible foreign minister.

The Soviet deception effort was both systematic and substantial.\textsuperscript{15} It developed Japanese misperceptions of Soviet military preparedness and plans and thereby diverted Japanese defense efforts away from the area of the main effort. To accomplish this result, it employed extensive military and discrete diplomatic means. The stocks and movements


\textsuperscript{15} See Matsulenko, 1975, for a survey of Soviet military deception operations in World War II, a discussion of the Manchurian campaign, and the appendix on "masking plans" for selected fronts, including the First Far Eastern Front.
of prepositioned supplies and equipment were effectively camouflaged. Invasion plans were restricted to a few top commanders and chiefs of staff who used field disguises and pseudonyms. Forward reconnaissance and deployments were strictly limited before the time of attack. Intense patterns of normal "defense" activities, communications, training, and construction were established well beforehand. Carefully simulated concentrations, false movements, and misinformation were presented to effective sources of Japanese intelligence, and special plans for final deployments at night on the eve of attack were worked out and rehearsed in advance. In short, the achievement of surprise was the deliberate result of Soviet designs to aggravate inevitable Japanese mistakes and weaknesses.

The modern significance of this historical case has been explicitly affirmed or commended by Soviet analyses of the campaign's strategic design. Indeed, one of the most important lessons of this campaign for the future is that "it is possible to attain complete strategic surprise in executing the first operations at the beginning of the war." It is not only of theoretical interest, but, as main authorities assert, "this experience can be of practical interest for planning modern operations." Moreover, from the data and testimony of Japanese authorities, this case demonstrates that less-than-complete surprise can be gained at limited cost and used to great advantage. Thus, it successfully illustrates a variety of principles and techniques that Soviet officers have professional interest in implementing by more modern means.

\[16\] Vnotchenko, 1971, pp. 82-83.
III. OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR DECISIVE STRENGTH

The Soviet Armed Forces had to realize practically the kind of "lightning operation" that renowned German theoreticians discoursed upon in numerous works, to no particular avail. Marshals Malinovsky, 1966, and Zakharov, Final, 1969

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

Vnotchenko, 1966

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

Army General Shtemenko, 1975

Soviet military officers have realized that the Manchurian campaign is their major, modern precedent for a quick, cheap, successful offensive. Premised on strategic surprise, the Soviet design for war against Japan concentrated the forces for three combined-arms fronts around Manchuria. Logistical preparations gained momentum in the spring of 1945, by which time Soviet soldiers and civilians had grown weary of the closing war in the West and could generate little enthusiasm for initiating a new war in the East. To obviate the military costs and political risks of protracted Japanese resistance and a war of attrition, the surprise invasion of Manchuria was planned to yield a prompt and unconditional surrender. In developing its operational plan, the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces considered a variety of military approaches, evaluated alternative objectives, and examined different methods. An early Japanese surrender had been deemed to require the extension of Soviet power into the full depth and around the flanks of Manchuria; although potentially even more desirable, major landings on the Japanese home islands were not considered feasible enough to promise an early, low-cost surrender. Accordingly, the operational plan

directed front and army commanders to isolate the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and North Korea and thereby defeat it in a brief campaign. The final plan postulated sudden, simultaneous attacks along separate lines on each front; a surprisingly strong, mobile force in the main effort striking south and east from Mongolia; and a mechanized tank army leading the advance across the Gobi Desert, the Greater Khingan Mountains, and the central Manchurian plain.

**EVOLUTION OF THE OPERATIONAL PLAN**

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

A more feasible but less desirable design was to seize the Japanese-occupied cities and to disarm Japanese forces in northern China, around Peiping (as Peking was then called by the Nationalist Chinese government), Tientsin, and the Shantung peninsula. This option was eventually rejected primarily because it offered inadequately lucrative objectives and, second, because the limited access routes to north China and the dispersion of Japanese forces there made the costs and risks unduly high.
A still more feasible design that offered new extensions of Soviet territory well into the Pacific Ocean was to seize and hold the Japanese-occupied islands of Sakhalin and the Kuriles. Because Japanese forces on the islands were quite small, these objectives did not require major Soviet military investments; nevertheless, the islands were sufficiently valuable to be included in the final design as second-priority objectives. As a result, when the surprise attack against Manchuria was underway, the Soviet Navy and Air Force were ordered to support landing operations against these islands.\(^2\)

The design actually chosen specified the disarmament of Japanese forces in Northeast China and North Korea as the main objective of Soviet military operations. Because the Kwantung Army was the most compact and formidable Japanese military force on the mainland of Asia, its destruction was intended to be a fatal blow to Japanese belligerence as it would deny the home islands their main reserve of potential strength. But the very strength that made the Kwantung Army such a lucrative political-military objective also posed a variety of worrisome problems for Soviet operational planners. Aroused by these new challenges, the operational planners on the General Staff have claimed credit for having become committed to this design first, before their political superiors.\(^3\) General Shtemenko, who served as Stalin's main liaison among the planners on the General Staff, has euphemistically cited political as well as military goals in Manchuria:

Hitler's Eastern partner in the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis interested us not only as an immediate military threat to the USSR. The "Japanese problem" had further significance. It was directly connected with the task of shortening the war,

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\(^2\) For an informed western account of Soviet amphibious operations in the 1945 war against Japan, primarily around the flanks of the theater and in North Korea, see Raymond L. Garthoff, "Soviet Operations in the War with Japan, August 1945," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 92, No. 5, May 1966, pp. 50-63.

\(^3\) The Chief of the Operations Department during the planning of the campaign, General Shtemenko, wrote: "First the General Staff, and then GHQ [General Headquarters, i.e., Stalin], became dedicated to this idea [of disarming the Kwantung Army]" (1968/1970, p. 329).
which had to be done for the sake of suffering humanity. World peace was inconceivable without the defeat of Imperialist Japan. And finally, it was necessary to help the peoples of Asia, particularly China, to throw off the foreign yoke.4

By the time political endorsement was required, the military planners had learned to anticipate their superiors' needs and aims. As the war in the West drew to a close, front and army commanders were motivated to occupy strategic areas in Germany and Manchuria ahead of the Allied Forces. Furthermore, the transfer of Japanese arms to local Communist Chinese forces was another significant but clandestine aspect of the Soviets' military occupation of Manchuria, whether or not it was part of the operational plan. For the Soviet leadership of 1945, the strategic design against the Kwantung Army in Northeast Asia was both a politically worthy and a militarily feasible challenge.

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

4Ibid., p. 322.
OPERATIONAL PLAN OF THE CAMPAIGN

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

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5 See Table 3.

6 General Zhukov's surprise offensive against the Kwantung Army at Khalkhin Gol, Mongolia, in 1939 and General Pavlovskii's surprise invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were much more limited in size and force.

7 Reportedly, outside the USSR the Soviet Army lost over 600,000 in Poland, over 140,000 in Czechoslovakia, over 140,000 in Hungary, over 69,000 in Romania, almost 26,000 in Austria, about 8000 in Yugoslavia, and over 102,000 in Germany (Krasnaya Zvezda, March 14, 1975, p. 3). Inside the USSR, Soviet sources have claimed over 20 million people were killed during the war. Strategic surprise played a part in the Battle of Stalingrad, and also in those of Moscow and Kursk, but these battles were very costly in Soviet casualties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choose main routes and objectives</td>
<td>Kwantung Army could stage counteroffensive and strategic evacuation from its main bases near points of escape and reinforcement.</td>
<td>Concentrate main effort in Mongolia to strike swiftly and deeply from least-expected direction and to close routes of escape or reinforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire field intelligence.</td>
<td>Strict limits on prewar collection to minimize warning of planned attack.</td>
<td>Intensive preattack surveillance and extensive postattack reconnaissance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrate superior strength.</td>
<td>Rarely 40 divisions in the theater early in 1945.</td>
<td>Transfer as many battle-seasoned, adaptable units from the West.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement command and control</td>
<td>Threat of Japanese spoiling operations, continuous, secure communications difficult during rapid advances along widely separate routes through mountainous and hostile terrain.</td>
<td>Exercise contingency plans for preemptive attack in case of detection of enemy spoiling preparations; issue coded orders for secure radio communications on the march.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate rates of advance</td>
<td>Extreme and varied distances to major enemy force concentrations, lines of communications, control centers, and evacuation points.</td>
<td>Continuous, deep, mechanized advances supported by air resupply, reconnaissance, and bombing up to enemy headquarters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between fronts, armies, and air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize troop formations.</td>
<td>Uncertain terrain obstacles and enemy defenses.</td>
<td>Allocate almost all mobile firepower to the first echelons and the advance detachments to overwhelm points and to bypass centers of resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare rear support services.</td>
<td>High planned rates of fuel and water consumption; exceptionally rugged terrain, poor roads, and deep series of obstacles; natural and military threats of disease, expected bad weather.</td>
<td>Augment water supplies through well-drilling; use airlift for fuel in emergencies; capture enemy supplies; train nonregulation engineers; immunize troops and motorize medical units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete troop training.</td>
<td>Newcomers unfamiliar with the theater, and originals untested in combat.</td>
<td>Conduct combined-arms exercises under joint command with old and new troops operationally integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign target priorities.</td>
<td>Unknown enemy designs for counterattack.</td>
<td>Direct commanders to pursue lucrative targets of opportunity and to converge on headquarters facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure strategic and tactical</td>
<td>Forward concentration and deployment areas subject to enemy reconnaissance and surveillance.</td>
<td>Execute active cover and deception measures and attack along all fronts simultaneously at night either from the march or by commando action to minimize enemy warning, preparedness, and resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surprise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
estimates of Japanese strength and until the Sixth Guards Tank Army had been reinforced with fully mechanized infantry units to transform it effectively into a mechanized army.

