

Kolosov Yury Ivanovich. Great Patriotic War. The Origins

Television channels and other mass media have supported the idea that the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War is highly controversial. Strong arguments concern the statistics of our losses, the tragedy of our soldiers who fell prisoners, the barrier troops and penal battalions, the commanders' proficiency, and the role of J.V. Stalin not only in the war but in the former period too. The false picture of war is sustained by a great amount of films, broadcasts, articles, speeches, books, etc. Particularly we owe misrepresentation to the people who didn't take part in the war, or don't know true facts, or intentionally doctor the information. Unfortunately, even we, veterans, for the reason of bad memory or age can misinterpret or pervert the truth.

In his speech addressed to international community of writers Vladimir Karpov said that "human history is created three times: on the battlefield, on the time field with the influence of current affairs, and on the field of facts and events revision. The way to that third field is long and thorny". Today, after years of straying, we are coming into the last – third – field. We are meeting obstacles from half-educated interpreters of our history who grew into scientists and rulers from dusty institute laboratories and smoking-rooms. They huff and puff pretending that they can easily haul a cart of government of a state, and rewrite unwanted facts of Russian history of the latter century. They follow the recommendation of R. Mills who stated in his book *The Power Elite* that modern historians must interpret the historical past from the point of current and mentality but not from the angle of previous attitude. This political virus has infected our mass media. V.O. Klyuchevsky noted that "we underestimate our past to understand it because our reason is not able to comprehend its power".

They try to fill us with thoughts that do not belong to us. But we ought to remember that attainment of truth is a long and complicated process. A researcher must consider all points of view to overcome his subjectivity. It's necessary that he should not only find out if a fact is true or not but also analyze the interrelation of events, give their causes and scientific assessment. Historical method must not be substituted by politicking and neglecting the facts that are not appropriate for the current state of affairs. History is a collective memory of the people, and it corresponds not only with our past but with our future too. As G. Orwell said, "Who controls the past controls the future". It's obvious that the last page in studying the history of the Great Patriotic War is not written yet. The USA consider that it were they who won the war and saved the Russians. Multivolume books are devoted to these mythical victories, and in them, one can find only few lines about our soldiers. There appeared some authors blaming the Soviet Union for unleashing the war. They said that we were fighting the war that was vain and disgraceful, and ended by our defeat. Such views suit very well some powerful interests both in our country and abroad. It is no accident that about 100 members of the European Parliament have signed the letter to the heads of state and government of the world boycotting Russia for celebration Victory Day in Moscow in May, 9 2005 despite the fact that the UN General Assembly urged all countries to honor the memory of World War II by celebrating Victory Day as international day of remembrance and reconciliation.

For foes of Russia, the world recognition of historical significance of victory means recognition of the decisive role of our country in winning this victory. Consequently it means that the results of the war also must be recognized as unshakeable and Russia must take an appropriate position in Europe and in the world. To those who are trying to decide the fate of peace today this fact seems the most unpleasant. Russian historians of extremist, ultra-liberal and dissident trend are keen on erasing all the

Soviet period of the war, and for them, our victory is like a bur in the throat. To their mind, the victory in the war is the last bridgeboard kept by the Bolsheviks. Therefore the task is to dismantle the bridgeboard because only disclaiming our victory they can justify the events of the 1990s. Mr M. Shvydkoy, being Minister of Cultural Affairs of the Russian Federation, said that but for Russian history we could have avoided World War II. And none of political leaders corrected him. "If we distort and badmouth our heroic past, we cannot build lasting and enduring future on an empty space", said General M.A. Gareev, President of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences.

We want our descendants to know the whole truth about the grand event that changed the world. The fates of the continents were being decided in World War II (1939-1945). It was the most significant geopolitical event that resulted in decolonization of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As World War II was an international event and the Soviet Union played an important part in the war, we should not consider Russian history separately from its influence on the whole world. Because it will help us to see the meaning of the Great Patriotic War from proper perspective. From the very beginning World War II was of dual nature; the aim of the war was in repision of the western world, but at the same time the whole western world fought war with the Soviet Union.

West has always had a fear of Russia, mysterious country that differed from west. Though it didn't have the advantages of the western civilization our country was powerful enough to be forced to submit. Through centuries western countries have easily conquered Africa, America, Australia, most of Asia. While the crusades of Sweden feudal lords and German knights for the Baltic territories in the 12th-14th centuries and vigorous campaigns of Poland and Sweden in early 17th century, of France in early 19th century, etc completely collapsed.

