



**THE
SOVIET STRATEGIC
OFFENSIVE
IN MANCHURIA, 1945**
‘August Storm’

DAVID M. GLANTZ

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Preface

This critical examination of the Manchurian strategic offensive of August 1945, the Red Army's final and most ambitious strategic offensive operation during the Second World War, challenges two inaccurate but enduring judgments Western historians have made regarding the Red Army's performance during the war. The first is that the Red Army prevailed over the German *Wehrmacht*, the twentieth century's most formidable fighting machine, solely because of geographical and climatic factors and sheer numerical superiority, a view that relegates Red Army military accomplishments to utter oblivion. The second is that the Red Army's contributions to Allied victory over Japan were minimal and insignificant, rendering Soviet military operations in the Asian theater irrelevant and unworthy of meaningful study.

As this study indicates, these judgments reflect a distinct German bias on the war that has colored the history and analysis of operations on the German Eastern Front in particular and the entire war in general for more than a generation and are patently false. Nevertheless, they persist, and in so doing perpetuate a woefully inaccurate view of the war, the Red Army's performance in it, and the Soviet Union's overall contributions to Allied victory. In turn, this inaccurate view continues to warp contemporary attitudes and serves as a barrier to closer United States-Russian relations at a time when the national interests of both countries are sharply convergent.

The first biased judgment of the Soviet-German War is derived largely from the *Wehrmacht*'s spectacular performance during Operations Barbarossa and *Blau* [Blue] in the summer and fall of 1941 and 1942, when the *Wehrmacht* skillfully employed Blitzkrieg tactics to rout poorly trained and inadequately led Red Army forces, inflict immense casualties on the army, and conquer vast swaths of Soviet territory. Exploiting the element of surprise, German panzer and panzer grenadier (motorized) troops, supported by the ubiquitous *Stuka* dive-bombers, repeatedly overcame desperate but crudely fashioned Red Army defenses to capture vast areas of Soviet territory and the imagination of the world.

Just as Erwin Rommers performance against the British in North Africa made him a legend, the postwar writings of Heinz Guderian, W.F.von Mellenthin, Hermann Balck, Erich von Manstein, and others who achieved victory in the East on the wings of Blitzkrieg created a myth of *Wehrmacht* invincibility that somehow outlived the ultimate German defeat.

In reality, however, the brilliant operational and tactical successes the Germans achieved in 1941 and 1942 blinded them to strategic realities they

were unable to understand. Having fashioned a war machine ideally suited to achieving victory within the limited confines of western Europe, the Germans unleashed their armed forces in the east, a theater they did not understand against an opponent they woefully underestimated and misunderstood. Therefore, the imposing string of *Wehrmacht's* victories abruptly ceased in the summer of 1943 and was followed by a nearly unbroken series of increasingly spectacular defeats in 1944 and 1945 that culminated in the destruction of Hitler's Third Reich. Despite occasional tactical successes, after the summer of 1943, the *Wehrmacht* suffered continuous and ever more costly strategic defeats that sapped its strength and tore the Axis coalition apart.

Ironically, the spectacular feats of the victorious German conquerors of 1941 and 1942 still dominate Western historical literature and color Western perceptions regarding the *Wehrmacht's* performance in the Soviet-German war as a whole. At least in part, this is because, unlike their victorious predecessors of 1941 and 1942, the desperate German defenders of 1944 and 1945, such as Ferdinand Schoener and Gotthard Heinrici, who presided over the *Wehrmacht's* ultimate defeat, wrote no memoirs, since few Germans considered their experiences either memorable or glorious. Their impressions, along with those of countless field grade officers who experienced the defeats in 1944 and 1945, are all but lost.

Finally, this unbalanced and inaccurate perception of the war on the German Eastern Front masks the larger truth that Germany and its *Wehrmacht* lost the war and did so primarily in the east against what so many historians portray as a brutally inept Soviet regime and its 'artless' Red Army. The second biased judgment, that the Red Army made no major contribution to the Allied victory over Japan, has been reinforced by Western historians' general neglect of warfare in the Pacific theater during the Second World War. Together with the prevalent German bias on the war, this neglect has utterly concealed the Red Army's most ambitious military operation in the Second World War, its massive and spectacularly successful strategic offensive in Manchuria during August 1945.

On the other hand, Russian historians and military analysts have long considered the Red Army's offensive in Manchuria, an offensive conducted with surgical precision with almost predestined results, to be a postgraduate exercise by the Red Army and a logical byproduct of their extensive war experience in the West. Even though most military planners, US and Russian alike, realized that the Japanese Empire and its army were in a seriously weakened state by the summer of 1945, few actually believed that Japan would surrender China, Manchuria, or its Home Islands without a fight. In fact, given the dramatic manner in which Germany capitulated in April and May 1945, these planners were convinced that the Japanese would replicate Germany's *Götterdämmerung* on an even larger scale.

The human costs the United States expected to pay for reducing fortress Japan were indeed staggering to contemplate. The case of Okinawa stood as stark evidence of this grim prospect, where as late as April through June 1945, about 117,000 fanatically resisting Japanese troops inflicted more than 49,000 casualties, including 12,500 dead on attacking American forces. With more than 2.3 million Japanese soldiers defending the Home Islands and a million more in Manchuria, Allied planners prepared for the worst in the expectation of a prolonged and complicated campaign to reduce the remaining Japanese strongholds.

Because they appreciated the capabilities of the Japanese High Command, the vaunted Kwantung Army in Manchuria, and the individual Japanese soldier, Soviet military planners prepared an offensive plan that was as innovative as any prepared during the entire war. The superbly executed plan produced complete victory in only two weeks of combat.

Even though Soviet planners clearly overestimated Japanese military capabilities in Manchuria, the tenacious Japanese soldier lived up to Soviet expectations. The Japanese soldier proved his reputation as a brave, self-sacrificing samurai who, though poorly employed, inflicted 32,000 casualties on the Red Army and won its grudging respect. Had Japanese planners and commanders been bolder and Soviet planners less audacious, the price of the Red Army's victory could well have been significantly higher.

Its vast scope, magnitude, complexity, timing, and unprecedented success have made the Red Army's Manchurian strategic offensive a continuing topic of study for Soviet and Russian military theorists and historians, who perceive it as a textbook case of how to begin war and quickly bring it to a successful conclusion. In short, they study the Manchurian offensive because it was an impressive and decisive campaign.

More recently, Western study of 'August Storm' provided inspiration, concrete guidance, and a virtual model for its namesake Operation 'Desert Storm', the US-led coalition that crushed the Iraqi Army in 1991.¹

Western neglect of Red Army operations in the Second World War, in general, and in Manchuria, in particular, testifies not only to our apathy toward history and the past in general, but also to our particular blindness to Soviet and Russian military experiences. That blindness, born of the biases we bring to the study of the Second World War, is a dangerous phenomenon that inhibits full understanding of and future cooperation with the Russian Federation.

NOTE

1. US military planners in the Gulf War initially intended to name the offensive phase of the war against Iraq 'Desert Sword' to match the defensive phase 'Desert Shield'. However, planning cells sent to the Gulf from Fort

Leavenworth's School of Advance Military Studies, which had studied the Soviet Manchurian offensive in detail, developed an offensive operational plan that replicated the Soviet offensive, and named it 'Desert Storm'.