Sparse and uncertain information on Japanese forces in and around Manchuria was a chronic source of controversy for planners on the General Staff. Soviet military planners had lacked ample and reliable data on the Kwantung Army for at least several years. Moreover, they had been the target of Japanese strategic deception efforts designed to reinforce Soviet impressions of a formidable Kwantung Army and to cover the fact that many of its units' men and weapons had actually transferred to more active combat theaters. During special Japanese maneuvers in Manchuria while Moscow was threatened in 1941, a secret agent in Tokyo, Richard Sorge, had reliably assured the Soviet leadership that Japanese offensive priorities were aimed south rather than north. However, Soviet military historians barely acknowledge the evidence, so heavily emphasized by their Japanese counterparts, that the once-formidable Kwantung Army had been severely depleted and only partially replenished by August 1945. According to their published recollections, General Staff planners and front commanders concentrated substantial attention and resources to ensure against the dangers of preemptive spoiling operations, delaying counterattacks, and major counteroffensives, including the use of bacteriological warfare, posed by the suspected strength and uncertain plans of the Kwantung Army.

Soviet estimates of total Japanese strength in and around Manchuria immediately before the campaign approached one-and-a-half million men, including over one million in the Kwantung Army, a quarter million in local or regional forces of the Japanese authorities, and a hundred thousand Japanese troops on the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin. Before the build-up in 1945, Soviet manpower strength in the Far East was barely half as great. Indeed, given the balance of forces in the area before the build-up, Soviet estimates of their own offensive strength could only promise the expulsion of Japanese forces from northern

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8 As it happened, most of these forces either switched sides or became neutral.
Manchuria--at most. Hence, Soviet wartime deployments were primarily aimed at repelling possible Japanese attacks from the well-developed line of fortified staging areas around the Maritime Province in the east, opposite Blagoveshchensk in the north, and toward Chita in the northwest of Manchuria.

By doubling their own strength during the spring and summer, the Soviet Armed Forces achieved, by their estimates, approximate parity with their Japanese opposites in potentially effective combat manpower. However, depending on the definition and measure of effective military manpower used to calculate the strength ratio, it varied from less than equality to over two-to-one superiority for Soviet forces. In the numerator, Soviet personnel strength in combat units was just over a million men, another half million being in support units. In the denominator, potential strength could either include or exclude the units associated with the Kwantung Army that could have been mobilized under certain conditions. Thus, the total mobilizable manpower of Japanese-controlled forces exceeded Soviet combat strength, but total Soviet manpower was double the nominal strength of the Kwantung Army. Disparities between and uncertainties in estimates of military manpower ratios reflected evident controversy between the General Staff planners, who confidently discounted Japanese strength, and the front commanders, who warily reserved judgment pending more and better evidence.

Besides effective military manpower, other critical dimensions of the Japanese ability to resist eluded Soviet planners and commanders.

Indeed, these uncertainties have outlasted the war by at least a generation. Marshal Zakharov, who as Chief of Staff on the Transbaikal Front had been initially most skeptical of the General Staff's assurances, seemed to insist during the 1960s that the campaign's success was largely due to the Soviets' qualitative rather than quantitative superiority. With his demise in 1971, the basic history of The Liberation Mission of the Soviet Armed Forces in World War II edited by the Minister of Defense, Marshal A. A. Grechko, altered its estimate of Soviet superiority in manpower from 1:1 to 2:1 between the first edition of 1971 and the second in 1974. (Osvoboditel'naia missiia Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil vo vtoroi mirnoi voine, Politizdat, Moscow.) Hence, differences over Japanese strength at the time of the campaign have apparently recurred. Vnotchenko, 1971, estimates overall enemy strength at over 1.2 million men, more than total Soviet combat strength, by including Japanese armies around Peking in North China.
Constrained by the need to conceal their intentions, overt reconnaiss-
sance in force was considered too alarming to preserve surprise. Simi-
larly, extensive covert reconnaissance was thought too intrusive, con-
spicuous, and likely to alert the Kwantung Army's warning system as a
precursor to attack. Hence, remote surveillance and limited reconna-
sance, mainly by Communications Troops, Border Guards, and Air Forces,
were the main means of information gathering in the theater. Because
these means were limited, maps of Japanese positions, data on force
dispositions, and analyses of their combat characteristics were defi-
cient, especially with respect to the main concentration of Japanese
strength in the depths of Manchuria. Still, there were abundant and
relevant data for planning the initial, midnight attack by armored col-
umns from the march in the west, by river crossings at selected points
in the north, and by saboteurs infiltrating narrow breach sectors in
the east. The extensive network of Japanese fortified areas, strong
points, and surveillance systems were the special targets of prewar
intelligence and of the preplanned assaults. The main uncertainty con-
cerned plans for the Transbaikal Front and the threat that Japanese
mobile forces, combat aircraft, and mechanized divisions based in Cen-
tral Manchuria posed to large Soviet armies, which bad weather alone
could and almost did stall in mountain passes, far from secure supply
systems and air support.

Despite persistent doubts and controversies surrounding the General
Staff's draft plan ostensibly due to inadequate intelligence, the final
plan conformed closely to the original prescription. First, the Sixth
 Guards Tank Army was allowed to lead the first echelon into Manchuria,
but only after it had been cautiously augmented with two motorized
infantry divisions, two self-propelled gun brigades, and four indepen-
dent tank battalions at the insistence of its front commander, Marshal
Malinovsky, and his Chief of Staff, General Zakharov. Second, mecha-
nized forces were more generally concentrated in the armies' first
echelons; in reinforced battalions of advance detachments assigned to
operate independently 10 to 50 kilometers ahead of first echelon divi-
sions; and in special reconnaissance detachments assigned to operate
about another 40 kilometers ahead of the main body. Third, almost all
air transports, a disproportionately large share of tanks, bombers, and fuel stocks, and the most battle-seasoned manpower were assigned to the main effort in the west, where Japanese fortifications and forces were relatively weak and dispersed. Finally, rather than a slow squeeze or successive strikes, the final plan dictated sudden, simultaneous thrusts deep into the theater along separate lines of advance on all three fronts.

The plan for the main effort was unprecedented in specifying operational depths up to 820 kilometers; in providing the logistics support for the Sixth Guards Tank Army to advance an average of 82 kilometers a day over a roadless desert, a substantial range, and a rainy plain; and in permitting Soviet bombers and air transports to deliver battlefield support, fuel, reconnaissance, communications, and landings over long distances. Although the rates of advance achieved in practice were even greater than planned, the plans themselves were premised on knowledge of the too-shallow Japanese defense lines and of certain weaknesses in their air defenses.¹¹

The Manchurian campaign was planned and expected to be unprecedentedly successful. Its operational plan was based on cautiously high estimates of Japanese strength and on strategic designs to optimize the


¹¹ According to Zakharov,
effectiveness of Soviet strength through concentration, concealment, and deception. Rather than relying on a gross quantitative superiority in manpower, the plan depended on qualitative advantages due to the greater mobility, firepower, and modern combat skill of Soviet forces. Because its initial implementation had anticipated greater resistance than was encountered, both on the ground and in the air, the campaign was even more successful than planned.

RESULTS AND APPRAISAL OF THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

To stage the campaign against the Kwantung Army, the Soviet Armed Forces secretly mounted a strenuous, short-term effort to expand and reinforce the Far Eastern theater of operations. During the three months following the war with Germany, the Far East force of 40 standing divisions was doubled through the transfer of over four armies from the European theater of operations, selected and allocated for the suitability of their accumulated strength and skills. Most of these transferred forces were concentrated in Mongolia, on the Transbaikal Front, for the main effort. By August, the Soviets had positioned in the Far East an experienced combat force of over a million men, 26,000 guns and mortars, 5000 armored vehicles, and about 5000 aircraft.

The Soviet offensive was a combined-arms, joint operation that incorporated Soviet air and naval forces as well as Mongolian ground forces. Its theater embraced over 5000 kilometers (about 3000 miles) of front, and its operational objectives ranged from 300 to 800 kilometers deep. In the first hours of August 9, three Soviet fronts began unexpected attacks on and forced marches through narrow breakthrough sectors whose total width was about 300 kilometers, just 7 percent of the total front. Within six days, their armies had largely enveloped and paralyzed the Kwantung Army. (See Fig. 2.)

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

The Japanese were caught grossly unprepared by the early date of the Soviet offensive, by the location and direction of its main effort, and by the strength and speed of its advance, especially of the powerful mechanized units leading the Transbaikal Front. Although a number of Japanese divisions, particularly in the north and east, fought fiercely for almost ten days, the 40-division Kwantung Army was barely prepared to resist forcefully. Notwithstanding the Kwantung Army's hardened fortifications and the Soviets' limited (variously estimated between 1 and 2.5 to 1) overall advantage in manpower, Japanese unpreparedness for the Soviet offensive resulted in disproportionately heavy casualties (between five and ten Japanese for every Soviet casualty). Although the Soviet plan had postulated 20 to 30 days to inflict a decisive defeat on the partially depleted Kwantung Army, the Emperor's surrender became effective ten days after the Soviet assault.12 Even the most heroic Japanese resistance would have ultimately ended in rout due to the limited resources and disarray of their forces. In short, Soviet forces won a relatively low-cost victory,13 regardless of the

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

13 According to a Soviet communiqué issued after the war, 80,000 Japanese and 8000 Soviet soldiers were killed in this campaign. Japanese sources indicate a lower ratio and do not accept Soviet claims of a military, as distinct from a political, victory.
determinants or effects of the Emperor's surrender; but how decisive
their military operations were on the Kwantung Army's failure to sus-
tain major, organized resistance is the subject of continuing dispute
between Soviet and Japanese military historians.