The Great Patriotic War was a part of World War II aimed against the USSR. It was inevitable from a geopolitical point of view. Unfortunately, the confrontation of the West (including the USA) and Russia is unavoidable. In his book *Civilization on Trial* (1947) the greatest British historian Arnold Toynbee said that since the early XIV the West had been coming out as an aggressor while the Russian advance against the West was either in terms of a counterattack or as an ally of a western country. Although he made a mistake for three centuries because Bolesław I the Great, a duke of Poland, captured Kiev in 1018. In 1242 the army of Prince Alexander Yaroslavovich of Novgorod defeated Swedish forces under Birger Jarl on the Neva River near the settlement of Ust-Izhora. After that Prince was nicknamed Nevsky. On April, 5 1242 Alexander Nevsky routed the Teutonic Knights during the Battle on the Ice on Lake Peipus. These victories stalled further invasion of German and Swedish feudal lords to Russian territories.

Western aggression intensified in the wake of the events of October 1917 and continued after the Revolution because the new powerful state threatened to limit sphere of western colonization. Alexander Zinoviyev, a great modern philosopher and sociologist, said that a new evolutionary (communist) line resulted in development of a communist "supersociety". Our attitude to it can be different but it goes without saying that even in prewar years the Soviet Union was extremely fertile in resources. Western politicians realized that this potential could turn into their collapse. That's why the West fought against this hostile line with all tooth-and-nail. And they are still fighting today.

Under these circumstances western countries trying to save themselves contributed into consolidation of Germany and encouraged its occupation of the Soviet Union. But the strategy of western powers did not completely correspond with aftermath. Thus, the dominant perspective of the Great Patriotic War as a confrontation of the Soviet

Union and Germany, or as a fight of Bolshevism and Nazism, turns out to be inconsistent and superficial. In 800-814 Germanic tribes founded the Empire of Charlemagne that united most of Western Europe. As its successor states were formally established the Holy Roman Empire (in the 10th century) and then the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (in the 15th century). It was the latter that began the so-called Drang nach Osten expansion eastward. It met the geopolitical interests of European West where the myth about Russian danger was developed.

In the end of the 19th century Germany was striving for dominance and that was the main cause of World War I and II. During the period from September 1939 to July 1940 Germany managed to subdue most of continental Europe (Greece and Yugoslavia were conquered in 1941). German forces met minor resistance against their advance. The invasion of Poland began on 1 September 1939, on 17 September the Polish Government abandoned the country, and on 21 September the state of Poland ceased to exist.

The Netherlands were overrun in 5 days, Belgium – in 15, Norway – in 29. On 5 June 1940 the invasion of France started, and on 14 June the German troops occupied Paris. France held out for just 38 days. In history this period of war was called to be phoney, twilight, strange, or sitting war. The fascists grabbed control over the material and military resources of occupied countries; captured munitions of 92 French, 30 Czech, 22 Belgian, 18 Dutch, and 9 Norwegian pistols. Apart from others only French casualties made up 3,000 planes and 5,000 tanks. The military industry of all European countries began working for Germany. Alan Taylor in his book *The Origins of the Second World War* said that for steady extension of German power in Europe Hitler used both direct annexation and accumulation of satellites. France supplied Germany with oil for the first campaign against the Soviets, and with money for keeping 18 million soldiers of the German army. Germany had Swedish iron ore and Swiss precision instruments which were indispensable for continuing the war. Europe had become an economical entity. In the second half of 1940 the living standards in Germany became rather high. There was no need in full economic mobilization. The motor roads were being constructed. By July 1941 3 million workers from across Europe were conscripted for German industry.

Under these conditions on 20 July 1940 Hitler approved Operation Barbarossa named after Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire (1122-1190). It was how they realized their plan formulated in Point 3 of the 25-point Program of NSDAP: "We demand land and territory (colonies) for the sustenance of our people, and colonization for our surplus population". Adolf Hitler gave a detailed explanation of the idea in his *Mein Kampf* (1924): "Therefore we National Socialists have purposely drawn a line through the line of conduct followed by pre-War Germany in foreign policy. We put an end to the perpetual Germanic march towards the South and West of Europe and turn our eyes towards the lands of the East. We finally put a stop to the colonial and trade policy of pre-War times and pass over to the territorial policy of the future. But when we speak of new territory in Europe to-day we must principally think of Russia and the border States subject to her... and once again the new German Empire should have set out on its march along the same road as was formerly trodden by the Teutonic Knights". The operation was grounded on the ideas of Major-General Max Hoffman, a general staff officer since 1901 to 1918, which he declared after World War I. The development of Operation Barbarossa was supervised by General Frederick Paulus, and resulted in a famous War Directive No. 21 to the German High Command issued on 18 December 1940.

On 22 June 1941 German troops crossed the Russian border. It should be mentioned that by that time the Wehrmacht was the most powerful army. Unlike the Red Army it had had a two-year experience of offensive operations. The armed forces of Germany

supported by nine Allies – Italy, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Finland – were sent to the Eastern Front to enter on war with the USSR. The rest states not included in the Alliance but working for a new European Empire sent their volunteer armies.

