

Learning Lessons of the Soviet War with Japan

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FROM THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY and throughout the early part of the 20th century, Japan was among the countries very hostile to Russia. This can be seen from the Russia-Japanese War, the Japanese intervention in the Far East during civil war in Russia (the northern part of Sakhalin was freed by us as late as 1925), the aggression against China and especially the occupation of Manchuria close to the Soviet border, the armed provocations near Lake Khasan and on the Khalkin River and other hostile actions. Japan's alliance with Germany and Italy against the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the attack on the American base at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 once and for all determined the role and place of Japan in World War II as one of the aggressors and most important enemies of the Allies.

In practical terms, Japan was accessory to the Nazi aggression against the USSR.

The Soviet command's strategic plans regarded Japan, as early as the 1920s, as a potential adversary. The Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact only papered over the differences between the two countries. The threat of Japanese aggression was always there. Shortly before and throughout the Great Patriotic War, it was clear that without complete defeat of Japan and especially of its Kwantung Army in Manchuria, it was impossible to eliminate the threat to our country and ensure its security in the Far East. The Soviet Union was extremely interested in hastening the end of World War II.

The acute differences between Japan, the United States and Great Britain were in evidence as early as the 1930s. Japan's attack against the USA in December 1941 was prompted not only by its predatory goals in the Pacific region, but also by the plan coordinated with Germany to tie down the US forces in the Pacific zone and limit American participation in military operations on the European theater. The war against Japan also involved a fraction of the forces of Great Britain and the other allied forces. China had been trying to contain Japan's aggression for nearly ten years and suffered enormous losses (more than 30 mil-

The name of General of the Army **Makhmut Gareev** is famous. He is a veteran of the Great Patriotic War who has been through the most difficult and dramatic episodes. The war ended for him in the Far East with the defeat of Japan. The general was the chief military adviser in Egypt and Afghanistan. Now he is president of the Academy of Military Sciences.

lion lives) in WWII.

As early as 9 December 1941, Roosevelt suggested that Stalin enter the war with Japan. But this was impossible to do at that time. Trying to repulse the Nazi aggression, our country was in a difficult position. The Allies raised the question of the USSR's entering the war against Japan in more certain terms at Teheran and raised it again at Yalta and Potsdam. Stalin agreed to go to war against Japan two or three months after Germany's surrender, and he kept his word. Incidentally, the 1945 Potsdam Declaration said that Japan had a chance to stop the war. Japan rejected the offer and the USSR had to enter the war against Japan.

At the same time the U.S. and Britain were as inconsistent in their attitude to Japan and the USSR's participation in the war against it as in their attitude to Nazi Germany. On the one hand, our allies were interested in the USSR's participation in the war against Japan mainly in order to spare their own forces and cut on their losses, on the other, all possible measures were taken to minimize the role of the Soviet Union in winning a victory over Japan and, in particular, to limit its military-political influence on the postwar settlement in the Far East.

When Roosevelt died and Truman stepped in, the positions of U.S. circles not interested in coordinating efforts with the Soviet Union in the final phase of the war against Japan strengthened. After the Americans got their atomic bomb, Washington was generally trying to do without the Soviet Union in this war. General MacArthur insisted that Soviet troops should not occupy any part of Japanese territory, in particular Hokkaido. The U.S. undertook some other steps in violation of the earlier agreements between Stalin and Roosevelt. But despite these impediments, the Soviet Union fulfilled its allied obligation in full; it declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 and made a worthy contribution to completing the defeat of militarist Japan.

Looking back over history, we can discern a rather paradoxical tendency. Early in the 20th century, the United States, Britain and other Western countries were intensively helping Japan to arm itself in order to oppose and weaken Russia. Finally, in December 1941, Japan entangled these countries in a war. In the 1920s and 30s, the West was surreptitiously helping Germany to arm itself only to see it invade Poland, France and other Western countries in 1939-40. And it was thanks only to the USSR's selfless efforts that mankind, including Western countries, was saved from the Nazi menace. In our times, U.S. special services were sending arms across Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for the Taliban in Afghanistan who fought against Soviet forces. Later the Taliban got out from under them and now the United States and other NATO countries are making war on them. A similar thing took place in Yugoslavia, in particularly, in Kosovo. It must be high time to learn a lesson from all this and gear up in a more definite way for cooperation between the West and Russia and other countries to oppose our common threats.