LESSONS FOR MODERN OPERATIONAL PLANNING

By Soviet accounts, the surprise, strength, speed, and depth of
the Manchurian offensive determined its successful outcome. Yet, they
also admit that the Kwantung Army's technological and numerical inferi-
orities, its lack of air power and antiair defenses, and the paucity
of Japanese minefields and antitank armament facilitated the Soviet in-
vansion of Northeast China. Soviet military histories nevertheless
record their planners' and commanders' anxieties at the possibility of
being drawn into protracted combat by successive Japanese retreats and
counterattacks.

To obviate such costly prolongation of the war, the Soviet strategy
to isolate the Kwantung Army from other Japanese forces before it could
either evacuate the theater or receive reinforcements was designed to
be spearheaded by fast and potent advance detachments. These mobile
strike elements operated independently ahead of the main forces, over-
came provisional defenses, proceeded deep into rear areas, and dis-
organized communications and command centers while bypassing heavily
defended fortifications. In the wake of these advance detachments,
prompt advances by the main body of Soviet forces enabled them to out-
flank and take centers of resistance and other fortified objectives.
The speed of the advance detachments was not matched by the main body
of troops whose heavy supply trains and masses of artillery retarded
progress over the rugged terrain and poorly paved roads. The campaign
plan was particularly strained by lack of fuel and by ineffective trans-
port. Soviet as well as Japanese accounts depict the precariousness of
certain Soviet forces stranded deep within Manchuria and ordered to
pool their fuel supplies, to form advance battalions, and to accelerate
their advance.14

14 Japanese military historians have duly noted the weakness of
many Soviet units that were isolated, depleted, and therefore vulnerable
Soviet memoirs portray the campaign as exceedingly hard to command due to its far-flung and dispersed operations; incorrect maps, incomplete intelligence on the enemy; acute shortages of fuel, water, and even food; and its fragile troop control network. Still, Soviet military scholars and commanders publicly concur that the concept and design of the campaign were correct; the problems encountered have rather been attributed to improper planning of details, to inadequate preparations, and to equipment that was unsuited to the stringent natural demands of the theater and physical requirements of the plan.

Besides acclaiming its strategic design, operational plan, tactical implementation, and its actual execution, Soviet military analyses of the Manchurian campaign have recognized certain key strategic factors that ensured its success. By all their assessments, the Soviet forces' quantitative superiority in total military manpower was at most a minor factor. Rather, it was by exploiting their superiority in numbers of modern weapons, their freedom of movement in the air, and their well-secured surprise that major gains were quickly achieved at low cost. Finally, Soviet accounts admit that the lack of prepared defenses in depth facilitated overfulfillment of the Manchurian model's original plan. Yet they neglect or discount the cumulative effects of Anglo-American operations on the Kwantung Army's ability to resist and on the Emperor's inclination to surrender. Nonetheless, without yielding any credit to the United States, Soviet military authorities have acknowledged actual limits and potential threats to the success of their most splendid offensive in history. Had the Kwantung Army prepared defenses in depth, better alerted its air defenses, and mobilized a greater share of its potential strength, Soviet forces would have advanced less rapidly, suffered greater losses, and achieved a more dubious outcome. Thus, one unstated lesson that is merely implicit in Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign is that the cost-effectiveness of plans based on the Manchurian model varies inversely with the alertness, strength, and skill of prospective opponents.

to potential counterattacks, which for the most part failed to materialize.
IV. TACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION FOR OPTIMAL RESULTS

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

Marshal Zakharov, 1960

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

Vnotchenko, 1971

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

¹Professional concern to establish claims for continued peacetime development on the basis of wartime accomplishments is illustrated by the story told in the memoirs of a staff general of the railroad troops. Shortly after VE-Day during May and June 1945, while strenuously preparing the neglected Far Eastern rail system for the forthcoming transfer of forces, the administration of the railroad troops took time out to arrange a major conference of its leading cadre to sum up the service's accomplishments during the year and to "mark the future perspectives of the development of our affairs."
technical branches. Thus, Soviet analyses of the Manchurian campaign have been ingredients in the development of institutionalized competition, innovation, and modernization within the Soviet military establishment. Simultaneously, they are the products of a collective, general commitment to develop strategic offensive capabilities by combinations of arms whose total effects are designed to exceed the sum of their parts. Detailed consideration of the separate arms and branches by combined-arms authorities and by institutional advocates has reflected both common commitments to the Manchurian model and specialized differences of opinion on practical matters.

GROUND FORCES

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

Because the principal works on the 1945 campaign were stimulated and monitored by General Staff officers who were most closely affiliated with ground forces, this literature was presumably intended to confirm their preferences and to improve their assessments of the possibilities for modern operations on the ground.2 These works coincided with and

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2In his 1967 review of Malinovsky's Final, 1966, Marshal Vasilevskii publicly rebuked the authors for the "inaccuracy" of their claim that the campaign had been planned as a strategic operation by three ground-force fronts. In the Zakharov 1969 edition of Final, this limited definition of the combined-arms fronts was deleted (p. 88).
apparently contributed to the institutional recovery of Soviet ground forces and to greater status for their claims to resources. Separately and together, various subordinate branches of the ground forces have also analyzed lessons of the Manchurian campaign for their own modernization and planning.

Infantry

Besides constituting the bulk of Soviet forces and providing most of the front and army commanders in the Far East campaign, according to its advocates infantry played the leading role in developing a major instrument of lightning warfare—the advance detachments. The "artful use of surprise" in the initial assault and speed in the immediate advance have also been claimed as special contributions of the infantry. No doubt, dense and powerful infantry formations were also the main means for sustained offensive action; not only were 72 out of the 87 equivalent ground-force divisions composed of infantry, but the infantry has also been generally credited with a corresponding share of credit for the overall success. 3

The initial breaching operations were executed primarily by infantry as commandos; the immediate exploitations were executed largely by mechanized infantry integrated with mobile armor and self-propelled artillery as advance detachments of divisions in the first echelons. Almost complete tactical surprise was achieved by foot soldiers through elaborate camouflage measures and well-planned night assaults. 4 To breach border fortifications, advance battalions of infantry infiltrated under cover to neutralize remotely surveyed positions up to a depth of 5 kilometers. Such limited but precise infantry actions enabled the main forces to launch a surprise attack without the prior warning of intrusive reconnaissance, air strikes, or artillery


barrages. At the same time, surprising strength was concentrated in heavily gunned infantry formations that constituted the main forces for sustained offensive action. By covertly concentrating its artillery and armor within the narrow breakthrough sectors of the front, the first echelon of infantry amassed an average of over 200 artillery pieces and 30 armored vehicles per kilometer. Deeply echeloned reinforcements were also available to support the first echelons of the offensive in surprising strength. In addition to these elements of tactical and operational surprise, the infantry also combined stealth, speed, and strength, exploiting them with sustained operational effectiveness in depth against the weakly organized resistance.

Infantry officers organized and commanded most of the advance detachments in the offensive. Advance detachments of mechanized infantry were created initially in every division and subsequently in each corps of the armies' first echelons. These shock units combined the firepower, mobility, and flexibility of command required for independent operations far ahead of the main forces. Their purpose was to facilitate the fast, uninterrupted advance of the main body of forces that followed in their wake, most often led by a tank brigade in its first echelon. Ranging in size from battalion to regiment, these detachments were composed of motorized infantry, combat engineers, chemical troops, and signal troops. To expedite their own advance, they would themselves detach special armed-reconnaissance units to scout ahead and to remove bottlenecks along the planned route of march. In addition, air reconnaissance, interdiction, resupply, communications, and close support forces cooperated directly in screening them from possible counterattacks, pursuing retreating forces, routing covering deployments, and bypassing strong fortifications.

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5 Ibid., p. 276.
6 Ibid., pp. 275-276.
7 Ibid., p. 275. Infantry corps occupied 5 to 5.4 kilometers and regiments 1 to 1.5 kilometers of the front in the breakthrough sectors.
8 I. I. Liudnikov, Colonel General, Cherez Bol'shoi Khingan [Across the Greater Khingans], Voenizdat, Moscow, 1967, pp. 50, 78.
9 Ibid., pp. 78-80; and Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 276.
The specific size, composition, and rate of advance of these special detachments varied with the natural conditions, the enemy dispositions, and the missions of the units within the various sectors. The Sixth Guards Tank Army, which advanced 150 kilometers the first day and 500 kilometers over the Greater Khingan Mountains within six days, was led by advance detachments operating 30 to 40 kilometers ahead and by special reconnaissance detachments operating from 70 to 80 kilometers ahead of the main body. On the average, advance detachments were separated from the main force by about 30 kilometers, ranging from 20 to 80 kilometers on the Transbaikal Front to 25 to 30 kilometers on the First and Second Far Eastern Fronts. Certain reinforced advance detachments in hot pursuit actually operated up to 120 kilometers ahead of the main forces. Because of their exceedingly rapid progress and the fuel supply problems stalling the main forces, especially on the Transbaikal Front, advance detachments of the divisions pooled their supplies and equipment on the fifth day of the campaign to form corps detachments, to accelerate their advance, and to capture the main Manchurian cities as soon as possible. Yet, such extraordinary rates of advance and separations were allowed only because the advance detachments could maneuver and fight well enough to elude or fend off the weak Japanese counterattacks that were anticipated.