On 30 June 1941 the Head of the Army General Staff Franz Halder recorded Hitler's words that the whole Europe is united in the war against Russia. And it was true while this multinational army was coming off with flying colours in Russia. Volunteer armies from Spain, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, France, Austria, Latvia, and Estonia contributed to defense of Leningrad. In some Wehrmacht elements Polishes and Slovaks were engaged in the war against the USSR. (Yu.M. Lebedev, Lessons of War).

Not 70 million of Germans but more than 300 millions of Europeans were fighting against us on different grounds – from political pressure to longing for alliance. The whole European economy was at Hitler's disposal, and this allowed him to mobilize 25% of all German military manpower. In Russia 17% were conscripted because work in military industry required skilled personnel in the age from 18 to 50, with preference to male. It is important to say that World War II was a war of motors. A typical German soldier was an industrial worker of the most educated nation of the world. A Russian soldier (Red Army soldier) was a peasant with a skillful scythe, pitchfork, etc.

In June 1941 we were doomed to suffer primary losses for it is difficult to resist against the whole Europe. Hitler believed in his glorious victory but was not ready to a dragged-out war. According to Klaus Reinhardt the Wehrmacht was either to crush the Soviet Union in a Blitz campaign or to win none (Klaus Reinhardt «Moscow - the turning point», Oxford & Providence, «Berg Publishers», 1992, pp. 26-28).

Did the USSR prepare for the war? The Khrushchev's speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist party was not objective and was aimed at criticizing foreign policy of Stalin who had failed to prepare the country for invasion. Actually the Soviet leaders did comprehend the imminence of the war with West. Everybody was aware of the war and was getting ready to it. Arms production had quadrupled since 1938 to June 1941. The unity of command which lacked during the Winter War was restored. In October 1940 commanding officers of the Red Army gained all the authorities the tsarist officers had wielded.

In May 1940 Kliment Voroshilov was replaced as Defence Commissar by Semyon Timoshenko, and this marked the modernization of army by mechanization. In summer 1940 9 mechanized corps were being formed, and in spring 1941 their number rose to 20. They must be supplied with 32,000 armored tanks (KV and T-34s). By June 1941 there were only 1,863 tanks. The Soviet industry started production of the new types of aircraft and rocket-launching artillery. Russian military strength had grown from 1,5 million to 5,3 million of manpower since 1938. The law on general military conscription came into effect on 1 September 1939. After conflicts with Japan on the Russian Far East the 1st Red Banner Army was disbanded and its part was redeployed to the west. Soldiers knew that they were going to fight with Hitler. Other pisions were also brought up, thus, the preparation was quite serious. I don't remember a school day without being told that the war was coming, and we were getting ready to it.

There's another thing which is often ignored and suppressed. I would like to draw your attention to Stalin's speech on 10 March 1939 in which he in a careful but firm manner said that the state was being reorganized according to its pre-revolutionary course and sense. That was how it went, in the 1930s the Party was pushed aside and

power passed from the Politbureau to the Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars). It was finally fixed in May 1941 when Stalin assumed the new office of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. The revision of revolutionary neglect of the centuries-old Russian history kept pace with the conversion to patriotic ideology. All this taken one with another couldn't cause opposition by the Old Bolsheviks. That was the latent sense of 1937-38s repressions, purge of leaders of all categories but especially of the Party leaders, including also commanders of army. The latter couldn't but have serious consequences.

However we must take into consideration that all generals of the Red Army came to the foreground after the Civil War in 1918-1922. They got used to give orders and wage war with a rifle. So it was a completely different class war. New war required new commanders with radically distinct way of thinking. Officer Vasil Bykov gave an accurate observation from his personal war experience: "There's a widespread myth that failures of the early period of war were caused by the repressions among the Red Army High Command... But persecutions affected not all commanders, and the first month of war revealed complete insufficiency of the former generals. Other commanders assumed their offices before long. Army was replenished with a lot of college-bred people, and that was considerably important because the renewal made ideology fall by the wayside." (Rodina, 1995, No.5).

It's interesting that in the end of the war Hitler used to say that "Stalin was right to have killed all his commanders". (D. Melnikov, L. Chernaya, Prestupnik nomer 1. Natsistskiy rejim i ego fyurer. 1991). Though repressions had somewhat rejuvenated the command stuff but at the same time they had affected their qualification. Several prewar conflicts and liberation campaigns along with a series of maneuvers gave some experience to the senior commanders. The average age of the junior commanders of both the Red Army and the Wehrmacht in the beginning of the war was the same – 24. The middleweight and senior commanders were respectively 4 and 6 years junior to those of the Wehrmacht. Military education level at all echelons of the Wehrmacht was considerably higher; only 2.7% of commanders, 2.3% of political workers, and 8.1% of engineering manpower had higher education. The middleweight commanders had lower education level, failed to keep up with the Wehrmacht in troop management, organizational and staff structure, military operations and planning, strategy and tactics training. The junior commanders of the Red Army were also ill-trained.