Abbreviations

SOVIET FORCES

A	army
AEB	assault engineer-sapper brigade
BGBn	border guards battalion
Cav-Mech GP	cavalry-mechanized group
CD	cavalry division
FD	forward detachment
FFR	field fortified region
FR	fortified region
Gds	guards
GKO	<i>Gosudarstvennoi komitet oborony</i> (State Defense Committee)
GRU	<i>Glavnoe razvedyvatel'noe upravlenie</i> (Main Intelligence Directorate)
HSPR	heavy self-propelled artillery regiment
MB	mechanized brigade
MC	mechanized corps
MNRA	Mongolian People's Red Army
MnRR	mountain rifle regiment
MRD	motorized rifle division
NKO	<i>Narodnyi komissariat oborony</i> (People's Commissariat of Defence)
NKPS	<i>Narodnyi komissariat put' soobshchenii</i> (People's Commissariat of Communications Routes)
NKVD	<i>Nordnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del</i> (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)
PGB	<i>Primorskaia grupa voisk</i> (Coastal Group of Forces)
RBA	Red Banner Army
RBn	rifle battalion
RC	rifle corps
RD	rifle division


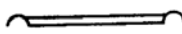
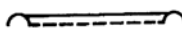


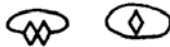

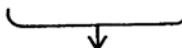

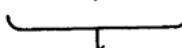



RAG	regimental artillery group
TA	tank army
TB	tank brigade
TC	tank corps
TD	tank division
TO&Es	tables of organization and equipment or establishments
TVD	<i>teatr voennykh deistvii</i> (theaters of military operations)
UR	<i>ukreplennyi raion</i> (fortified regions)

JAPANESE FORCES

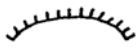



BGU	border guards unit
IB	independent mixed brigade
ID	infantry division
IR	infantry regiment
IBn	infantry battalion



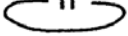
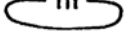

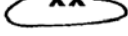




Symbols

SOVIET

	front boundary
	army boundary
	corps boundary
	division/brigade boundary
	infantry unit assembly area
	tank/mechanized unit assembly area
	cavalry unit assembly area
	infantry unit deployed or moving
	tank/mechanized unit deployed or moving
	cavalry unit deployed or moving
	self-propelled artillery unit deployed or moving
	tanks in firing positions
	self-propelled guns in firing position

JAPANESE

	field fortifications, defensive positions
	fortified region, permanent
	section position
	squad position

	platoon position
	company position
	battalion position
	regiment position
	brigade position
	division position
	division boundary
	army boundary
	area army boundary
	Kwantung Army boundary

Introduction

Shortly after midnight on 9 August 1945, assault parties of Red Army troops crossed the Soviet-Manchurian frontier and attacked Japanese defensive positions around the periphery of Manchukuo, Japanese occupied Manchuria. These assault groups, which represented the vanguard of a force of more than 1.5 million soldiers, advanced along multiple axes across a front of more than 2,730 miles (4,394 kilometers), traversing virtually every type of terrain from the arid deserts of Inner Mongolia to the forested shores of the Sea of Japan. Thus began one of the most significant military campaigns of the Second World War.

For the Soviet Union, its Manchurian offensive marked the culmination of four years of bitter and costly military struggle with Germany in the west and a similar period of worried attentiveness to Japanese intentions in the east. The Red Army had absorbed the German *Wehrmacht's* potent attacks in 1941, 1942, and 1943 and responded with its own massive offensives in 1943, 1944, and 1945, which finally crushed Germany's vaunted military machine. While the Soviets waged a war of survival with the Germans, precious Red Army forces remained in the Far East on guard against a possible Japanese attack in support of its Axis partner.

By 1945, the combination of Soviet victories in the west and Japanese defeats in the Pacific diminished the potential for any Japanese offensive in the Soviet Far East. At the same time, as Allied victory over Germany loomed, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the United States President, and his military advisers, urged Stalin to join the war against Japan to complete the destruction of the Axis powers.¹

Moved by his Allies' appeals for assistance against Japan and wishing to cement the Soviet Union's postwar position in the Far East, Stalin and his *Stavka* (Headquarters of the Supreme High Command) began planning a final campaign to defeat Japanese forces in the Far East and wrest Manchuria, northern Korea, southern Sakhalin Island, the Kuril Islands, and possibly at least the northern portion of Hokkaido Island from Japan.

The enormity of the task of conquering the vast expanse of Manchuria before a Japanese surrender rivaled the challenges of earlier military operations. The main area of Red Army operations in Europe was located more than 6,200 miles (10,000 kilometers) distant from Manchuria. Soviet planners and logisticians had to move forces, weaponry, and other military equipment earmarked for employment in Manchuria along a fragile transportation network, the Trans-Siberian railroad, the carrying capacity of which was extremely limited. Along the eastern segment of that network,

Japanese forces, particularly artillery and aviation, threatened the viability of the railroad line.

Soviet estimates of force requirements necessary to undertake such an extensive campaign were correspondingly large. Thus, the anticipated campaign involved extensive planning and careful preparations stretching over a five-month period from April through August 1945. The dramatic results of the campaign bore witness to the success of the planning and the thoroughness of preparations. Within only nine days, Red Army forces penetrated from 310 to 590 miles (500–950 kilometers) deep into Manchuria, captured every major population center, and forced the Japanese Kwantung Army and its Manchukuoan and Inner Mongolian auxiliaries to surrender. Thus, despite severe terrain obstacles and significant Japanese resistance, Red Army forces achieved their territorial objectives and accomplished their assigned missions within an extremely limited period of time.

The successes the Red Army achieved in the Manchurian offensive validated the experiences its forces had amassed in the war against Nazi Germany. The Red Army applied the advanced tactical and operational techniques it had learned in the brutal school of war in the west and displayed the requisite degree of audacious leadership Soviet commanders had laboriously developed during the campaigns in the west. The Manchurian campaign represented and still represents the highest stage of military art the Red Army reached during its operations during the Second World War. Then and now, serious students of contemporary warfare can learn significant lessons from their study of this unique campaign.

Entitled *The Soviet Strategic Offensive in Manchuria, August 1945: 'August Storm'*, this book provides general information on the campaign by concentrating on Red Army ground force and amphibious operations. It covers the strategic context of the campaign and details the strategic and operational techniques employed by *fronts*, armies, tank armies, and corps and divisions of various types, and the tactics employed by brigades, regiments, and lower echelon units and subunits. It also includes significant information regarding initial strategic and operational planning by *fronts* and armies, redeployment and regrouping of forces to and within the Far East and Mongolia, and Red Army organization for combat at every command level. While doing so, it analyzes the Red Army force structure and published operational and tactical doctrine governing the employment of these forces in 1945, highlighting tactical innovations and emphasizing adjustments made to the force structure that contributed to Soviet victory. The book concludes with an extensive assessment of the usefulness of these tactical and structural innovations and their implications for the future.

The companion volume on Red Army operations in the Far East in August 1945, *Soviet Operational and Tactical Combat in Manchuria, August 1945: 'August Storm'*, presents a broad mosaic of the diverse types of operations

the campaign encompassed by describing in detail the conduct of operations in ten specific sectors.

This volume is based primarily on Soviet primary and secondary sources, including after-action assessments by the Red Army General and Main Naval Staffs, supplemented with Japanese materials prepared on the basis of interviews with Japanese officers who participated in the defense of Manchuria. Russian-language secondary source literature on the Manchurian campaign is extensive, and coverage has intensified in recent years. Many of the participants in the campaign have written memoirs or shorter commentaries on the role they or their forces played in the operation. These include Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M.Vasilevsky, the commander of the Far Eastern Command, *front* commanders and chiefs of staff, army commanders, and service commanders. In addition, military historians have written numerous books or articles on various aspects of the operations or the operation as a whole, many in the Soviet Army's official journal, *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* [Military-historical Journal], which has published tens of such articles.

Japanese source materials on the Manchurian campaign are in shorter supply, in large part because the Soviets captured the records of the Kwantung Army during the campaign. The Japanese monograph series on operations in Manchuria, published by the US Army in the early 1950s, provides a sketchy account of the operation reconstructed from the memories of Japanese officers who served in Manchuria. Unfortunately, few of these monographs detail the fighting in the regions where the heaviest combat occurred. Those few existing Japanese memoirs are of only limited value.

In contrast to Japanese sources, Soviet sources are generally fairly complete and accurate in much of their operational detail. While they candidly discuss operational and tactical difficulties, as is the case with other works in this genre, they sometimes exaggerate the scale of individual victories or denigrate the impact of local defeats. Frequently, these Soviets sources also simply gloss over unpleasant events. This study compares Soviet accounts with accounts contained in the Japanese monographs and other Japanese studies, notes where details do and do not match, and highlights some differences regarding interpretation and emphasis.

Dr Edward J.Drea of the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS deserves special thanks for the assistance he provided in translating Japanese source materials. Throughout this study, all Japanese personal names appear in the Japanese manner with surname preceding given name.

NOTE

1. Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); Charles L. Mee, Jr, *Meeting at Potsdam* (New York: M. Evans, 1975); and P. N. Pospelov, ed., *Istoriia Velikoi Otechestvennoivoiny Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941–45 v shesti tomakh*, T. 5 [A history of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–45 in six volumes, Vol. 5.] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 530–42. The Allies had urged Soviet participation in the war against Japan since the Teheran conference of 1943.