For most of the infantry, problems in the rear rather than severe resistance in front were the constraints on rates of advance. The progress of the main body was limited by the shortage of motor transport,

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14. Liudnikov, 1967, pp. 80, 98. Colonel Krupchenko reports that in the sector of the Sixth Guards Tank Army, lack of fuel necessitated creating the strong advance detachments by August 12 and 13. He also notes that the "decisive condition enabling the success of the advance detachments of the tank army, operating up to 100 km ahead of the main forces, was the absence of organized enemy resistance." I. Krupchenko, "6-ia gvardeiskaia tankovaia armiia v Khingano-Mukdenskoi operatsii" [The Sixth Guards Tank Army in the Khingans-Mukden Operation], Voennootnoro-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 12, December 1962, p. 26.
so acute in some cases that artillery transport was converted to carry troops. The poor cross-country capability of motor transport further hampered infantry movements over terrain without adequate roads. Inadequate information on the conditions of roads and insufficient preparations for road service, including engineering support, were notable deficiencies on both major fronts. Rather than the bulk of foot soldiers, however, the main problems in the rear were caused by the sheer mass of artillery and ammunition, further exacerbated by the consuming demands for fuel by the armies' rapidly advancing mechanized forces.

**Armored and Mechanized Forces**

In the Manchurian campaign, the forward concentration of tank units on the Transbaikal Front was a strategic decision designed, and deemed, to have enhanced the success of the entire campaign. The uninterrupted advance of the Sixth Guards Tank Army in a naturally hostile environment with enormous logistic problems has been acclaimed by many Soviet analysts, including its front commander who had originally resisted its commitment to lead the first echelon of the main effort. But, armored and mechanized forces also led the other advances of the Manchurian campaign. Their successful employment demonstrated that the "Far East region (including the Greater Khingans) is accessible to large masses of troops equipped with modern technology." More generally, "in the absence of major concentrations of enemy forces and prepared defenses," the campaign showed that the "use of tank divisions and armies in the first echelon of the Front is advantageous under conditions of a surprise initiation of war."
Selecting a tank army to lead the main effort, namely, the Sixth Guards Tank Army on the Transbaikal Front, was unprecedented in Soviet military history. Its mission was to achieve the major, ultimate objectives as quickly as possible. However, conventional formations with infantry leading the tanks were seriously considered and only reluctantly rejected as incapable of ensuring optimal rates of advance. Specifically, the General Staff in late June 1945 persuaded the Supreme Commander, contradicting Marshal Malinovsky's previous plan for the Transbaikal Front, that after crossing the desert and surmounting the Greater Khingan Mountains, large infantry units and especially their artillery support would inevitably congest the passes and slow all the forces behind them. By early August, the tank army was augmented with two motorized infantry divisions, two self-propelled gun brigades, and four independent tank battalions. Through these reinforcements, the army's self-sufficiency was increased to improve its independent operation in depth. Particularly significant for advocates of mechanized infantry, the "special meaning" of the Sixth Guards Tank Army's experience is that it had, through these additions, actually become a mechanized army comprising 44 battalions of motorized infantry and 25 tank battalions. Similarly, in other armies of the Transbaikal Front, tanks were heavily concentrated in the first echelon. For certain

the General Staff's decision to lead the main effort with a fully mechanized tank army. See Shtemenko's account in his memoirs (1968/1970) for one well-placed observer's view of how the Supreme Command initiated, supervised, and resolved this argument.


Zakharov, Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, 1969, p. 19; and Shtemenko, 1968/1970, pp. 335, 339. As noted, Marshal Malinovsky and General Zakharov had, in June, opposed the leading role of the Sixth Guards Tank Army assigned to it by the General Staff. Their intent could have been to transform it into a mechanized army and, thereby, ensure that the infantry had a good claim for some of the armored forces' scarce industrial and technical resources necessary for its own postwar, high-quality motorization.

Zakharov, Final, 1969, p. 106.

experienced army commanders, this was an innovation in operational forma-
tion that had no counterpart in their previous offensives on the Western front.25

Tanks and mechanized forces aided the development of the campaign because of their unique ability to pursue retreating forces deeply and to prevent them from organizing well-prepared defenses.26 The advantages of tanks were surprisingly great in mountainous and desert environments, which, until then, had been regarded by Soviet commanders as serious retardants to their large masses of heavily equipped troops. Whether they were in advance detachments or leading the first echelons of the main body, tank forces were best suited for executing sudden, rapid, and deep encirclements of opposing forces, paralyzing their movements, and disrupting their combat coordination. Besides the tank forces' potent combination of mobility and firepower, their combination of armor and maneuverability was most valuable in the desert because it made their flanks less vulnerable than softer and less mechanized infantry forces.27

The overwhelming concentration of tank forces in the first echelon at the start of the war facilitated penetration in depth for the initial exploitation of surprise attacks. Indeed, it was this innovation that allowed accelerated advances in the campaign.28 The poor state of Japanese defenses has also been acknowledged as having facilitated Soviet mechanized assaults and advances.29 Still, the main credit for the stunning Soviet success has been attributed to the operational planning, tactical skill, supply organization, and technical quality of its modern, mechanized arms.30

28Ibid., pp. 70, 329-330.
30Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 279. Krupchenko, who has recurrently noted the absence of organized resistance, has concluded that the rapidity
Mechanized forces, however, were clearly hampered in the Manchurian campaign by rear support and resupply problems. In 1945, two to three times more engineering support and materiel were required in the hostile natural environment of the Far East theater than in the more benign western plains. Under modern conditions, similarly high rates of advance would require even more mechanized engineering support. Depending on the specific terrain, climate, and resistance encountered, a variety of problems developed in supplying or improvising traversing aids, inspecting and repairing tanks, and conserving scarce fuel. Fuel shortages were particularly constraining for the most unexpectedly successful forces as their accelerated rates of advance imposed excess demands on the limited-capacity supply lines. Slow transport movements over rain-soaked roads as early as the second day of the offensive aggravated these problems so that even the main forces on the Transbaikal Front began to stall soon after the war began. In some sectors, tank (and self-propelled artillery) forces resorted to moving on railroad beds to facilitate passage and economize on scarce fuel. In sum, the natural hostility of the Far East theater compounded the normal difficulties of providing combat support services to heavily armored and mechanized forces, especially in a rapid offensive.

31 Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 331.
32 Zakharov, Final, 1969, pp. 156-157; Col V. Ezhakov, "Boevoe primenenie tankov v gorno-taekhnoi mestnosti po opyty 1-go Dal'nevostochnogo Fronta" [Combat Use of Tanks in Mountainous Forest Locality According to the Experience of the First Far Eastern Front], Voennno-istorichekii zhurnal, No. 1, January 1974, p. 79; and Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 332.
33 Colonel A. A. Strokov judges this "fully justified" (Istorii voennogo iskusstva [History of Military Art], Voenizdat, Moscow, 1966, p. 516). However, Liudnikov (1967, pp. 99, 103-105) reports that this use of rail beds was halted to prevent their damage. He further cites the effective use of rail transport to move fuel-starved tanks and artillery and, particularly, of railroad bridges to move vehicles across rivers, observing that due to the absence of railroad troops, the requisite work had to be done by combat engineers.
Aside from the Transbaikal and Mongolian Fronts of Inner Asia, tank armies have been deemed ill-suited to the Far East. On the First Far Eastern Front, because of continuous fortifications and successive mountain barriers, the massed deployment of a tank army or even a corps requires especially extensive engineering and logistics measures. The disappointing results achieved by the Tenth Mechanized Corps in these forested mountains have been largely attributed to inadequate engineering support. Rather than several corps using a single road, as in 1945, the minimal requirement implied by retrospective analysis is that at least one engineering brigade and two or three roads would be needed for each corps-size unit. Moreover, because of terrain constraints, the maneuverability of tank forces could not be fully exploited even with adequate support. Instead, tank brigades and self-propelled artillery regiments, attached as reinforcements to the combined-arms armies, were the most effective organization for mechanized forces under these conditions. Advance tank battalions were particularly useful as battering rams to breach enemy fortified areas and to make way for the main forces. In conjunction with special sapper and engineering units, tanks also proved valuable as trailblazers through the thick forests where they bulldozed roads for the main forces and artillery. The "rich and valuable experience [by the tank forces on the First Far Eastern Front] of a forced offensive, breaching fortifications in mountainous forests and crossing rivers" provides concrete guidance for the uses and requirements of armored forces in such terrain. In sum, the uneven success of tank forces on the First Far Eastern Front proved both the value and the limits of employing heavily equipped units in mountainous forests.

The experience of the tank forces on the Transbaikal Front, which was apparently more successful because it quickly suppressed all serious resistance, illustrated the value of numerous operational and tactical

34Vnotchenko, 1971, pp. 331-332, 335.
36Ezhakov, 1974, pp. 77-81.
innovations. First, it demonstrated the feasibility of deploying into combat while on the march in the opening assaults of an offensive.\textsuperscript{38} Second, the experience of direct and multifaceted cooperation with air forces has been "of great interest" to Air Force as well as ground-force authorities.\textsuperscript{39} The extraordinarily rapid advances by the Sixth Guards Tank Army were critically dependent on massive air deliveries of fuel, ammunition, and even water in the desert.\textsuperscript{40} The Air Forces also provided the heavily mechanized advance detachments with valuable reconnaissance, communications, navigation, and interction support through difficult and potentially hostile terrain. Finally, a particularly "instructive" innovation was the use of armed reconnaissance teams to smooth the way for tank forces. Operating on motorcycles 150 to 200 kilometers ahead of the tank corps, these special units were trained and equipped to seize and secure key objectives such as intersections, bridges, and airports. Even more than the advance detachments and the first echelons of the main effort, these specially detached, highly advanced units were heavily dependent on air support for resupply and reconnaissance.\textsuperscript{41}

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

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 1971, p. 81. To adapt this experience, Soviet readers have been reminded that "the higher degree of motorization of modern forces and their heightened maneuverability allow them to execute movements and marches in even less time and at faster rates."