Nevertheless it was not in 1937 but in 1930 when the major damage was done by repressions. During that period Stalin eliminated such eminent commanders as General-Major A.A. Svechin, General-Lieutenant A.E. Snesev, General-Major V.N. Egoriev, and other teachers of the General Staff Academy who had precisely predicted the character of future war and developed the strategy and tactics for the Red Army. M.N. Tukhachevsky didn't agree with them and blamed them as anti-Soviet and anti-revolutionary strategists. As a result they made a serious strategic miscalculation in the plan of border defense and choice of the main enemy axes.

According to the plan developed in July 1940 by General-Major A.M. Vasilevsky, first deputy chief of the General Staff Operations Department, the enemy was expected to attack along the central Minsk-Smolensk-Moscow axis. Stalin rejected this assumption and insisted on defending the South-Western axis (oil and coal). As a result the mobilization plans were revised and the first-rate armament was sent to the Kiev Special Military District under G.K. Zhukov. The assumption of the General Staff and Stalin failed. In the initial period of war the main German thrust was to march along the North-Western axis and to invade Leningrad. In 1926 great strategist General A.A. Svechin predicted it in his book Strategy and called Leningrad "the Sevastopol' of a future war". Unfavourable strategic position of Leningrad, to his mind, was redoubled

by its remoteness from fuel, bread and raw material suppliers. It was the same that Ernst Henry wrote about in his book *Hitler against the USSR* (1936).

It should be taken into account that it was not the Army and pision commanders who played the main if not decisive part but their stuffs, secret and intelligence sections in which, after military repressions, worked graduates, students, and school-leavers. Scientifically, repressions were one of the victory factors. But for the renewal the Soviet Army would have been defeated in two or three months in the initial period of war. Joseph Stalin foresaw it. That's why prominent western politicians wrote in their memoirs that our country had been lucky to have him as a ruler.

Political and military leaders made serious miscalculations in prospects and time of invasion, in planning and strategic posture. The assumptions about the initial period of war were wrong. It was considered that Hitler would wage only with part of his forces, while in the frontier battles, the Wehrmacht fed 83% of land forces, 86% of tank pisions, 100% of motorized forces, and 80% of air forces. As a result frontier troops who hadn't expected such a massive attack sustained great losses. The frontier districts were not prepared to defensive conflict under zero warning conditions, troop concentration and alerting were delayed, strategic defense was aimed at lightning defeat without considering the capacities of troops, and frontier defense was not supported by the rear engineering base. Because of these factors by mid-July 1941 we had lost 28 pisions from 170, and 70 pisions were at 50% fighting strength in manpower and weaponry. Our losses during the first months of war included 3,500 aircraft, 6,000 tanks, more than 20,000 artillery pieces and mortars.

Our ideological and psychological training was perfect, and did imply a victory of the USSR, but technically we were weaker than our enemy and lacked for time to prepare. Western commanders chose the most favourable time to begin their invasion and predicted a quick defeat of the Soviet Union.

An essential military training was required, and Stalin took all possible measures to gain time before invasion. He did expect that Germany would not venture. "He was a man who took responsibility not only for the country but for the very history." (A. Zinoviev). His attitude to received information and all his policy should be considered in terms of his fear of provocations and attempts to escape them. Intelligence reports are always controversial to some degree. It's known that Stalin received different reports including deceptive ones. (*Hitler's Secrets on the Stalin's Table*, 1995) In many of them it was informed that Germany was going to defeat Britain before invasion of Russia. General P.A. Sudoplatov, one of the Heads of the Soviet Intelligence Services, noted that three reliable informers from Germany gave the most important information that the Wehrmacht commanders rejected a two-front war. The intelligence messages concerning the German invasion dates were discrepant (14 and 15 May, 20 and 21 May, 15 June, and then, at last, 22 June), and thus, misdoubted. "When the first May dates had turned out to be wrong Stalin became convinced that Hitler would not attack the USSR in 1941." (V.A. Anfilov, *Road to the Tragedy of 1941*, 1997).

The main reason of failure of the Soviet Union in 1941 was in the German superiority over our troops due to a great forces concentration for a lightning war. Leningrad and Moscow were to have been subdued by 7 November 1941. This day the Wehrmacht planned to march along Red Square. I must repeat that level of the German training was so high that neither talented commanders, nor the first-rate armament would repulse German thrusts in the first days of war. Even if our army had been ten times superior in armament we wouldn't have avoided the catastrophe. In the first months of war 2, 335 000 (52.2%) Soviet soldiers were reported missing in action, i.e. they had fallen prisoners or had been missing behind the front line (according to *Book of*

Losses, 2009). The casualties included 567,000 battle deaths (12.7%). The ratio of dead to prisoners of war was 1:4 in 1941 while in 1943 it considerably changed to 5:1 (1,869,000 and 368,000). Huge number of prisoners of war in 1941 speaks for grand superiority of the German military forces. Though basis for our victory was exactly in these first battles. General Varennikov was quite right to say that although we had fallen prisoners and defeated in those battles we didn't suffer a defeat in the campaign of 1941 for we didn't let occupy Leningrad and Moscow. These cities seemed to be doomed, and big factories were already being mined.