Part I:

Before the Offensive

1

Preparations for the Manchurian Strategic Offensive

BACKGROUND

Despite negotiating a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in August 1939, during the perilous days after the beginning of the Second World War in September, Stalin and the Red Army General Staff realized that Germany still posed a considerable military threat to the Soviet Union. Therefore, from September 1939 to the outbreak of the Soviet-German War in June 1941, the Soviet political leadership and General Staff formulated a military policy and strategy that sought to defend the Soviet Union against the frightening prospect of a war on two fronts. This defensive strategy accorded priority, first and foremost to the west, and secondarily to the east. In the west, the Soviets exploited their agreement with Germany for a partition of eastern Europe by subsequently occupying and annexing the Baltic States and Belorussia. The policy also promoted Stalin to wage war against Finland after Soviet threats had failed to intimidate that small nation.

Soviet defensive concerns assumed even greater urgency after the spring of 1940 when German forces seized Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France, and drove British forces from the continent. Subsequent Soviet war planning reflected this urgency. In July 1940 the General Staff prepared a new strategic plan, drafted by Major General A.M. Vasilevsky, Deputy Chief of the General Staff's Operations Division and approved by B.M. Shaposhnikov, the Chief of the Red Army General Staff.¹ Like previous plans, this plan postulated an attack by Germany supported by Italy, Finland, Rumania, and possibly Hungary against the western Soviet Union and by Japan in the Soviet Far East. The General Staff assessed a total threat of 270 infantry division, 11,750 tanks, 22,000 guns, and 16,400 aircraft, the bulk of which would be directed against the most critical western theater. Soviet strategic deployment in accordance with this plan required the formation of three wartime *fronts* in the western theater: the northwestern and western protecting the main strategic axis and the southwestern protecting the region south of the Pripiat Marshes.

The General Staff planned to employ the Far Eastern Front and Trans-Baikal Military District, whose forces manned the boundaries of Japanese-occupied Manchuria, to deal with the Japanese threat to the Far East. The Far Eastern Front, whose original name was the Red Banner Far Eastern Front, had been organized in late June 1938 from the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army. Initially, the *front* consisted of the 1st and 2d Red Banner Armies and the Khabarovsk Group of Forces. After the battle with the Japanese at Lake Khasan in late summer 1938, the General Staff disestablished the *front*, only to form it again in July 1940 on the base of the Chita Front Group of Forces with its subordinate 1st and 2d Separate Red Banner and 15th Armies and Northern Army Group. The *Stavka* added the 25th and 35th Armies to the *front* in July 1941.²

The Trans-Baikal Military District had been formed in May 1935 on the base of the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army's Trans-Baikal Group of Forces. When war began in 1941, it included the territory of Irkutsk and Chita *oblasts* [regions] and Buriat-Mongolian and Yakut ASSRs, and its headquarters was at Chita. From June 1941 the military district consisted of the 16th and 17th Armies, and after July 1941, the 36th Army. Soon after the outbreak of war, the *Stavka* transferred the 16th Army to its reserve and then westward to the Smolensk region to reinforce the Western Front. The Trans-Baikal Military District then mobilized fresh forces to defend its borders with Manchuria. In September 1941 the *Stavka* reorganized the military district into the Trans-Baikal Front consisting of the 17th and 36th Armies, and after August 1942, the 12th Air Army.³

Diplomatic measures supplemented the Soviet's new military strategy. As an adjunct to war planning, the Soviet government sought to defuse the threat in the east by signing a non-aggression pact with Japan, which would in turn allow the Soviet State to pay principal attention to its western borders and the German threat. Since it was angry over the German—Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939, which it viewed as a violation of its Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany, in April 1941 the Japanese signed a pact of neutrality with the Soviet Union.⁴

Reassured by its non-aggression pact with Japan but distressed over Germany's evident mobilization, the Soviet Union began a strategic regrouping of forces from the Far East in the spring of 1941. In the second half of April, the People's Commissariat of Defense [*Narodnyi komissariat oborony*—NKO] decided to reinforce its forces in the West at the expense of forces stationed in the Far East and Trans-Baikal regions. By 22 June 1941, it had dispatched the field headquarters of the 16th Army, two rifle and one mechanized corps, and two airborne brigades westward. This force, which included two rifle and two tank divisions, one motorized division and two separate regiments with a total strength of more than 57,000 men, 670 guns and mortars, and 1,070 light tanks, later participated in the Western

and Southwestern Fronts' defensive operations during the tragic initial months of war.⁵

SOVIET WARTIME STRATEGY VIS-À-VIS JAPAN

The Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact benefited the Soviet Union immensely after June 1941 by partially mitigating against the adverse effects of the German Operation Barbarossa and permitting the Soviet Union to devote its energies to meeting and defeating the German threat. Despite the pact's existence, however, the fragility of the earlier German—Soviet non-aggression pact and its violation by Germany prompted Stalin to suspect that the same fate might befall his pact with Japan. Consequently, while the Soviet Union shifted its strategic attention westward, nagging concerns over Japanese actions forced the *Stavka* (Headquarters of the Supreme High Command), which directed the Soviet war effort after late June 1941, to maintain strong defenses in the Far East. After December 1941, however, Japanese involvement in a Pacific war with the United States largely negated Soviet concerns over its eastern flank.

From 22 June 1941 through mid-1944, Stalin and his *Stavka* applied to the conduct of the war strategic concepts that had been fundamental tenets of Soviet military strategy during the 1920s and 1930s. In particular, the Soviet Union accorded the highest priority to, first, the conduct of strategic defense in the west to halt the German invasion and, second, the conduct of strategic offensive operations to defeat Nazi Germany. Whether or not Japan entered the war, the Soviet Union's survival depended on successful defense and, ultimately, counteroffensive action in the west. All Soviet strategic measures served that essential end. Virtually from the first day of the war, Stalin and his military advisers shifted vital military resources westward from the Far East. All subsequent Soviet strategists agree that 'The forces of the Far Eastern Military District made a worthy contribution to the overall matter of victory in the great Patriotic War.'⁶

In June 1941 Stalin ordered the Far Eastern Front and Trans-Baikal Military District to erect firm defenses along the Manchurian and Korean border and on 29 June begin transferring westward the bulk of their well-trained and battle-tested divisions.

To defend their territories once their best forces had departed, commanders in the East relied heavily on 14 fortified regions (12 in the Far Eastern Front and two in the Trans-Baikal Military District), some of which had been created as early as 1932, but the bulk of which were formed between 1938 and August 1941. Fortified regions [*ukreplennyi raion*—UR] consisted of from eight to 12 machine gun-artillery and antitank battalions positioned in increasingly well-fortified defensive positions. Although they were dispersed along the entire Soviet-Manchurian border, most of these fortified regions were concentrated in eastern Manchuria, 'since it was in

this area that the Soviets expected the main body of the Japanese Army to attack' should hostilities break out.⁷ Japanese sources recognized their defensive nature, noting, 'There is no room to doubt the initially defensive nature of the URs.'⁸

Behind this fortified defensive shield, the Soviets maintained a skeletal force structure in the Far East made up of rifle divisions, cavalry divisions, and a minimal number of mixed formations. After 22 June 1941, the vast majority of other forces moved westward to play a vital role in the war in the west, even though the *Stavka* still had reason to be concerned about its eastern flank.⁹ The force the *Stavka* allocated for wartime defense in the Far East was based on the assumption that it was possible to conduct a two-front war successfully if sufficient forces could be mustered to defend the Far East. The *Stavka* assumed 'that Japan could allocate up to 50 divisions, 1,200 tanks, and 3,000 aircraft against the Soviet Union'. Therefore, 'it was necessary to have 33–34 divisions and a specific quantity of forces and ships in the Pacific Fleet to guarantee fully a stable situation and for defense of the Far Eastern borders'.¹⁰