\textsuperscript{40} Zakharov, \textit{Final}, 1969, pp. 193-194.

\textsuperscript{41} Krupchenko, 1962, p. 27.
Artillery

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

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

\[\text{This has aroused the indignation, but not substantially altered the public assessments, of artillery advocates. A terse and critical evaluation of artillery forces' contribution to the campaign appeared in Vnotchenko, 1966, and was amplified in the 1971 edition (pp. 345-340). General Liudnikov's memoirs on the campaign were so deficient in the eyes of the Transbaikal Front's Artillery Commander, Colonel General N. Fomin, that he composed a postscript for it to correct the "rather modest role" artillery actions play in the account. The first major exposition of the artillery's role in the campaign did not appear until the second edition of Artillery Marshal K. P. Kazakov's memoirs in 1973; the first edition, published in 1969, did not even mention the Far East campaign (Vsegda s pekhotoi, vsegda s tankami [Always with the Infantry, Always with the Tanks], 2d ed., rev. and enl., Voenizdat, Moscow, 1973, pp. 246-295).} \]

\[\text{Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 284.} \]

\[\text{Ibid., p. 103; and Liudnikov, 1967, pp. 56-57.} \]
mention physical destruction," and "artillery had the decisive role in the struggle against Japanese fortified areas," primarily on the First Far Eastern Front.  

In the Far East theater, the deployment and positioning of artillery pieces demanded inordinate time and effort. This was partly because the enormous construction and other work had to be performed at night under strict camouflage discipline to ensure surprise and partly because of the theater's poor roads and rough terrain.  

In contrast with the standard three to four days required under normal conditions, presumably temperate plains, 10 to 15 days were required just for positioning artillery in the Far East.  

Prewar restraints on reconnaissance by artillery survey parties and on live firing to register the range of the guns were compounded by poor visibility at night and heavy rainfall at the time of the offensive. Thus, most Front and Army Commanders decided to forego artillery bombardments in advance of the initial assaults.  

In the rear, artillery ammunition took up so much of the limited-capacity transport facilities that 75 to 85 percent of rail cargoes on the First Far Eastern Front were occupied by artillery materiel. To move artillery forward, reassign it to new units, and deliver its ammunition under fluid combat conditions created severe transportation problems in the exceptionally rough terrain of the Far East theater.  

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46 Ibid., p. 263.  
48 Ibid., p. 345. In the course of training, experiments were conducted using powerful searchlights for range-finding at night; but dust, debris, and rainfall were found to obscure the targets or blind the observers with reflections, making the illuminated artillery barrage an ineffectual prelude to attack.  
49 Ibid., p. 347. Marshal Kazakov (1973, pp. 260-262) acknowledges this criticism by noting the importance of timely stockpiling. In fact, ammunition transports for artillery were first allocated to the Far Eastern theater in January 1945, and by the time of the offensive, the First Far Eastern Front's stocks contained 6 million rounds, including mines and charges of various calibers (p. 265).  
but its mobility was grossly deficient relative to the exceptional requirements for lightning operations in the Far East.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, critics recognize that artillery was very effectively employed in the Far East when it was well prepared, and that the leading role of artillery belongs to its mechanized and self-propelled mobile forces.\(^{51}\) But heavy, slow-moving artillery was restricted to breaching fortifications and destroying points of resistance because it lagged too far behind the fast-moving infantry and tank units when employed in pursuit.\(^{52}\) Indeed, the congestion of the roads caused by artillery equipment and support elements occasionally paralyzed movements by tanks and infantry. The artillery's high rates of fuel consumption practically exhausted allocated supplies and left them stranded because deliveries could not be accelerated.

Thus, subdivision strength and self-propelled artillery units, rather than larger and heavier artillery units, were best suited for exploitation and pursuit because of their superior mobility. Emphasizing these strengths, artillery advocates alone have noted that in many cases the artillery component of advance detachments was so large that these elite units were actually commanded by artillery officers.\(^{53}\) To achieve the requisite operational efficiency and flexibility, especially when operating in the depth of prepared positions and engaging in unplanned and unforeseeable combat conditions, the command organization of artillery was of "exceptional importance."\(^{54}\) Thus, in the Manchurian campaign, the fact that the centralized artillery command was ordinarily maintained only up to division level, and very seldom at corps level, was an innovative adaption to the Far East.

**Border Troops**

In the Manchurian campaign, Soviet Border Troops for the first time took part in offensive operations under the command of fronts and armies.

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 284.

\(^{53}\) See Liudnikov's memoirs (1967, p. 117) for a postscript contributed by Colonel General of Artillery N. Fomin.

\(^{54}\) Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 346.
In this capacity they executed such tasks as overcoming border obstacles and positions, pursuing troops, engaging sabotage and reconnaissance units, and protecting the rears of the field forces. The experience "proved convincingly" that Border Troops can "under certain conditions successfully execute active offensive missions." Because of the special and unpredictable missions that Border Troops may be assigned in the event of hostilities, "it is only by means of all inclusive training of Border Troops in peacetime that successful actions in the beginning phase of war can be guaranteed."

In the assessment of Marshal Vasilevskii, the Far East Commander in Chief in 1945, the Border Troops rendered "enormous support" to the regular forces throughout the campaign. Besides pursuit, security, countersabotage, and counterintelligence operations, newly formed special detachments took over the defense of large sectors of the front and thereby freed field troops to concentrate densely in the narrow breakthrough sectors, particularly on the First Far Eastern Front. Border Troops also acted as guides for the advance and reconnaissance detachments of the field forces on the first night of the offensive.

The operations by one detachment of Border Troops allegedly cleared hostile forces from an area 427 kilometers in length and 90 kilometers in depth, and simultaneously secured 24 population centers, including a town. Altogether, two-thirds of the Border Troops assigned to the armies moved with the advancing forces and only one-third stayed behind.

56 Colonels V. Platonov and A. Bulatov, "Pogranichnye voiska perekhodiat v nastuplenie" [Border Troops Assume the Offensive], Voennno-istoricheskiy zhurnal, No. 8, August 1965, p. 16. This article was apparently inspired by the armed forces of the KGB (Committee for State Security), which, in effect, constitute a special branch of the ground forces, the Border Troops.
57 Ibid.
58 Zakharov, Final, 1969, p. 182. The Border Troops' peacetime language training, reconnaissance activities, and surveillance functions doubtless enhanced their value in this role.
59 A. M. Vasilevskii, Delo vei zhizni [A Lifetime Affair], Politizdat, Moscow, 1974, p. 519. The Marshal's account fails to record the relative strength of friendly and hostile forces in this sector.
at the border. Accordingly, in launching the offensive, the Border Troops' primary mission was moving with the front. Protecting the rear became a secondary mission, but a secondary mission that was "fully justified" in view of alleged Japanese attempts to infiltrate through the frontier. 60

Thorough advance arrangements for mutual support by Border Troops with ground and naval units were noteworthy, particularly in the sectors where Border Troops actually led the surprise attack. 61 Border Troops helped to mount the initial sneak attack on Japanese fortifications the night of the offensive, thereby allowing the main forces to advance immediately without air or artillery preparations. Thus, the Border Troops enhanced the tactical surprise of the offensive. 62

In March and April 1945 the task of border defense in certain sectors was reassigned to the garrisons of the fortified areas. 63 These garrisons were subsequently reinforced by combined-arms units to prepare the field defenses, which ultimately served as starting areas for the offensive. As forces concentrated and supplies accumulated in these "border defense" sites, strict camouflage discipline was enforced to ensure cover and surprise. Accordingly, during the preparatory phase, Border Troops patrolled actively outside the fortified areas to prevent the detection of the build-ups by the other side's reconnaissance. Thus, the role of the Border Troops was central to ensure strategic surprise as well as to obtain tactical surprise.

Given the constraining precautions adopted to deny warning to the Japanese forces, the Border Troops helped to provide critical intelligence for the initial attack, to secure maximum surprise, and to serve as armed scouts for advance detachments and rear guards for field forces in the offensive itself. 64

60 Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 293; and 1971, p. 359.
63 Fortified areas (ukreplennye raioni) refer to defensive positions occupied in peacetime by static infantry units, of which there were several on each front.
64 Zakharov, Final, 1969, pp. 130, 182, 368.
Engineering Troops

In addition to the enormous construction tasks required to prepare and conduct the campaign, Engineering Troops also assumed important combat and reconnaissance missions in the 1945 offensive. Such vast demands were imposed on the engineers that they had to train large numbers of nonregulation combat engineers during the final build-up. Unlike operations in the West, the Far East campaign "opened up a new page in Soviet military engineering art" for an offensive conducted in a theater of forested mountains and desert plains. In such a hostile natural environment, engineering support was not only necessary for preparing the theater before the offensive, but it was also an important factor in its progress. Aside from their novel roles in the advance detachments and mechanized forces recorded above, the engineers' special accomplishments in this campaign were: (1) helping to lift a whole front's forces across the Amur River at the start of offensive operations; (2) supplying water to an entire front in the desert, and (3) launching an offensive through heavily forested and fortified mountain areas.