After failure to invade Leningrad the Germans were certain about the defeat of Moscow. By 30 November German motorcycle infantry had seized a bridge across the Moscow-Volga canal (near present the Rechnoi Vokzal metro station). On the night of 1 December Germans were impudent to airland on the Sparrow Hills and Neskuchny Garden (4 km far from the Kremlin) with the task to kidnap Stalin. (The Road to Smolensk: American Writers and Journalists about the Great Patriotic War in 1941-1945 edited by B.A. Gilenson, Moscow, 1985). Two days earlier, on 29 November Hitler announced that he had already won the war.

In the aftermath of 1941 it became evident that the failure of a Blitzkrieg Campaign would mean a defeat of the Fascists in the war. On 12 November 1941 at the confidential meeting in the Wehrmacht General Headquarters Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt and Generalfeldmarschall von Leeb requested permission that the German Army should withdraw from Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov to Poland, and proposed that for being saved Germany should make peace with Russia and lay it under huge contribution. But Hitler didn't follow their advice and by late 1941 he dismissed Generalfeldmarschall of the Army Group North von Leeb, Generalfeldmarschall of the Army Group Centre von Bock, Generalfeldmarschall of the Army Group South von Rundstedt, Commander-in-Chief of the Army von Brauchitsch, the Head of the Army General Staff von Halder. (On the materials of International Conference, 2000). On 19 December Hitler assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief of the German Army. A.Zinoviev noted in his interview to A. Bondarenko in the Krasnaya Zvezda (25 April 2005) that "the war of that type provide us with colossal experience because in short time it caused significant changes in our military system, in the structure of the whole country and in its economy. This fact used to be ignored but what happened was a real miracle. The German armament wasn't practically upgraded during the war, neither was the Western one. While the Red Army began the war with Mosin rifles, plywood aircraft, and primitive carburetors, and ended it with the best armament in the world. It was possible only due to social changes in the whole life of our country. And the significance of that factor is hard to estimate."

As it was mentioned above Leningrad was a primary objective of the German offensive. The defense stability of the city could influence the tide of the war and possibility of our victory. Hitler expected a quick victory and announced to occupy Leningrad in three weeks. Finland even had prepared a speech of President to be broadcasted on the downfall of Leningrad, "For the first time in its history, this magnificent former capital of Russia has fallen. This news is certain to have infused courage into all Finns."

After failure to stop the enemy in the frontier battles the Soviet troops were forced to retreat for about 500 km eastward the borders and to leave most of the Baltic area. In early June 1941 the German troops forced a crossing over the Velikaya River, on 9 July occupied Pskov, and broke into Leningrad Oblast. The losses of the Pskov-Ostrov fortified regions made possible the successive enemy's advance to Luga and Leningrad. The Baltic Fleet had lost its Liepaja and Ventspils naval bases. The 8th Army was isolated from the main forces of the Northwestern front.

On 10 July 1941 the Leningrad defense operation began. The 4th Panzer Group and the left flank of the 18th Army were forcing their way to Leningrad. The German troops attacked almost simultaneously along the Luga, Novgorod, and Staraya Russa axes, and along the Petrozavodsk and Olonets axes. On the same day the Finnish Karelian Army assumed the offensive on the Onega-Ladoga Isthmus. 2 tank divisions, 1 motorized division, and 1 infantry division of XXXXI Motorized Corps under General Reinhardt advancing along the Pskov-Luga axes, along with LVI Motorized Corps under General von Manstein composed of 2 motorized divisions and 1 tank division advancing along the Porkhov-Soltsy-Novgorod axes, were fiercely repulsed by the Soviet forces.

Under the pressure of superior enemy's forces our troops operating along the Luga axis had to retreat toward the foreground of the Luga defense line. For a short time since 24 June 1941 the Luga-line defense fortifications had been built by efforts of 475,000 Leningraders including women, old men and children. This line extended 300 km from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ilmen and consisted of 100 km anti-tank ditches and escarpments, 24 barricades, 300 operational sites, and 200 dug-in tanks. The construction was not completely finished.

By the beginning of the German offensive the Luga Operation Group under General-Lieutenant K.P. Pyadyshev was concentrated on the Luga line. The Luga Group included 4 rifle divisions, 3 people's militia divisions, the rifle brigade of two Leningrad military schools, artillery training units including the regiment of the Red Banner advanced artillery training courses for command staff, the regiment of the Second Leningrad artillery school, and the battery of the Leningrad artillery instrumental reconnaissance of anti-aircraft artillery school. The artillery group was under the command of Colonel G.F. Odintsov. The Luga Group played a great part in the defensive operations against the 1st and the 2nd German panzer divisions.