The wartime deployment of Red Army forces from the Far East to the west began in early July 1941 and accelerated thereafter. From July through November, the *Stavka* recalled 13 rifle, tank, and motorized divisions from the Far East, divisions that subsequently played a significant role in halting German forces on the approaches to Moscow and in launching the Red Army's ensuing Moscow counteroffensive.¹¹ A second wave of Far Eastern divisions, sent westward in 1942, contributed to Red Army success at Stalingrad in November 1942. This included two rifle divisions between 5 December 1941 and 30 April 1942 and ten rifle divisions and four rifle brigades with a total of 150,000 men and more than 1,600 guns and mortars between 1 May and 19 November 1942.¹²

Later still, in the winter of 1942–43, the NKO transferred one rifle division, three cavalry divisions, six howitzer artillery brigades, and three mortar regiments totaling 35,000 men, 557 guns and mortars, and 32 light tanks westward to reinforce the post-Stalingrad offensive.¹³ The transfers decreased sharply as Red Army combat fortunes soared in the summer of 1943. From March to May 1943, the NKO shipped eight newly formed howitzer artillery brigades with 9,000 men and 230 guns back to the west, and in 1944 an airborne brigade and four howitzer artillery regiments.¹⁴

In total, from 1941 to 1945, the *Stavka* redeployed 39 divisions, 21 brigades, and ten regiments totaling 402,000 men, 5,000 guns and mortars, and more than 3,300 tanks from the Far East to the western theater. In addition, it also sent as many as 150,000 personnel replacements.¹⁵ Deprived of these forces, by December 1941 Red Army strength in the Far East had dwindled to 32 divisions or divisional equivalents, barely enough to defend in accordance with the General Staff's calculations.

Throughout the period from June 1941 through January 1944, Red Army forces in the Far East remained on the strategic defense, although the army's strength in the region slowly crept up from 32 to 48 divisional equivalents.¹⁶ By mid-1944, when it became apparent that victory in the west was only a matter of time, Soviet strategic planners began entertaining thoughts of an offensive in the Far East and adjusted their Far Eastern strategic posture accordingly.

TRANSITION FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE, 1941-44

The *Stavka* began strengthening its strategic posture in the Far East in earnest during the summer of 1943 in the expectation that offensive operations would be required in the future. In August it formed the Coastal Group of Forces (the 1st and 25th Armies and the 9th Air Army) from the existing Far Eastern Front. This group, initially under 25th Army control, took over the 'deployment of forces and responsibility for the separate coastal strategic axis protecting the approaches from the Far East into eastern Manchuria.'¹⁷ Ultimately, it provided the basis for the formation of the 1st Far Eastern Front in 1945.

Throughout the summer of 1943, the General Staff transferred personnel between theaters to improve its expertise on Far Eastern matters. The General Staff brought Major General N.A.Lomov from his previous position as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Far Eastern Front to the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, where he began serving as deputy to Lieutenant General S.M.Shtemenko, the directorate's chief. Lomov brought with him extensive experience in the Far East. At the same time, the *Stavka* replaced Lomov with Major General F.I.Shevchenko from the General Staff to strengthen its representation in the Far East.¹⁸

At the meeting of the 'Big Three' Allied leaders (Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill) at Teheran in November 1943, in response to Anglo-American requests for assistance in the war against Japan, Stalin announced that, in principle, the Soviet government would agree to join the war once Germany had been defeated. Following Soviet victories in the West in 1943 and 1944, the Red Army General Staff began preliminary planning for military operations in the Far East. In the summer of 1944, for example, Stalin designated Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M.Vasilevsky, the Chief of the General Staff, as future Far Eastern Theater commander.¹⁹

Throughout 1944 the *Stavka* and General Staff beefed up their force in the Far East by dispatching to that region from the west 11 rifle divisions, together with the command group of a mechanized corps, a mechanized brigade, and several artillery regiments, thus raising the strength of their forces in the Far East to about 59 division equivalents by December 1944 and 47 divisions and 31 separate brigades by May 1945. During the same period, the Red Army's personnel strength in the Far East

TABLE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH OF SOVIET FORCES IN THE FAR EAST, 1941–45

Forces	Date						
	22.6.41	1.12.41	1.7.42	19.11.42	1.7.43	1.1.44	9.5.45
Divisions:							
Rifle	23	24	29	20	20	31	45
Cavalry	1	2	3	3	3	2	2
Tank	8	4	2	2	2	2	2
Aviation	13	23	10	24	27	29	29
PVO (antiaircraft defense)	—			—	—	—	6
Brigades:							
Rifle	3	11	20	31	30	26	6
Tank	1	7	20	22	25	26	27
Aviation	4	4	4	3	4	—	—
PVO	1	—	—	—	1	4	4
Fortified regions	13	15	15	15	15	18	19
Total divisional equivalents*	32	39	49.5	46	45.5	55	59.5

*Divisional equivalents count one rifle and cavalry as one division and two brigades and fortified regions as one division.

Source: *Istoriia Vtoroi Mirovoi voiny 1939–1945*, T. 11 [History of the Second World War, 1939–1945, Vol.11] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1980), 183.

rose to 1,185,000 troops, supported by 20,695 guns and mortars, 2,338 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 4,314 combat aircraft (see Tables 1 and 2).²⁰

Planning for the transition from defense to offense continued to accelerate. In late September 1944, Stalin tasked the General Staff's Operations Directorate, headed by Shtemenko, with drafting estimates for concentrating and logistically supporting forces necessary to conduct offensive operations against Japanese forces in Manchuria. Preliminary estimates, based on assessments made by the General Staff's Main Intelligence Directorate [*Glavnoe razvedyvatel'noe upravlenie—GRU*] of Japanese strength in the theater and the enemy's overall strategic situation, were ready by late October. They assessed Japanese ground strength at over 680,000 men, including 443,000 in the Kwantung Army, 1,215 tanks, 6,700 guns, and 1,900 aircraft in Manchuria and Korea. According to these estimates, another 100,000 troops were deployed on southern Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands. Additional forces in northern China were also available to bolster the Kwantung Army. The Soviets also noted Japanese efforts to improve their defenses in Manchuria by the construction of 17 fortified regions consisting of substantial permanent fortifications.²¹

The General Staff assumed that a major Soviet offensive in Manchuria aimed at destroying the Kwantung Army would also break Japanese power in China and Korea and hasten the end of the war. Set within the context of Soviet strategic objectives, these assessments of overall Japanese strength established the basic norms that Soviet planners would employ to determine the scale and other parameters of the strategic redeployment the Red Army

TABLE 2: PERSONNEL AND WEAPONS STRENGTH OF SOVIET FORCES IN THE FAR EAST, 1941–45

<i>Date</i>	<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Guns and mortars</i>	<i>Tanks and SP guns</i>	<i>Combat aircraft</i>	<i>Combat ships</i>
22.6.41	703,714	10,080*	3,188**	4,140	94***
1.12.41	1,343,307	8,777	2,124	3,193	96
1.7.42	1,446,012	11,759	2,589	3,178	107
19.11.42	1,296,822	12,728	2,526	3,357	98
1.7.43	1,156,961	13,843	2,367	3,949	101
1.1.44	1,162,991	16,827	2,069	4,006	102
9.5.45	1,185,058	20,695	2,338	4,314	93

*Does not include 50 mm mortars.

**All tanks shown are light types and the only self-propelled guns included 132 in May 1945.

***Includes special classes of combat ships only and not transport ships.

Source: *Istoriï Vtoroi Mirovoi voiny 1939–1945*, T. 11 [History of the Second World War 1939–1945, Vol. 11] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1980), 184.

would have to conduct to create a correlation of forces requisite for the achievement of victory in the Far Eastern theater of military operations.²²

During the fall of 1944, the General Staff focused its attention on logistical problems, since, in the final analysis, logistics would determine the size of the force that it could commit against the Kwantung Army. To improve its logistical posture, the Soviet government initiated preliminary discussions with representatives of the United States and Great Britain regarding additional Lend-Lease aid to support Soviet preparations for hostilities against Japan. Logistical support for specific Red Army operations in Manchuria figured prominently in these conversations.