During the build-up, Engineering Troops constructed 1390 kilometers of new roads and repaired 5000 kilometers of old ones. On the

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65 Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 286. Soviet texts indicate the sapery (sappers) as a distinct part of the engineering troops. Hence, "sappers" correspond to U.S. combat engineers and "engineers" to U.S. construction engineers.


67 Zakharov, Final, 1969, p. 129. Marshals Malinovsky and Zakharov presumably subscribed to the following, ostensibly conservative credit: "It is not an exaggeration to state that in a number of situations, engineering support was the deciding factor in the successful accomplishment of missions by the Soviet troops" (ibid., p. 127, and Malinovsky, Final, 1966, p. 118).


69 Ibid., p. 128.
Transbaikal Front, they drilled thousands of wells for water and excavated underground shelters for the tanks of the Sixth Guards Tank Army.\textsuperscript{70} They also performed extensive and elaborate camouflage measures to cover preparations for the campaign.

In the offensive itself, "significant interest" is attached to the engineering support provided for storming permanent fortifications. The combat engineers units of the Fifth Army on the First Far Eastern Front were particularly enterpriseing in training over 5000 men as non-regulation combat engineers and organizing them into 163 obstacle-removing and 106 assault groups.\textsuperscript{71} Combat engineers performed a central role in securing railroad junctions, facilities, and tunnels that were critical for the rapid progress of the main forces.\textsuperscript{72} For lack of special railroad troops, in certain cases, combat engineers assumed the task of operating the railroads.\textsuperscript{73} Both for reconnaissance and for holding valuable assets deep within enemy lines, combat engineers took part in a large share of the airborne landing missions conducted in this campaign.\textsuperscript{74}

The natural conditions of the theater, its inhospitable climate, rugged terrain, paucity of construction materials, and poorly paved roads seriously aggravated the normal problems of the Engineering Troops in this campaign, especially in supporting the assaults on the First and Second Far Eastern Fronts.\textsuperscript{75} Like the infantry, their forward movements were so badly hampered by the shortages of motor transport that certain reconnaissance and combat engineers actually lagged behind

\textsuperscript{70} Krupchenko, 1962, p. 19; and Khrenov in Zheleznykh, 1958, p. 296. Tsirlin, 1963, pp. 39-40, states that almost 50 percent of the Engineering Troops on the Transbaikal Front were detailed to the water supply mission.

\textsuperscript{71} Ynotchenko, 1966, p. 287.

\textsuperscript{72} Zakharov, Final, 1969, pp. 157-158; and Khrenov in Zheleznykh, 1958, pp. 301-302.

\textsuperscript{73} Liudnikov, 1967, p. 105.


\textsuperscript{75} Khrenov in Zheleznykh, 1958, p. 304.
the advancing forces they were supposed to lead and had to resort to hitchhiking on infantry and artillery vehicles. Nevertheless, Engineering Troops played a "decisive" role in the advance of tank units. Such substantial support demanded two to three times as many engineering troops and equipment as ordinarily required in the plains of the West. Today, even more support would be required. Moreover, in the particularly arid and rugged conditions of deserts and mountains, operations require higher allocations of water crews and road service units. Thus, Soviet military analyses have endorsed the exceptionally large role played by engineering support in the 1945 campaign; and they have projected an even larger role in more mechanized modern operations, especially under such extreme natural conditions as prevail in the Far East.

Communications Troops

The offensive along multiple, widely separated axes forced Soviet Communications Troops, reluctantly, to relinquish their previous reliance on cable and to adopt the innovation of radio for operational coordination as well as for tactical communications. Among the deficiencies cited by modern military critics were their inadequate advance allocations of appropriate equipment, the lack of preparations for moving it forward quickly with the front, and the means of protecting it. To minimize their effect on operations, the threat of interrupted communications had required the preparation of advance orders

\footnote{Liudnikov, 1967, p. 82.}

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

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

See also Vnotchenko, 1966, pp. 294-298.
enabling the units to plan to operate completely independently. As it was "especially important" to guarantee continuous combat initiative, these advance orders were drawn up to avoid restrictive command and control arrangements.

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

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78 Vnotchenko, 1971, pp. 334, 360. At the higher levels, however, there was no relaxation of tight command. Liudnikov (1967, p. 56) notes the front command's order to his Army staff on August 8, which "made it obligatory for us to report on combat actions to the Front staff every four hours." Vasilevskii (1967, p. 85) states that the "Supreme Commander stayed in direct and daily communication with the acting fronts, even while at the Potsdam Conference." Lieutenant General of Signal Troops P. Kurochkin reports that he was "struck with the great attention to the communications service by the top leadership" and that in the July 5 Stavka directive, troop command and control ranked among the very top priorities ("V shtabe Glavkmna na Dal'nem Vostoke" [On the Staff of the Far East Commander in Chief], Voenny-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 11, November 1967, p. 77). See also S. P. Ivanov, Army General (general editor), Nachal'nyi period voyny; po opytu pervykhm kampanii operatsii vtoroi mirovoi voyny [The Initial Phase of War, According to the Experience of the First Campaigns and Operations of World War II], Voenizdat, Moscow, 1974, p. 294.

79 Army General I. A. Pliev observes that the front command permitted the Soviet-Mongol Group "freedom of action and full opportunity to show initiative" in fulfilling its mission of covering the flank of the main effort on the Transbaikal Front (Cherez Gobi i Khingan [Across the Gobi and the Khingans], Voenizdat, Moscow, 1965, p. 35). Vnotchenko (1971, p. 325) notes that the above-plan performance of the Second Far Eastern Front was achieved through the multidirectional maneuvering of its forces permitted by the absence of a tightly structured front. Fomin (in Liudnikov, 1967, p. 166) claims that in the Far East operations "commanders at all levels were given considerably greater independence than on the Soviet-German front."
with solving operational problems due to interrupted communications. These included forming operational groups of staffs, maintaining command posts close to the advancing troops, and issuing advance orders to unit commanders.

To a commander of the Communications Troops, the Far East campaign is of "special interest" because of the acute difficulties it posed in (1) maintaining communications across extreme distances, (2) maintaining communications during very high advance rates and very frequent relocation of the command points for large units, (3) setting up communication systems in the complete absence of roads, (4) transporting signal units and equipment by air, and (5) maintaining communications with air and naval landing parties and with the Supreme High Command across territory not controlled by Soviet troops. 80 This commander of the Far East theater's Communications Troops expressed his branch's particular anxiety in the face of unexpectedly high rates of advance that required the extensive use of mobile and insecure radios. From the standpoint of a field commander, however, the army-front link must "more boldly" switch to radio communications during rapid advances. 81 Noting that 30 percent of all noncombat sorties of the Air Forces were committed to communications functions, the Chief of Staff of the main effort similarly endorsed the frequent relocation of staffs and their exclusive reliance on radios to maintain communications with such rapidly advancing units as the Sixth Guards Tank Army. Citing the exemplary communications on the Transbaikal Front, he deemed its organization "especially instructive."82

Basing its analysis on similar data and assessments, a practical prescription for Communications Troops' operations in the Far East stresses the need for high-powered radio stations in mountainous areas, and recommends that "under new conditions" mobile radio stations should have armored protection, while their transport vehicles must have sufficient cross-country mobility to keep up with combat formations. It

80 Kurochkin, 1967, p. 82.
concludes that "combat experience proved the necessity of echeloning and planned relocation of radio equipment in the complex terrain conditions of the Far East military theater."\textsuperscript{83}

Combined-arms authorities have drawn the following lessons from the Manchurian campaign: slow-moving, ultra-secure cable systems traditionally preferred by Communications Troop commanders are inappropriate for lightning offensives; rather, the need is for ample, hardened, and highly mobile systems.

**AIR FORCES**

In the Manchurian campaign, Soviet Air Forces "completely dominated" the air space in opposing the acknowledgedly weak Japanese air forces and air defenses.\textsuperscript{84} Despite the lack of armed opposition, extraordinary efforts were still required to deliver strong air support to the ground forces because of the natural barriers to effective air operations inherent in the Far East theater.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, the Soviet Air Forces acquired new experience performing several missions in pursuit under naturally extreme but militarily mild conditions: (1) air transport of fuel, ammunition, and even water;\textsuperscript{86} (2) airborne landings;\textsuperscript{87} and (3) guiding ground forces through desert and mountains.\textsuperscript{88} Finally, the plans and measures successfully used to cover the prewar concentration

\textsuperscript{83}Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 297; and 1971, p. 332. Given the poor road conditions, even mobile radio means could not keep up with the rapidly advancing army staffs. A solution was found in organizing all staff radio vehicles in three echelons or series, each consisting of stations of high, medium, and low capacity, thus ensuring the constant availability of at least the basic communications means (Kurochkin, 1967, p. 81).


\textsuperscript{85}Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 340. Indeed, the cost of creating substantial air capabilities to overcome the terrain, climate, and logistic problems of that theater exceeds the norms established in more militarily hostile but naturally congenial environments.


\textsuperscript{87}A full account of airborne landing operations during the campaign is presented in Lisov, 1968, pp. 191–198.

\textsuperscript{88}Vnotchenko, 1971, pp. 338–339.
of Air Forces in the theater have been alluded to for their "definite
interest."