International Affairs: How and when did the USSR decide to launch military operations against Japan?

Makhmut Gareev: Considering what I have said above, the question of war against Japan in the Soviet foreign policy and military strategy of that time was practically never removed from the agenda. First, a Japanese aggression against our country had always been a possibility. Second, this was in the interest of the country's security and the completion of World War II in cooperation with the Allies. At the same time, the right moment for entering the war should have been chosen. Stalin alerted the General Staff to that in 1943 in the wake of the Teheran Conference. First trains carrying troops were bound east right after Finland pulled out of the war in 1944. The planning for the Manchuria strategic operation began in earnest in February 1945. The commanders of fronts became fully involved in the planning in April 1945.

International Affairs: One newspaper ("Novaia Gazeta" No. 57, 2004) wrote: "We must call things by their proper names: the USSR's attack on Japan is a direct act of aggression that had not been provoked by any Japanese actions."

Makhmut Gareev: It will be first of all recalled that the Pact of Neutrality between the Soviet Union and Japan was concluded in April 1941 to run until April 1946, but it was terminated by the Soviet government on 5 April 1945, or four months before going to war with Japan on 8 August 1945. This pact said that in the event one of the signatories should become target of military action by one or several powers, the other signatory would observe neutrality throughout the conflict. Therefore, the Soviet Union did not violate the pact of neutrality, which we cannot say about Japan.

The Soviet Union was to enter the war against Japan under its allied commitments to the USA and Great Britain. As I have mentioned, Roosevelt asked Stalin to go to war with Japan as early as 9 December (the next day Japan attacked Pearl Harbor). But Stalin believed that Nazi Germany should be defeated first. It was agreed at Teheran and Yalta that the USSR would go to war with Japan two or three months after the war against Germany ended. Stalin fulfilled the decisions of these international conferences precisely three months after Germany's surrender.

This was also prompted by the military-political and strategic situation shaping up in the Far East and the Pacific region. Had the USSR failed to enter the war, the Kwantung Army's main forces could have been mobilized against the Americans and in this event (as U.S. leaders expected) combat operations would have continued for two additional years and there would have been even bigger losses especially because the Japanese command was getting ready to employ bacteriological weapons.

After Germany's invasion of the USSR, Japan was keeping on the

Soviet border throughout the war at least 40 divisions in Manchuria (many more than in the entire Pacific region) that were posing a constant threat of aggression which was only postponed by Japan's desire to carry out its predatory plans first in the Pacific and then in a war against the USSR in consequence of Germany's failures. Japan was also deterred by the lesson it learned from G.K. Zhukov at the Khalkin River.

Throughout the war, the USSR was obliged to keep a big active force in the Far East. This force, its equipment and weapons were extremely needed at the German front, but they had to remain in the Far East since the threat of Japanese aggression was constant and fighting on two fronts was unaffordable.

Undeclared war against the USSR continued even when the neutrality pact was still in effect. Japanese troops violated our land border on 779 occasions and intruded in our airspace more than 400 times. Japanese naval ships illegally detained 178 and sunk 18 Soviet merchant vessels. At any rate, military tensions in the Far East were much greater than during the "terrible war" in the West. Finally, Japan continued to fight a war against our allies. In the wake of the Nazi invasion of the USSR, Japan took an openly hostile stance toward our country, stating in no uncertain terms that it regarded the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy as more important.

Taking advantage of the radical change on the Soviet-German front, the USA and Britain restored their strength after the defeats of 1941-42 and launched active offensive operations against Japanese armed forces in 1943. A considerable proportion of the Japanese army was diverted to oppose the heroic struggle of the Chinese people. Despite the hard times, the Soviet Union was shipping big amounts of weaponry to China to support its fight against Japan's aggression.