That defense campaign was operated by the forward units of the 177th, 90th and 11th rifle divisions, and the Luga operational group. The battles became dragged-out. Being strongly resisted Hoepner switched the 41st Motorized Corps to north-west towards Kingisepp to reach Leningrad passing through forests and the Koporje Plateau. On 14 July he managed to seize two bridgeheads on the right bank of the Luga River, but there his Corps was repulsed by cadets of the Leningrad infantry school and soldiers of the 2nd people's militia division. The German forces had to stop.

At the same time Manstein's LIV Corps operating west of Shlisselsburg threatened to capture Novgorod, and, thus, could advance to Leningrad. On 14 July in the area around Soltsy the Corps found itself under counter-attack by the Soviet 11th Army reinforced with 1 tank and 2 rifle divisions. The Soviet troops assailed the flanks and rear of Manstein's Corps. Our infantry forces were covered by 235 aircraft of the Northwestern front and the 1st corps of the long-range aviation. The 8th panzer division, part of the 3rd motorized division, and the rear of Manstein's Corps were encircled and destroyed. The Corps staff was cut from the forces. After war Erich Manstein wrote in his book *Lost Victories* that the position of his Corps was far from favourable, the enemy did his best to keep the Germans encircled. Thus, the German offensive towards Leningrad was halted by the troops of the Red Army and the militia soldiers on the Luga defensive line.

The Red Banner Baltic Fleet was actively operating during these battles. Sailors assisted infantry in repelling the enemy's assaults, defended the naval bases and islands covering sea approaches to Leningrad. The defenders of Smolensk played a great part when they paralyzed the main forces of the Army Group Centre frustrating the deployment of the whole 3rd Panzer Group to the Leningrad axis. The Wehrmacht plans on the swift capture of Leningrad were foiled. The Soviet forces were given

about 40 days of delay which allowed the Soviet commanders to take measures for fortification of the city. Three sectors of the Krasnogvardeysk fortified knot namely Krasnoselsky, Central, and Slutsk-Kolpino regions were being prepared. The fortification works were very intense for more than 133,000 people were engaged in them every day. By 20 August 370,000 m² of slits were dug to shelter 750,000 people, and 4,600 bombshelters were built for more than 800,000 people. More than 19 million square meters of garret floors were covered with fire-protective compound. About 270,000 people worked for the local antiaircraft defense units.

Since 10 July the Red Army had suffered great losses on the Petrozavodsk, Olonetsk and Sortavala axes but managed to halt the enemy by late-July. In early-August the German and Finnish armies began a simultaneous advance along the Karelian Isthmus and five axes which were Krasnogvardeysky (Gatchinsky), Novgorod-Chudovo, and Petrozavodsk-Svir. With numerically vastly superior forces the Karelian Army was forcing its way towards Leningrad. Due to weak organization the Soviet 23rd Army had to retrieve to the Karelian fortified region (along the Soviet-Finnish border of 1939) having sustained great losses. The 50th rifle corps and part of the 19th rifle corps with the force strength of 53,000 men were encircled and pushed towards Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland. The frontier battle on the Karelian Isthmus was lost. There were such areas with only 100 Soviet soldiers each 3 km of front.

On 1 September the advanced Finnish armored detachment reached the frontier near Sestroretsk where they had been repulsed during a few days by a small people's militia detachment. Workers of the Voskov factory had been blunting the Finnish attack until reinforcement arrived. The Karelian fortified region was occupied by the 142nd, 265th, and 198th rifle divisions, and a regiment of the 115th rifle division. The 291st rifle division and a regiment of the 1st people's militia division took the area from the Copper (Medny) factory up to the Gulf. The Soviet-Finnish front on the Karelian Isthmus was stabilized until the summer of 1944. Along the Petrozavodsk and Olonets axis, on 10 September after two months of bloody battles being three times superior to the 7th Army in the force strength the Finnish troops reached the River Svir. Olonets was captured on 5 September, Petrozavodsk – on 2 October. The enemy was cutting the Kirov railway. The Soviet forces managed to stabilize the front around the River Svir until June 1944.

The operations of the Finnish Army were to draw off the enemy forces from the main south-western strike on Leningrad. On 4 August Hitler visited the staff of the Army Group Centre to explain generally the priority of capturing Leningrad. He said that for further decisions the primary task was to deprive the enemy of the essential regions among which there were Petersburg and the Russian coast of the Baltic Sea. Many industrial plants and the Petersburg factory only producing ultraheavy tanks made that area attractive goal for Hitler. Besides he planned to eliminate the Soviet Fleet on the Baltic Sea. Hitler thought that by 20 August Leningrad would have been captured.