To ensure surprise, the build-up was conducted according to a
strict regime that covered Air Force movements and communications. The
divisions of the Twelfth Air Army did not begin to move from their dis-
perssed bases toward the Transbaikal Front's intermediate airfields un-
til 20 days before the start of operations. At about the same time,
the Ninth and Tenth Air Armies on the First and Second Far Eastern
Fronts began to move to forward airfields from their permanent bases
further back. On all fronts, extensive camouflage was employed, and
radio communications maintained their normal routines while actual com-
mands were transmitted by cable and courier. On the Transbaikal Front,
not until one or two days before the start of operations were aircraft
moved to forward airfields, and attack and fighter aircraft only arrived
on the eve of the war. Air Force authorities have drawn particular
attention to the operational camouflage of air basing and the organiza-
tion of low-altitude flight formations during the final relocation to
forward airfields. Without explaining them in detail, combined-arms
authorities state such measures "deserve attention."

Planned disparities in the operational depths, rates of advance,
force compositions, and other characteristics of the three fronts de-
demanded different forms of air support. Accordingly, the initial al-
locations and mission priorities of the air armies varied between the
three fronts in ways that remain applicable under similar conditions.
The bulk of the long-range bomber and transport units was concentrated
in support of the main effort on the Transbaikal Front, while fighter-
bombers and short-range fighters were disproportionately allocated to

89 Ibid., p. 342.
90 Ibid., p. 341. The divisions were initially distributed over
an area of about one million square kilometers. Their intermediate
airfields were located 100 to 200 kilometers from the border and 200
to 300 kilometers from the area of the main effort.
93 Ibid., p. 344.
the Second Far Eastern Front for operations primarily along the banks of the Amur and the Sungari Rivers. For reconnaissance, communications, and resupply on the Transbaikal Front, noncombat sorties actually exceeded combat sorties, while the First and Second Far Eastern Fronts had one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half times as many combat as noncombat sorties. Although weakly challenged by opposing forces and limited to the main effort, Soviet long-range air bombing and support capabilities demonstrated extraordinary offensive strength by directly assisting mechanized forces on the ground.

Because of the prewar constraints on information collection and the need to ensure rapid rates of advance, the primary missions of the Air Force at the start of operations were long-range reconnaissance and bombardment concentrated on fixed fortifications, supply depots, command centers, and railroads. Overall, 30 percent of the sorties were for reconnaissance purposes and, for lack of appropriate aircraft, a substantial share of combat aviation helped to perform this urgent task.

The initial priority of destroying command centers and isolating the area from reserves "arose from the concrete situation of the war, and the experience continues to be of timely significance." In particular, on the Transbaikal Front, the mission to bomb enemy rail transportation was especially important. Yet, there were notable lapses in planning and possible failures in executing the air interdiction of force movements, particularly in the vicinity of the Greater

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95Rudenko, 1968, p. 429; and Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 341. The latter source indicates that this "experience possesses definite interest."
97Rudenko, 1968, p. 435. This assessment was confirmed by Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 432; and Zakharov, Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal, 1969, p. 22. Indeed, they state that air bombardment of the limited rail and road system of the area "fundamentally affected the successful development of the operation."
Khingan Mountains where the Japanese could have reached, and blocked, the passes by road.  

As the offensive developed, Air Forces progressively concentrated on supporting the mechanized armies, especially their divisional and corps advance detachments leading the fronts. Because the ground units were so unexpectedly fast in traversing distances, demands for air support were compounded and plans were superseded. Resupply requirements for the Sixth Guards Tank Army became particularly urgent as it sped across the desert and spanned the Greater Khingan Mountains within three days, barely half the time expected. Similarly, unanticipated demands for relocating communications facilities further limited combat air operations, especially on the Transbaikal Front.

Shortcomings in fulfilling assigned missions on the Transbaikal Front were ultimately due largely to the failure to make advance plans and allocations of materiel for rebasing the Twelfth Air Army into forward airfields. With the limited range of fighter-bombers, the Sixth Guards Tank Army could be substantially supported only by long-range bombers. At the same time, supplying such a large force by air transport in the mountains involved exceptional difficulties because of lack of natural landing sites. Moreover, forward airfield

98 Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 340. Colonel Vnotchenko also notes the inadequate planning for the bomber support of the 39th Army, north of the Sixth Guards Tank Army, whose progress could have been most readily impeded. In contrast, the account edited by both the Commander and the Chief of Staff of the Transbaikal Front (Zakharov, Final, 1969, p. 126) rejects as unfounded the criticisms made by histories of the planning and assignment of air support to the various axes, on the grounds that they failed to recognize the limited capability of the aircraft at the time, especially the limited range of bombers. They concur, however, in criticizing the lack of rebasing plans for the Transbaikal Front's Twelfth Air Army in view of the planned deep advance of the tank army. Krupchenko (1962, pp. 17-18), recounting the Sixth Guards Tank Army's operations, attributes to the tank army the mission of interdicting pass approaches, and notes that it included securing sites for airfields in the Greater Khingan range.

100 Rudenko, 1968, p. 431.
construction was seriously hampered by the "extreme shortage of transport aircraft" needed to lift airfield personnel and supplies. Because of the unexpectedly great demand for fuel and the diminished capacity of ground transport caused by heavy rains, air transport had to concentrate on filling urgent fuel supply requirements and was unable to move airfield equipment at the same time.¹⁰²

Throughout the campaign, the close air support of mechanized forces on the ground, particularly on the Second Far Eastern Front, was based on detailed joint plans, the formation of joint operational groups within armies and divisions, the placement of command points for air attack divisions close to the front lines, and provision of joint communications documents such as coded maps, radio signal tables, and mutual positioning signals.¹⁰³ This close cooperation was particularly valuable in one sector, from an army commander's standpoint, in its "exceptional" contributions to orientation and navigation on the ground.¹⁰⁴ Similarly "interesting" experience with ground-air cooperation in this campaign was exhibited in numerous but small airborne landings. Although comprised of small unit paradrops and company-size landings, which were largely unopposed and concentrated toward the end

¹⁰²Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 344. A significant lesson of this experience has been explicitly inferred:

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

The criticism of the "extreme shortage of transport aircraft" (Vnotchenko, 1971, pp. 344-345) appears to be entirely directed to planning oversights, since it does not refer to a general Soviet shortage of the craft. Together with the criticisms of "feeble projections for airfield maneuver" (ibid., p. 340; and Zakharov, Final, 1969, p. 127), it implies previous underestimation of the role of air transport. See also Rudenko, 1968, p. 433.


of the campaign, these airborne operations showed that "great opportunities for the use of airborne troops exist in conditions of desert, mountainous desert, and mountainous-forested locales containing significant sectors that are not occupied by enemy troops and that are inevitably weak in air defenses." In practice, airborne operations were mainly used to conduct reconnaissance, seize key facilities, and occupy command centers.

Thus, the 1945 campaign showed that "in the Far East military theater, the role of air transport is exceptionally great," both in supplying and moving troops; and for sudden, fast, and deep offensives in general, it demonstrated the need for long-range air support and air rebasing capabilities to reinforce and resupply advance units on the ground.

**ANTI-AIR DEFENSE FORCES (PVO)**

Each of the fronts had its own PVO army consisting of three fighter-interceptor divisions, several antiaircraft artillery corps and regiments, and armored trains equipped with antiaircraft artillery. In addition, combined-arms armies as well as tank and infantry divisions had mobile air-defense forces attached to them. Special forces and arms were also deployed in the rear of each front to limit the extent and damage of airborne landings that might have penetrated the air defense screen in forward areas.

Actual employment of the PVO forces during the campaign was not necessary because of the lack of Japanese air capability. Nevertheless, Soviet military authorities have increasingly stressed the need for both national and theater antiair defense systems to safeguard Soviet

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105 Zakharov, *Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1969, p. 22. Alternative views have been expressed by other authors. Strokov (1966, p. 516) has noted that these landings "were made primarily at enemy airfields and were possible because of the demoralization of the enemy." However, Vnotchenko has emphasized the value of airborne landings in such difficult terrain because it "will render difficult the use of other types of troops for lack of freedom of maneuver" (1971, p. 320).

106 Vnotchenko, 1971, p. 344.

107 Ibid., pp. 78-79. See also the tables provided in Zakharov, *Final*, 1969, pp. 399-401.
deployments and, thereby, permit greater confidence in carrying out offensive operations.\textsuperscript{108} Finally, the offensive value of air defense forces in providing fighter-escort and ground-based defense coverage for deep-penetrating air and ground forces has been explicitly affirmed.\textsuperscript{109} Thus, analytical histories of the Manchurian campaign have endorsed the special value of air defense forces in protecting base structures, armies on the march, and advance detachments from air attack.

**NAVAL FORCES**

In the Manchurian operations, the Soviet Amur Flotilla ferried troops and supplies along the Amur and Sungari Rivers, and thereby enabled the Second Far Eastern Front's limited forces to maneuver rapidly and to exceed their plan.\textsuperscript{110} Outside Manchuria itself, operations by the Pacific Fleet interdicted Japanese and secured Soviet naval movements in the Sea of Japan, attacked Japanese naval bases by sea and air, and protected the Soviet coast against Japanese landings.\textsuperscript{111} Only after the ground operations in Manchuria had definitely succeeded were amphibious landings to seize Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands finally implemented. The Soviets' inadequate equipment, the poor coordination between their ground and naval forces, and their weak communications made these landings much less successful than those planned, prepared, and integrated by ground-force commanders on the Second Far Eastern Front. The Pacific Fleet, however, had better prepared its air arm for antishipping and antiport operations in the Sea of Japan to start simultaneously with the Manchurian offensive.\textsuperscript{112} And the Marines had also occupied new, permanent coastal-defense


\textsuperscript{111} Zakharov, Final, 1969, p. 86.