The most important of these discussions took place in Moscow during October 1944 when Stalin and his military planners met with Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, his Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, and US observers, including Ambassador Averill Harriman and General John Deane, head of the US Military Mission. At a high-level session on 15 October, Harriman and Deane presented a series of questions to the Soviet leadership:

1. How long after the war with Germany ends will the Russians declare war on Japan?
2. How much time is necessary for the Russians to begin active offensive operations?
3. To what degree can the Trans-Siberian railroad be used for the accumulation of strategic ground and air forces?²³

The next day Stalin and A.I. Antonov, the chief of the General Staff answered:

The Soviet Union has 30 divisions and 19 rifle brigades stationed in the Far East against 24 Japanese divisions and 42 brigades located in Manchuria and Korea. To secure the necessary superiority in forces and equipment and be in a state to commence offensive operations, we need to transfer about another 30 divisions to the Far East for which we need to run no fewer than 1,000 military trains along the Trans-Siberian railroad. The daily load capacity of this railroad is about 36 trains, of which 26 can be allocated for military aims. In such circumstances the transfer of 30 divisions will take 2.5–3 months. Thereafter we can open offensive operations in the event that the western Allied powers prevent the enemy, who possesses more favorable communications, from bringing up reinforcements to Manchuria and Korea from other regions. Not considering the Japanese to be a sufficiently strong enemy, we suggest that we will complete our military operations within two months after the declaration of war... The Soviet Union can strike a blow several months after the destruction of Germany.²⁴

At the same time, Stalin and Antonov emphasized that the Trans-Siberian railroad lacked the load capacity to transport to the Far East supplies necessary to sustain successful military operations by so large a force. Therefore, 'the Soviet leadership insisted it was necessary to supply our Far Eastern armies from the United States via Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka and Vladivostok'.²⁵

At the conference's third session, which took place on 17 October, the General Staff presented the Allied representatives with a detailed list of supplies necessary for Soviet forces to conduct successful operations in the Far East. It stated that, since the forces required a two-month reserve of food and other types of supplies, about 860,410 tons of dry goods and 206,000 tons of liquids (primarily fuel) were necessary to support the planned force, which would consist of 'more than 1.5 million men, 500 aircraft, 3,000 tanks, and 75,000 vehicles'.²⁶ The General Staff requested that the Western Allies provide all of the necessary supplies by the end of June 1945 and that they be considered to be outside the parameters of present Lend-Lease agreements. During the same session, Stalin agreed to commence operations against Japanese forces in Manchuria approximately three months after the capitulation of Germany.

The 'Big Three' heads of state and their representatives met once again four months later at Yalta in the Crimea. During the sessions, which met from 7 to 12 February, they formalized agreement on matters negotiated in Moscow during the previous October. Specifically, on 11 February,

Roosevelt and Stalin signed an agreement announcing the Soviet Union's intent to enter the war against Japan. Thereafter, the General Staff began preparing detailed operational plans for the campaign, and other state organs began making decisions regarding the transport of troops and supplies to the Far East. The General Staff and NKO Directorates responsible for planning military operations in Manchuria assumed that 'The military-political aims could be achieved in a short period only if three powerful offensive groupings and considerable superiority over the enemy in troops and equipment existed in the Far Eastern theater.'²⁷

From the Japanese perspective, in late 1943 and 1944, the military situation took a sharp turn for the worse. Consequently, for the first time in the war, in June 1944 Japanese military planners began preparing plans for a future defense of Manchuria. A postwar Japanese assessment noted that, during wartime, the Soviet Far Eastern defensive structure of fortified regions gradually took on a more ominous offensive tone:

There is no room to doubt the initially defensive nature of the URs. The character of the URs changed, however, when the Soviets were able to step up war preparations and reinforce the border areas. With the adoption of an offensive operational policy, the Soviets' reliance upon the URs as defensive installations decreased. The URs began to be considered as springboards for offensive action in Manchuria. Proof of this can be found in the construction of the Dauriya positions in front of the Borzya positions in the Trans-Baikal in 1939, and also in the fact that, when the unit in charge of defending the UR in the vicinity of Poltavka was pulled back in 1940, it was reorganized into the 105th Infantry Division, apparently for future use in offensive operations in this vicinity.²⁸

Although these concerns surfaced in retrospect, in 1944 and 1945, the Japanese High Command clearly appreciated the maturing Soviet offensive capability. They did not, however, anticipate the scope of these preparations or the timing of what was about to occur.

PLANNING THE STRATEGIC REGROUPING OF RED ARMY FORCES TO MANCHURIA

The Soviet Union began actively preparing for war against Japan in February and March 1945, shortly after Stalin reiterated his promise to do so to his 'Big Three' partners at the February conference in the Crimea.

During March the General Staff approved plans for deploying forces and *matériel* to the Far East, and several weeks later, on 19 March the State Defense Committee [*Gosudarstvennoi komitet oborony*—GKO] decided to reinforce its air defenses in the Far East and Trans-Baikal region. Shortly

thereafter, Soviet state organs issued a steady stream of orders improving its military posture in the region. On 19 March the *Stavka* created its third strategic grouping in the region by removing the Coastal Group of Forces from Far Eastern Front control and subordinated it directly to its control, and on 26 March the *Stavka* issued new orders to the Far Eastern Front and Coastal Group of Force concerning the concealment and protection of its force deployments.²⁹

Given the decisive role armored forces would obviously play in the upcoming campaign, in March 1945 the *Stavka* also began upgrading the equipment in Red Army tank forces already in the Far East, which were still equipped only with older model light T-26 and BT (fast-moving) tanks. To improve the capability of these forces, the *Stavka* equipped one battalion of each tank brigade and one regiment of the 61st and 111th Tank Divisions with T-34 tanks as the first installment of 670 T-34 tanks it planned to dispatch to the Far East.³⁰ The limited carrying capacity of the TransSiberian railroad prevented the dispatch of enough tanks to the Far Eastern theater to equip the Red Army's entire armored force in the region. Therefore, the United States agreed to ship the several hundreds of tanks required to make up the difference via Vladivostok.

The most serious logistical problems Soviet military planners faced in 1945 were the inadequate carrying capacity of the rail network to the Far East, the poor condition of the railroad, and the lack of qualified personnel and equipment to repair the vital line. The GKO began resolving the problem on 13 April when it issued instructions, 'Concerning Measures to Improve the Operations of Far Eastern (Krasnoiarsk, Eastern-Siberian, Trans-Baikal, Amur, Far Eastern, and Coastal) Railroads.'³¹ Among other measures, the People's Commissariat of Communications [*Narodnyi komissariat put' soobshchenii*—NKPS] increased the carrying capacity of some rail sectors from 12 to 38 trains per day and the number of locomotives available along rail lines in the Far East from 2,708 on 1 May 1945 to 2,947 on 1 July and 3,107 on 1 September, in part by providing 800 locomotives from its reserve.³²

Also in April the Communications Commissariat began dispatching railroad forces to the Far East, first, elements of three railroad exploitation regiments and three exploitation squads from Poland and Rumania numbering over 14,000 men, and augmenting them with 8,000 conscripts who had been called to limited service due to poor health. Soon after, two railroad brigades and several specialized formations began to perform repair work on the railroad lines.³³

In May the GKO and NKPS dispatched the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Railroad Brigades to the Trans-Baikal region from the west to construct and maintain another more secure railroad line from Irkutsk to Sliudianka, a 191-mile (307-kilometer) rail sector connecting the Eastern Siberian and Trans-Baikal railroads.³⁴ In addition, these forces significantly improved the Trans-Baikal Front's vital single-track railroad line from Karymskaia in

Siberia through Borzia to Chiobalsan (Baian-Tumen') in Mongolia, increasing its capacity from seven to ten trains per day.³⁵

During the same period, the NKPS transferred its 3d Railroad Brigade from Czechoslovakia to the 1st Far Eastern Front to work on the Coastal Railroad and the 25th Railroad Brigade to the 2d Far Eastern Front to improve the condition of the Amur and Far Eastern Railroads, increasing the capacity of these railroads from 25 to 30 trains per day.³⁶

While the railroads serving the Far East and Trans-Baikal regions were being improved and repaired, road administrations were carrying out similar measures to improve the road network in the region to support internal force movements and the forward deployment of forces. By 9 August, road construction and repair forces built or repaired 2,610 miles (4,200 kilometers) of roads in the Far East, including 1,416 miles (2,279 kilometers) in the Trans-Baikal Front, 938 miles (1,509 kilometers) in the 1st Far Eastern Front, and 301 miles (485 kilometers) in the 2d Far Eastern Front.³⁷

To help provide necessary political context for its military operations in Manchuria, on 5 April 1945 the Soviet government renounced its neutrality pact with Japan.³⁸ During the same period, while operations in the west were entering their final phase, the *Stavka* dispatched its first warning orders regarding impending military action against Japan to the headquarters of the Far Eastern Front and Coastal Group of Forces. Also in March, Stalin centralized all operational planning for the Manchurian offensive under the *Stavka*'s direction. Soviet forces were to conduct the offensive according to a common *Stavka* plan, which included 'a complex of diplomatic, military-technical, and strategic measures on an all-governmental scale'.³⁹

Also during April, the State Defense Committee [GKO], the People's Commissariat of Defense [NKO], and the Red Army General Staff began the arduous process of assembling sufficient forces in the Far Eastern theater of military operations with which to conduct the offensive. First, these organs stockpiled equipment in the Far East and reequipped and reorganized forces already located in that region. Later, primarily in May and June, they began shifting men, *matériel*, and equipment to the Far East, in general, transferring combat units and their equipment separately.⁴⁰ All the while, the United States geared up its efforts to send requisite equipment and supplies to the Far East through the ports of Petropavlovsk and Vladivostok.