The situation on the southern approaches of Leningrad in August 1941 was very tense. The 41st German motorized corps began advancing from the Luga bridgehead, in two days the 56th motorized corps advanced along the Novgorod axis. The 41st corps under General Reinhardt was fiercely repulsed by the 90th rifle division, the 2nd people's militia division, cadets of Kirov military school, composite battalion of sailors, tank battalion of the Leningrad advanced armored training courses for command staff, and the 14th brigade of armored defense. Reinhardt's corps managed to advance only within 5 km for a day. Hitler ordered that the corps should stop to defend but suddenly the 1st panzer division broke through the Soviet defense and Reinhardt did not haste to reinforce with the 6th panzer division and the 1st infantry division. Hoepner sent there the 3rd motorized division and the 8th panzer division. The 4th Panzer Group came to the Kopperje Plateau to deliver the direct strike on Krasnogvardeysk and gain

the shortest way to Leningrad. On 12 August the Soviet 34th Army in cooperation with the 11th Army from the region of Staraya Russa operated a counter-attack to the rear of Novgorod grouping of the Wehrmacht. Our advance from the Luga line was averted by the Germans and the 34th Army was retreated with great losses due to the mistakes of commanders. By 25 August the Soviet Army had lost 60% of manpower and 805 units of armament.

The German Army strengthened its forces along the Leningrad axis and on 16 August the enemy occupied Narva and Kingisepp, on 19 August invaded Novgorod, and Chudovo – next day. Thus the German troops had cut off the October railway. The 2nd and the 3rd people's militia divisions, and cadets of the NKVD military school and political commissars training courses were still operating along the Luga line but their number was too insufficient. On 23 August they were ordered to retreat but it was late. Most Soviet troops were isolated from the main forces of front and as a result 15,000 men fell prisoners.

On 21 August the message of K.E. Voroshilov, A.A. Zhdanov, and P.S. Popkov addressed "To all workers of Leningrad" was published. They call on all citizens to close ranks for defense of their native city, their homes, their families, their dignity and freedom. The message had a cordial response of soldiers and residents. 150 people's militia detachments, each to 600 men strong, were formed for street fighting. The regulation of operations was revised. By 28 August the special defense and evacuation commission sent by Stalin had developed the plan according to which the population and the most important factories of the city were to be evacuated during 10 days. It was arranged that 250,000 women and children from the city and 66,000 people from the front-line area would be evacuated during the period since 30 August to 8 September. The authorities agreed to victual for six weeks.

The Army Group North sustained great losses in the past sanguinary battles. On 24 August 1941 von Leeb recorded in his military diary that divisions noticeably lost their best forces. 21,076 privates and commanders were killed, 3,118 were missing, and 70,491 were wounded. Nevertheless the army still kept their superiority over the forces of Leningrad defenders. On 25 August the 1st and the 28th corps along with the 39th motorized corps covered from the air began their new advance from the Chudovo region towards Leningrad. The 48th army counting only 10,000 manpower couldn't resist and had to retreat to Kirishi and Pushkin.

On 28 August the German forces occupied Tosno only 50 km far from the city. The capture of Tosno caused Stalin's anxiety and irritation. On 29 August the German troops approached Kolpino but were repelled by workers of the Izhora factory joined with the units of the 55th army. On 30 August Mga station was taken and thus the enemy cut the last railway line that connected Leningrad with country. On 8 September the fascists invaded Schlisselburg and isolated Leningrad by land. Only the island fortress of Oreshek (Petrokrepost') retained under Soviet control and during 500 days its small garrison kept defending its position.

On 9 September the enemy tried to force a crossing over the Neva River and unite with the Finnish army for a total blockade of the city. This attempt was repulsed by the Soviet forces deploying on the right bank of the river and the Baltic torpedo-boat destroyers lying along the Ivanovskie rapids. Stalin appointed G.K. Zhukov to succeed K.E. Voroshilov as Leningrad front commander. Zhukov reinforced forces management and focused all front forces on the most dangerous axes. He removed part of anti-aircraft guns defending the city to place them along the tank axes, and reinforced hardening positions of the Pulkovo heights. That hazardous line was defended by the 42nd army under the command of General I.I. Fedyuninsky who had flown with Zhukov. His army was reinforced with the troops redeployed from the Karelian

Isthmus and rifle brigades of sailors and military cadets. This area was covered by all artillery forces of the Baltic Sea.

The German troops were forcing to the city. On 13 September the 42nd army retreated to the Pulkovo defense line which had only ground anti-tank barriers, separate weapon emplacements, and small minefields. On 14 September Zhukov had put into the field his last reserve which was the 10th rifle division. On 16th September the enemy broke between Strelna and Uritsk towards the Gulf, and thus the 8th army was cut in the Oranienbaum bridgehead.