\textsuperscript{112} Vnotchenko, 1966, p. 271.
fortifications along the Sea of Japan well beforehand. Thus, the Soviet Navy's early attention to the 1945 Far East campaign displayed renewed interest in retaining its role and improving its performance as a versatile auxiliary to Soviet ground and air forces.

\[113\] Ibid., 1971, p. 78.

\[114\] The Soviet Navy was, by 1960, the only Soviet military organization to have published histories devoted entirely to the 1945 Far East campaign, one each in 1958 and 1959. Within the next several years, the Soviet Navy revived the Marines, which had been a dormant institution since 1945, and established a new long- and medium-range air arm incorporating ground-based forces equipped with antiship cruise missiles and reconnaissance sensors.
V. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE MANCHURIAN MODEL

Soviet military assessments of the Manchurian campaign have endorsed its importance primarily for general strategic design and operational planning, secondarily for operational and tactical problem-solving in the conditions of East Asia, and only incidentally for tactical problem-solving under alternative natural and military conditions. Certain of the claims for radically innovative methods simply express professional pride in having efficiently applied lessons learned and resources freed from combat in the West. But the Manchurian model amounts to much more than military pride in past glories. The Manchurian model and its professional promotion through analytic histories of the Manchurian campaign have reinforced Soviet military interest in conventional offensive strength. The thorough consideration that Soviet authorities have given to lightning, combined-arms campaigns is largely attributable to the enormous losses that were suffered in the protracted operations of World War II and that could be caused by large-scale nuclear operations in the future. Interest in the Manchurian model also reflects the immediate institutional concerns of military officers, impulses to achieve greater authority in strategic decision-making, aspirations for more and better career opportunities, and projections that greater offensive strength may be needed to maintain or expand positions abroad. Indeed, important geopolitical and traditional factors in Soviet strategy have made the Manchurian model increasingly relevant as international relations have evolved since 1960.

The Soviet Union chose during the 1960s to compete with strong military powers in Asia as well as Europe. Soviet Armed Forces have thus been developing to help neutralize these neighboring forces in peacetime and to seize the adjacent areas they defend in case of war. Unless the Soviet leadership has neutralized its continental neighbors by peaceful political means, a potential multifront problem remains a plausible worst-case for Soviet strategy. This problem, in turn, has created issues for, and imposed demands on, Soviet Armed Forces. Among the more difficult questions it has raised (expressed in American terminology) are:
1. What is required to deter simultaneous threats from several directions?
2. How could forces prevail in one theater and, at the same time, deter threats on the other fronts?
3. Which preparations are needed to prepare for possibly large and simultaneous operations on both fronts?

A multiforn environment, which has also placed unusual demands on U.S. and Chinese defense programs in the past, has been the historic norm for Soviet strategy. It was temporarily altered during the Chinese civil war (1945-1949) and after the Korean War (1954-1960) only because China was divided or dependent. But a Soviet front in East Asia emerged again in 1960 when China finally rejected Soviet submarine bases, strategic guarantees, and disarmament policy as the basis for its own long-term security. China's development of nuclear arms in the 1960s paralleled the Soviets' build-up of costly bases and forces in the East. And with the improvement of Sino-American and Sino-European relations in the 1970s, the Soviet Union again faced a potential two-front problem that it had largely managed to avoid since neutralizing the German-Japanese axis in World War II. By reconciling themselves to better mutual relations, the United States and China, with European help, thus shifted the main burden of a two-front strategy from themselves to their common competitor.

The Soviet Union, in anticipation, had apparently been preparing for this strategic dilemma by improving its means for offensive operations on either front. To ensure against the requirement of simultaneous operations on both fronts, the strategy evidently entailed political "détente" or persuasive threats of force on one front to secure fast mobilization and strong concentration on the other for a short war. Thus, the Soviet Armed Forces' traditional interest in a doctrine of the offensive gained material support from a strategic requirement for enlarged surge capabilities. Permanently adjacent areas in Europe and Asia seem to be sufficiently vulnerable or lucrative for Soviet political leaders to institutionalize offensive designs aimed at seizing them swiftly. Although these designs apparently govern the
peacetime development, deployment, and exercise of Soviet forces, the political criteria and institutional requirements for executing them in a crisis would certainly be hard to satisfy given clear indications of well-prepared resistance.

Repeated crises and increasing tension, however, could stimulate a search for armed as well as peaceful solutions to possible future conflicts. Under such conditions, the Manchurian model could be used to generate the best possible candidate for a military solution. Although the specific tasks and methods it would prescribe would depend on unforeseeable conditions, the general approach can be roughly outlined.

The Manchurian model’s strategic design for prewar mobilization, cover, and deception includes special maneuver and masking (maskirovka) operations to disguise the main dimensions of actual strength even though the fact of a build-up might be inevitably disclosed. That is, the conditions for a surprise attack would be created and protected by active as well as passive security measures, notwithstanding the loss of complete strategic surprise. Indeed, to optimize the effective combination of strength and surprise, certain combat and other resources would be committed to implement masking plans. In practice, the optimal amount of investment of securing surprise would depend on the vigilance or gullibility of prospective opponents; on the discipline and skill of the security services, engineering troops, transport units, border guards, and others with important roles to perform; and on the expected returns foregone due to the diversion of resources from marginal combat and support functions. To ensure the achievement of surprise as efficiently as possible, the techniques commended by analyses of the Manchurian campaign would merit serious consideration had they not been already adopted by peacetime plans. In sum, Soviet strategic designs based on the Manchurian model would deliberately seek to maximize the combined power of a planned offensive’s physical strength and psychological surprise by all available means.

Complementary plans for combat operations based on the Manchurian model would aim to achieve decisive results immediately, so that hostilities could be terminated after a single phase of war. Such plans
would specify primarily (1) quick and dense concentrations within narrow breakthrough sectors; (2) sudden advances and bombardments in an unexpected time, place, and manner; and (3) fast, uninterrupted advances on the key control points and communications centers of opposing forces. To limit the scale, duration, and costs of conflict, operational plans would place a premium on disorienting, dividing, and disabling armed resistance by disrupting opponents' plans and organization, thereby obviating the need to destroy their main forces. Hence, operational plans generated by the Manchurian model tend to rely on the widespread employment of special forces, rapid maneuvers by advance detachments, and sustained advances by mechanized ground armies.

This general approach to offensive design and operational planning yields certain tactical requirements that are especially difficult and demanding. To implement it, Soviet tactical doctrine and force development must create usable solutions to the operational problems posed by the Manchurian model. Tactical innovations by combined arms would, for example, be needed to effect all-round security on the march, both in the mobilization and exploitation phases; to reinforce credible appearances of false formations and mistaken indicators of main axes; to prepare for meeting engagements from the march; to secure some specific forms of long-range air support; and to isolate or cripple key command, supply, and weapons facilities deep in the rear.

The Manchurian model and its application to a potentially multi-front environment thus implies a high institutional priority for realizing the offensive strength of ground forces and their supporting branches. Favoring the case for short, offensive wars under modern conditions, it has fostered certain arms and limited others. Technically, it has justified longer-range ground combat capabilities, more mobile means of resupply, more mechanized engineering support, ground-mobile air defenses, and modern, vehicle-mounted communications systems. Operationally, its prescriptions for unexpected, sudden, and uninterrupted movements by compact forces along separate axes over varied terrain have raised new demands for regular maneuvers, prepositioned materiel, and rapid troop transfer. For fast and deep
penetration, the model puts a premium on air rebasing, air transport, naval landing, and airborne interdiction capabilities. These technical and operational requirements have particularly enhanced the peacetime development of mechanized infantry, airborne troops, rear services, cross-country artillery, combat engineers, marines, air transport, and tactical air forces. To the extent resources are limited and fungible, these competing demands have diverted modernization efforts, on the margin, away from the previously dominant arms, that is, tanks, rocket artillery, medium bombers, and fighter interceptors. For a strategically offensive surge capability in Soviet Asia, the application of the Manchurian model has required exceptionally expensive military structures, forces-in-being, and civil mobilization assets to provide the requisite trained reserves, transport fleets, and rear services. And, for military manpower policy it could have provided arguments for an enlarged pool of active, regular cadre and trained reservists in case of orders for simultaneous build-ups on several fronts. In sum, it is a model that generates great peacetime requirements for modern weapons, specialized troops, ready forces-in-being, a large trained reserve, and ample rear support organizations.

Given their past experience, Soviet officers have had good reasons to seek more cost-effective solutions to conflicts in which they have had to participate. But the course of Soviet military development based on the Manchurian model aggravates the security conditions for continental neighbors and political competitors in both East Asia and Western Europe. Aside from the peacetime problems of coexisting with such a heavily armed adversary, the unknown dangers of conflict and crisis are potentially still more serious. In particular, the institutionalized implementation of the Manchurian model makes it hard for opponents to distinguish between precautionary and threatening moves and to deter the latter without stimulating excessive amounts of the former. Yet, for those who doubt that Soviet intentions are inherently and permanently benign, there are more or less cost-effective counters to military manifestations of the Manchurian model. Imitating the design of the Manchurian campaign, however, would be among the more risky and costly ways of frustrating its modern successors.
NOTE: The following Bibliography lists the Soviet academic and military press publications represented in this graph. Works devoted to naval landing operations, political and patriotic literature, and comment on the campaign in the political press, even by the main military writers, have not been included.

Fig. 3 — Soviet military works on the Manchurian campaign
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