On the basis of the General Staff's assessments of Japanese strength in the Far East, the Manchurian operation turned out to be slightly larger than the offensive operation the Red Army had conducted against German Army Group Center in Belorussia in June 1944. Using the Belorussian experience as a guide, to guarantee success in the Manchurian operation the General Staff believed it had to increase its military strength in the Far East to a total of more than 1.5 million soldiers, more than double their June

1941 strength and almost 50 per cent higher than the strength on 1 January 1945.

Several stark realities differentiated the Manchurian offensive from its Belorussian predecessor, delayed its preparation, increased its importance, and magnified the importance of deception and surprise in its preparation and conduct. As Shtemenko later recalled:

Our efforts to achieve surprise were much hindered by the fact that the Japanese had for long been convinced of the inevitability of war with the Soviet Union. Strategic surprise seemed altogether impossible. Nevertheless, in considering this problem, we reflected more than once on the first days of the war we were still fighting. Our country had also expected war and prepared for it, but the German attack had come as a surprise. So there was no need to abandon the idea prematurely.⁴¹

The first reality the General Staff had to address was the fact that the immense size of the theater of military operations and its staggering distance from European Russia required it to move almost 700,000 men and vast amounts of weapons, equipment, and other military supplies over 5,590 miles (9,000 kilometers) along the tenuous umbilical of the Trans-Siberian railroad from the European theater to the Far East. To achieve surprise, this movement had to be kept as secret as possible. Second, the General Staff was confronted with severe time constraints. Japanese reinforcement of Manchuria, the United States' employment of the atomic bomb against Japan on the eve of the offensive, and possible ensuing Japanese collapse before the Soviet Union was in a position to avail itself of the spoils of victory, made it imperative that the offensive achieve its goals in a matter of days, rather than weeks or months. In short, Manchuria had to be secured within 30 days and the main entrances into central Manchuria within one week, as much for political as for military reasons.

From virtually every perspective, successful strategic deception would be a large factor determining Soviet success or failure. In this instance, and for the first time, the Soviet Union would have to employ strategic deception to achieve surprise in an initial period of war. This required political finesse to dull Japanese apprehensions over possible Soviet military intentions and creation and orchestration of a deception plan outside the confines of ongoing combat. Hence, the *Stavka* could not rely on the 'noise of war' to conceal their offensive preparations. Ultimately, however, although the Japanese well understood the Soviet intention to attack, they were totally deceived regarding the timing, scale, location, and form of the offensive.⁴²

THE STRATEGIC REGROUPING OF FORCES TO THE FAR EAST

Movement associated with the strategic regrouping of Red Army forces to the Far East took place from May through July of 1945, and forces were still arriving in the Far Eastern Theater when the campaign commenced in early August. The regrouping process involved massive troop and material movements to the Far East and Trans-Baikal regions from the west and within and between the *fronts* designated to conduct the offensive (see [Map 1](#)).

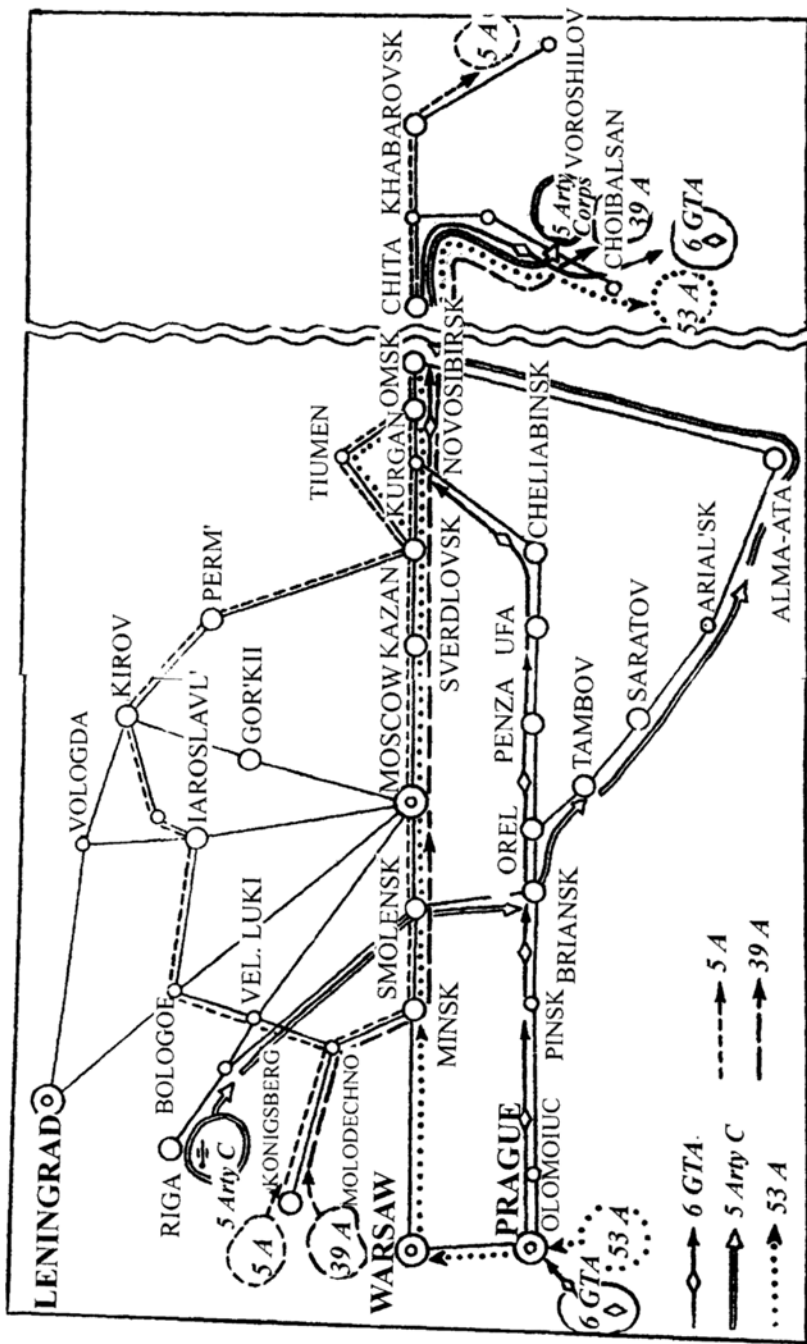
By 9 August 1945, the total number of railroad cars employed in this movement reached 222,331, including 127,126 railroad cars dispatched from central regions of the Soviet Union. Of this total, 75,345 cars carried reinforcements and material for the Trans-Baikal Front, 31,100 for the 1st Far Eastern Front, and 17,916 for the 2d Far Eastern Front, and a total of 81,538 cars were used to transport military formations and units.⁴³

Overall, the forces regrouped during the summer of 1945 included:

- *two front* [army group] headquarters, including a *reserve front* headquarters formed from the former Karelian Front from the *Stavka* reserve and the headquarters of the 2d Ukrainian Front;
- four army headquarters, including the 5th, 39th, and 53d Combined-arms armies and the 6th Guards Tank Army;
- 15 rifle, artillery, tank, and mechanized corps headquarters;
- 36 rifle, artillery, and antiaircraft artillery divisions;
- 53 brigades of various types;
- two fortified regions; and
- additional air, air defense, and naval units.