On 17 September after Slutsk (Pavlovsk) fell the German troops invaded Pushkin. They made slowly but steadily towards Leningrad. The situation on 17 September was extremely tense. At night workers remained at all inner defense lines to protect their factories. The Council of war of Leningrad front gave operational order No. 0064 according to which 'all commanders, political officers and rank and file who leave Ligovo-Koironovo-Pulkovo-Shushary-Kolpino defense line without prior written instruction of the Front or Military council, are to be shot on sight!'. This order was similar to the one No.227 by Stalin which was known as "Not a step back!" The order No.0064 was the first Leningrad order made by Zhukov. These actions helped separate forces to overcome their perplexity and instability. The troops of the 42nd army had repulsed all enemy's attacks to break through Uritsk and the heights of Pulkovo. Capture of Pushkin was the last German success in advancing along the northern axis.

On 23 September General Halder recorded in his diary about insignificant advancing within the area around Lake Ladoga and great losses. He wrote that the German army had enough forces for defense but not for crushing defeat of the enemy.

Hitler was anxious about blockade running which would cause the frustration of invasion. Therefore he ordered to deliver 20,000 mines by the Army Group North aircraft and reinforce it with two paratrooper regiments of the Army Group Centre, reserve battalions of defense units, and Spanish division from Vitebsk. On 25 September 1941, on the 96th day of war von Leeb reported to the German High Command about insufficiency of the available forces to continue advance. The German and Finnish armies within the whole Leningrad front had to pass over to the defensive.

The battles of Leningrad, Tikhvin, Rostov-on-Don and Moscow in October 1941-January 1942 were crucial, though temporary, point of the war. The enemy consolidating people and material resources of most Europe was still strong. The Wehrmacht managed not only to restore its strength and armament but also to reinforce it.

The enemy broke to the Volga River and the Caucasus. The isolation of the former would mean the rear attack to central areas and Moscow, the latter – the lack of oil. Our defeats of 1942 were almost the same as the ones of 1941 or even worse. By the time of the order "Not a step back!" the country had suffered its worst times for the whole course of the war. Only the battles of Leningrad, Moscow, Rzhev, and Stalingrad balanced forces, and then stabilized our superiority that predetermined the victory of the USSR. Numerous descriptions of that period were mainly connected with facts, statistics, different names...It is important beyond doubt but we must understand the reasons of what happened and the main factors of our victory. We have to choose other criteria. A. Zinoviev in the above-mentioned interview said that only the scientifically developed social theory could help to estimate the war properly. We should compare the Soviet and the German societies on that period of development to comprehend the phenomenon of the war.

Our victory was possible due to the range of factors that western politicians didn't take into consideration. First of all, new communist system that had mobilized the country. All Russian people operated as one whole. Zinoviev said that no country could allow such a mobilization of people and material resources. The second important factor was organization of the system under the Communist Party. Moreover, if the Party had been headed by the other person everything would have been different. It was Stalin who made possible our victory, said the former anti-stalinist. Compare it with Churchill's parliament speech on Stalin's death, "Stalin was an outstanding person who can be compared with none. His books are full of magnitude. When he entered the conference hall on the Yalta Conference we all stood as if on command. He could find the way out from any stalemate. He was a man who made us, imperialists, fight war with imperialists. Stalin came to Russia with a wooden plough and left it in possession of atomic weapons".

No less important a factor was stipulated by spirit of the Russians. Famous German historian and journalist Sebastian Haffner wrote in his book *Der Selbsterlöschung des Deutschen Reiches* (1970) that when the Russians had fully realized Hitler's intentions they showed all their spirit and morale to German force. From that moment the outcome of war was evident, the Russians were stronger because the war was a matter of life and death for them. Most people of our country had such spirit which was impossible to subdue. We call this patriotism.

We paid dear for that victory. During the Leningrad defense operation since 10 July to 30 September 1941 armies of the Northern and Northwestern front along with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet had lost almost 350,000 men including 214,000 dead, missing or prisoners, and almost 131,000 wounded. It is of natural interest to understand why the enemy was stopped only at the very gates to Leningrad. The correlation of forces being effectively organized allowed stopping the Army Group North far from Leningrad. Despite different opinions our Supreme High Command supported defenders of the city. Since 10 July to late-September 1941 we were reinforced with 17 rifle and 9 cavalry divisions, all tanks produced in the city were left, etc. The main reason is a defeat of the Northwestern front in the very beginning of the war. Neither Commanders, nor soldiers failed to recover from it. They had poor experience, low discipline and were demoralized by almost constant retreat and getting into encirclement.

The retreats of the troops who were to defend our city were caused by inefficient management of the Northwestern front Commander-in-Chief K.E. Voroshilov who was appointed later Commander of the Leningrad front too. By decision of the Politbureau, K.E. Voroshilov was declared to be responsible for failure to organize effective defense operation. Stalin was fair to criticize mistakes of commanders of the Leningrad front but often did make mistakes himself. And one of them was his doubt in possibility to defend Leningrad. It couldn't but influence the morale of front and fleet commanders.

Kolosov Yury Ivanovich,

Active member of Academy of Military History,

Chairman of Association of Leningrad Siege historians,

Head of Regional Society "Young Defenders of Leningrad"