Although the GKO reached its final decision regarding the transfer of a massive number of military formations to the Far East on 3 June 1945, the actual movement of these forces had begun many month before, even before the war in Europe ended. For example, in April it ordered the headquarters of its former Karelian Front, then in *Stavka* reserve, to move to the Far East, where it became the headquarters of the Coastal Group of Forces. On 9 May the GKO transferred two field-fortified regions to the area, also from its reserve. By month's end, it had completed the first wave of transfers by regrouping the 5th Army headquarters, the headquarters of three rifle corps, and four rifle divisions to the east.⁴⁴

All told, the GKO extracted sizeable forces from four *fronts* that had already completed their operations in the west (the 3d Belorussian, 2d Ukrainian, Leningrad, and 1st Belorussian Fronts) as its principal source of reinforcements for the new Far East Command. The most important source was the 3d Belorussian Front, which had just completed operations to destroy



Map 1. Regrouping Routes of Soviet to the Far East

German forces defending the Königsberg region. The forces taken from this *front* included the headquarters of the 5th and 39th Armies, six rifle corps headquarters, 18 rifle and two antiaircraft artillery divisions, and eight artillery and two guards-mortar brigades, comprising 60 per cent of *the front's* overall strength.⁴⁵

In addition, the GKO deployed eastward from the 2d Ukrainian Front its headquarters and those of the 53d and 6th Guards Tank Armies, six tank, mechanized, and rifle corps headquarters, ten rifle and antiaircraft artillery divisions, and 15 brigades of various types, and, from the Leningrad Front, the headquarters of an artillery penetration and mechanized corps, six divisions, and 17 brigades. Finally, the 1st Belorussian Front provided three guards-mortar brigades, the Moscow Military District, two tank brigades, and the *Stavka* reserve, a *front* headquarters, three brigades, and two fortified regions.⁴⁶

The headquarters staff of Vasilevsky's new Far East Command arrived in Chita on 5 July 1945. Vasilevsky's immediate staff included Army General I.I.Maslennikov, deputy commander, Lieutenant General I.V.Shikin, political deputy, and Colonel General S.P.Ivanov, chief of staff. The command element numbered 30 generals and 190 officers, all of whom had held responsible positions in the General Staff and central directorates and other organs of the NKO. All of the leading figures traveled to the region under false names (Vasilevsky was called Colonel General Vasil'ev). In essence, with its subordinate headquarters and chiefs of services, this assemblage formed a secret Main Command of Soviet Forces in the Far East.⁴⁷

Vasilevsky's staff included 12 generals and 66 officers made up of groups of officers from the General Staff's Main Operations, Intelligence, Operational Rear, 8th (Cipher), and Topographical Directorates, a communications group of four generals and ten officers led by Colonel General N.D.Psurtsev, and a Naval Section formed in July 1945 with one admiral and 13 officers. In addition, the command staff included:

- an Air Force group of six generals and 29 officers headed by Chief Marshal of Aviation A.A.Novikov;
- an artillery group of five officers under Marshal of Artillery N.M. Chistiakov;
- a tank group of eight officers led by Colonel General M.D.Solomatina, the chief of staff, Red Army Armored and Mechanized Forces;
- an engineer group of five officers under Colonel General K.S.Nazarov, the chief of engineer forces;
- a group of chemical forces headed by Major General A.S.Kubasov;
- a rear services group of 12 generals and 74 officers under the command of Colonel General V.I.Vinogradov, which included subgroups from the principal staff rear service departments and directorates, the road,

automotive, construction, quartermaster, medical, veterinary, fuel supply, trophy (captured material), and other directorates.⁴⁸

Eventually, all of these staff groups manned corresponding staffs, directorates, and departments subordinate to the Far East Command. In addition, the Red Army's Main Political Directorate formed a Political Directorate in the Far East Command consisting of six generals and 59 officers. When fully manned, the Far East Command consisted of 525 men, including 45 generals, 300 officers, 130 non-commissioned officers and soldiers, and 50 non-military workers. Finally, in June 1945 the People's Commissar of the Navy, Fleet Admiral N.G.Kuznetsov, arrived in the Far East with a group of admirals and officers and formed a Naval Department in the Far East Command and the 1st and 2d Far Eastern Front.⁴⁹

Beginning in the spring of 1945, the *Stavka* replaced the command cadre and senior staff officers in the major strategic force groupings in the Far East and Trans-Baikal regions and at every level down to brigade with more experienced officers. For example, the staffs of the former Karelian and 2d Ukrainian Fronts replaced those of the 1st Far Eastern and Trans-Baikal Fronts, which were designated to operate along the most important strategic axes. In addition, the Main Cadres Directorate replaced with more experienced officers 20 senior command and political cadre in combined-arms and air armies and 40 commanders of corps, divisions, and tank brigades. When this process was complete, the Far East Command included 60 generals and admirals and more than 10,000 officers, including 3,000 who had fought successfully on the Soviet-German front.⁵⁰

As far as the actual movement of forces was concerned, the first headquarters to deploy eastward was Meretskov's Reserve Front headquarters, which moved from the Iaroslavl' region to the region west of Vladivostok between 1 and 13 April 1945. Following the established pattern, Meretskov used the false name Colonel General Maksimov, and his chief political officer (Member of the Military Council) and chief of staff also used false ranks and names. Shortly after its arrival and redesignation as the Coastal Group of Forces (*Primorskaia grupa voisk*—PGB), on 20 April Meretskov's group came under direct *Stavka* control with the mission of defending the coastal region of the Far East and improving his forces' offensive capabilities. At the time, the Coastal Group consisted of the 35th, 1st Red Banner, 25th Combined-arms, and 9th Air Armies.

In late April, the *Stavka* formed the Chuguevka group within the Coastal Group of Forces to protect the group's rear and the southeastern coast of the Sea of Japan. It did so by dispatching to the Far East an operational group of two fortified regions from the White Sea Military District, which was experienced in coastal defense. The 150th and 162d Fortified Regions completed the bulk of their movement by 10 May, before the massive process of regrouping major forces from the west began. They

completed their movement over a distance of 199–217 miles (320–350) kilometers through exceedingly difficult terrain to their assigned positions by road and track between 21 May and 17 July.⁵¹

The massive movement of forces eastward from European Russia began with the dispatch of Army General N.I. Krylov's 5th Army from East Prussia. The army began its movement preparations in accordance with a 19 April *Stavka* directive and began loading its three rifle corps (the 45th, 65th, and 72d) and nine rifle divisions (the 63d, 97th, 144th, 157th, 159th, 184th, 215th, 277th, and 371st, which averaged 6,400 men each) into railroad cars at Königsberg, Insterberg, and Tilsit on 22 April. While 110 railroad trains were transporting the army eastward, on 26 April Krylov and his senior staff flew to Moscow to receive specific movement instructions.

Ultimately, the army's final elements were loaded on 10 May, a process requiring 19 rather than the planned 15 days. The army's first series of trains, which carried its operational group, arrived at Muchnaia Station, located 62 miles (100 kilometers) north of Voroshilovgrad, on 21 May, and the remainder of the army closed into Muchnaia, Shmakovka, and Manzovka Stations by 10 June, a total period of 50 days.⁵²

After their arrival in the Far East, from 2 May through 11 June, the 5th Army's forces moved into their concentration areas around Lunza, Muchnaia, and Arkhangelovka, where they began regrouping, replenishing, and training. Commanders' meeting and reports highlighted a variety of problems, including soldier fatigue, lack of training, shortages of mid-level and junior officers, shortages of food and fuel, and a large number of soldiers 50 years of age or older. The corps commanders reported that between ten and 15 days were required to bring their forces to full combat readiness.⁵³ Krylov responded by emphasizing the importance of the army's mission and the necessity of completing training and combat preparations rapidly and effectively, noting he intended to bring all of the army's divisions up to a strength of 7,000 men as soon as possible.⁵⁴

In addition to the 5th Army, 70 combat formations and units deployed eastward to support the Coastal Group of Forces on the following schedule:

April and May 1945:

- the 60th Antiaircraft Artillery Division from Czechoslovakia;
- the 15th Guards Antitank (Tank Destroyer) Artillery Brigade (with the 5th Army) from East Prussia; and
- six separate artillery regiments and 19 separate self-propelled artillery battalions (SU-76) from East Prussia to support rifle divisions.

July and August 1945:

- the 126th Mountain Rifle Corps (with three brigades) from L'vov;

- the 33d and 48th Antiaircraft Artillery Divisions RGK (Reserve of the *Stavka*) from East Prussia;
- five separate artillery and mortar brigades, four separate engineer brigades, one signal brigade, and nine separate self-propelled artillery regiments to support the rifle corps.⁵⁵

The *Stavka* regrouped the fewest number of formations and units from the west to reinforce and support the Far Eastern Front. The 30 formations and units moved east included the 73d Antiaircraft Artillery Division RGK, two separate antitank artillery brigades, one separate antiaircraft artillery brigade, one separate engineer brigade, two signal brigades, six separate artillery and mortar regiments, and 12 separate self-propelled artillery battalions (SU-76).

The greatest proportion of forces regrouped to the east went to the Trans-Baikal Front for employment along its intended main offensive axis. The largest formations were the 39th Army with three rifle corps and nine rifle divisions from East Prussia, the 53d Army with three rifle corps and nine rifle divisions from Czechoslovakia, and the 6th Guards Tank Army with one tank and two mechanized corps, also from Czechoslovakia.

Colonel General I.I.Liudnikov's 39th Army, which had recently finished destroying German forces on the Zemland peninsula, reverted from 3d Belorussian Front to *Stavka* control, concentrated in the Insterberg region on 1 May, and began loading on railroad cars at nine stations in East Prussia on 12 May. Its three rifle corps (the 5th Guards, 94th, and 113th), nine rifle divisions (the 17th, 19th, and 91st Guards, and the 124th, 192d, 221st, 262d, 338th, and 358th Rifle Divisions), and supporting formations and units (the 139th Army Gun Artillery Regiment, 555th Mortar Regiment, 610th Antitank Artillery Brigade, 32d Engineer-Sapper Brigade, and others) loaded on 110 railroad trains in 28 days and completed its departure from East Prussia on 9 July. After a 56-day trip, the 39th Army completed its movement on 4 July and concentrated in the Choibalsan region of Mongolia.⁵⁶ While the rail movement was under way, on 22 June the 39th Army's forces began moving forward into new concentration areas around Tamsag-Bulag, 155–208 miles (250–335 kilometers) southeast of Choibalsan, and completed its deployment on 16 July after a grueling 25-day march along one desert route.

Since Liudnikov's army had suffered heavy losses in the fighting for Königsberg and the Zemland peninsula, it was woefully under strength and required considerable reinforcement. The General Staff satisfied that need by dispatching 2,000 officers and 33,000 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men in ten more trains, together with massive amounts of weapons and equipment.⁵⁷ About 80 per cent of the personnel replacements were from the 1927 year group (17 and 18 years old) primarily from Chkalov, Stavropol', Stalingrad, and Novosibiirsk *oblasti'* [regions], and

Kazakhstan, and only a few had any military experience. Worse still, medical exams indicated that 15 per cent of the youth were ill, 30 per cent were in poor physical shape, and only 55 per cent were in good physical condition at a time when 84 per cent of the *front's* total manpower satisfied required physical standards.⁵⁸

With reinforcement of the Far East well under way, in June 1945 the GKO and *Stavka* began regrouping forces from Czechoslovakia to the Trans-Baikal region. The former 2d Ukrainian Front headquarters, which had just deployed to the region to become the Trans-Baikal Front, supervised the concentration and deployment of these forces and their preparations for forthcoming operations. On 1 July the 53d and 6th Guards Army began loading for rail transport to the Trans-Baikal region.

Colonel General I.M. Managarov's 53d Army, led by an operational group consisting of the army, corps, and division headquarters, loaded at Vlashim, Beneshov, Cherschany, Stranchina, Rzhichany, and Brno Station in Czechoslovakia on 1 June. The army's three rifle corps (the 18th Guards, 49th, and 57th), nine rifle divisions (the 1st Guards Airborne, 6th, 52d, 109th, and 110th Guards Rifle, and the 203d, 227th, 243d, and 317th Rifle), and supporting formations and units completed their loading at the same stations by 20 June.⁵⁹ The 120 trains transporting the army reached the Choibalsan region in Mongolia between 30 June and 26 July. After a brief rest in the Choibalsan region, the army's forces deployed forward on foot by road to the Matat-Somona region near the Mongolian-Manchurian border, where it began preparing for future offensive operations. The entire regrouping traversed 5,623 miles (9,050 kilometers), mostly by rail, in a period of 30 to 40 days.

After being alerted for movement to the Far East, Colonel General A.G. Kravchenko's 6th Guards Tank Army loaded for transport east in the Prague region between 1 and 15 July. The 92 trains carrying the army's three mobile corps (the 5th Guards Tank and 9th Guards and 7th Mechanized Corps) and supporting forces (the 208th Self-propelled Artillery Brigade, 15th Antitank Artillery Brigade, 4th Guards Motorcycle Regiment, and 57th Guards-Mortar Regiment) traveled along a single rail route and reached the Choibalsan region between 9 and 23 July. The 5,592-mile (9,000-kilometer) redeployment took a total of 23 days.⁶⁰

After a short rest in Choibalsan, Kravchenko's tank army deployed forward 186 miles (300 kilometers) by road and desert track to its concentration region around Tamsag-Bulag. The 5th Guards Tank and 7th Mechanized Corps brought with them from Czechoslovakia 208 and 285 tanks respectively, but the 9th Guards Mechanized Corps, which had brought no tanks with it during its redeployment, was issued Lend-Lease Sherman tanks shortly after its arrival.⁶¹ Soon after it reached Choibalsan, the army also received 15,000 personnel replacements and was reinforced by

the 36th and 57th Motorized Rifle Divisions, which were already subordinate to the Trans-Baikal Front.

Once the Trans-Baikal Front's major combat forces regrouped eastward, the *front's* command elements quickly followed. Ten trains left Bratislava, Czechoslovakia from 7 through 16 June, carrying Marshal of the Soviet Union R.Ia.Malinovsky, the former commander of the 2d Ukrainian Front, who traveled under the false name Colonel General Morozov, and his principal staff officers. His party included Generals A.N.Tevhenkov, *front* commissar, M.V.Zakharov, chief of staff, N.O.Pavlovsky, chief of the Operations Directorate, N.S.Fomin, chief of artillery, A.V.Kurkin, chief of armored and mechanized Forces, A.D.Tsirlin, chief of engineer forces, A.I.Leonov, chief of communications, V.I.Vostrukhov, chief of the rear, and I.A.Pliev, the former commander of the 1st Guards Cavalry-Mechanized Group. The trains carrying the *new front's* 's command group reached Chita, its designated command post, between 6 and 21 July.⁶²

The Trans-Baikal Front's most important supporting forces regrouped according to plan and reached the Choibalsan region between 14 and 31 July. These forces included:

- the 208th Self-propelled Artillery Brigade on 14–15 July from Czechoslovakia (loaded on 14–15 June);
- the 231st Self-propelled Artillery Brigade on 14–15 July from Osipovichi, Belorussia (loaded on 14–15 June);
- the 201st Separate Tank Brigade on 6 August from the Moscow Military District Tank Center (loaded on 10 July); and
- the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps on 16–26 August from Siauliai, Lithuania (loaded on 25–31 July).⁶³

While the Trans-Baikal Front's combined-arms and tank formations were regrouping, the GKO and *Stavka* dispatched trains carrying its vital artillery, engineer, and other supporting forces eastward from the Baltic region, East Prussia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. These included the 5th Artillery Penetration Corps, consisting of the 3d and 6th Guards Artillery Penetration Divisions (with 13 artillery and mortar brigades), four antiaircraft artillery divisions, five separate antitank artillery brigades, five separate artillery and mortar brigades, and eight engineer brigades. These formations traversed a distance of up to 11,600 kilometers during an average period of 30–35 days and reached the Choibalsan region between 2 and 28 July.⁶⁴

The regrouping of such massive amounts of artillery to the east drastically increased the Trans-Baikal Front's firepower relative to the Far Eastern Front (see [Table 3](#)).

When the Coastal Group of Forces was formed as an independent entity in April 1945, the problem of providing it with artillery support was resolved