In the spring of 1945, Tokyo asked the USSR to mediate between the USA and Japan in bid to stop the war saying it would agree in this case to transfer Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands to us. The Soviet government had a chance to solve its territorial problems without entering the war, but that would have been tantamount to collusion with Japan. The USSR could not do that and thought it necessary to perform its allied duty to the end. Besides, entering the war was the only way to help the liberation of China and Korea from the Japanese aggression. Early in August 1945, the USA went so far as to drop atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki killing nearly 300,000 civilians. But even under those circumstances, Japan was not going to surrender. It was clear that the war would be dragging on without the USSR's entering it.

International Affairs: *Many military historians consider the military skills displayed by the Soviet Army in the war against Japan a masterpiece of military thinking of the 20th century. Is that true? Which outstanding Soviet strategists and military commanders took part in planning and carrying out this operation?*

Makhmut Gareev: True, the Manchurian strategic offensive operation is one of

outstanding operations in the entire history of the world for its original concept and masterful execution. It was quintessence of military thought and art of warfare developed by the Soviet armed forces during the Great Patriotic War. It is no accident that this operation became in the West a model of future strategic operations.

The concept of the operation was to use converging and splitting attacks of the Transbaikal Front (Marshal Malinovskii) delivered from Mongolia and of the 1st Far Eastern Front, from Primor'e (Marshal Meretskov), of the 2nd Far Eastern Front from the north (General of the Army Purkaev) with active cooperation of the Pacific Fleet (Admiral Iumashev), to break up, encircle and destroy or force Japan's Kwantung Army into surrender. It also called for simultaneous landing operations to liberate the southern part of Sakhalin island and the Kuril Islands. A force disposition of the Mongolian army was to mount an offensive operation on the right flank of the Transbaikal Front.

The operation was against a very strong enemy force of nearly one million men, 6,260 artillery pieces and mortars, 1,150 tanks and 1,500 planes. The enemy had built permanent-type fortifications along the border.

The operation was being prepared well in advance. The General Staff started on preparations right after the Yalta Conference. Marshal K.A. Meretskov and his operations group left for the Far East after Finland's surrender in 1944 to study the situation and draft proposals on preparations for the operation. The planning of the strategic operation was the responsibility of the General Staff headed by General of the Army A.I. Antonov. Direct preparations for the operation with the commands of fronts began in the spring of 1945.

On 3 August 1945, A.M. Vasilevskii, appointed commander in chief of the Soviet forces in the Far East, and the head of the General Staff, A.I. Antonov, reported to Stalin the final plan of the Manchurian Strategic Operation. Marshal Vasilevskii proposed to launch the offensive involving only the forces of the Transbaikal Front and, in the zones of the 1st and 2nd Far Eastern fronts, to carry out only probing actions so as to be able, in five or seven days, to launch the offensive by the main forces of these fronts. Stalin disagreed and ordered to launch the offensive simultaneously by all the fronts. As subsequent developments showed, this decision of the General Headquarters proved correct because, if the fronts launched the offensive at different times, the element of surprise would have been lost and the Kwantung Army would have been able to maneuver forces and fires and carry out attacks in the Mongolian and the maritime sectors. This is yet another argument in the discussion on whether Stalin understood or did not understand operational and strategic matters.

After the Victory Parade in Moscow in June 1945, all the commanders appointed to carry out the Manchurian Operation left for their assigned stations. The hard work to prepare the operation began.

All preparations for the operation had to be carried out in the absence of an official declaration of war on Japan, and that caused problems.

The Soviet Army had never previously attacked anyone first (save Finland) and the conditions under which it was to go on the offensive were vastly different from those prevailing on the German front.

Precisely this gave rise to some of the new practical aspects of military art. What were they?

First, in the absence of a state of war, reconnaissance could only be carried out by surveillance and the use of covert agents, who were extremely unreliable. The thick taiga forest terrain hampered surveillance. Nor was it possible to carry out aerial reconnaissance or probing actions. In the absence of reliable knowledge about the enemy, especially the state of its defenses and weapons, it did not seem possible to make specific plans and employ the artillery and aviation in an efficient way.

Second, from the point of view of observing secrecy, it was not wise to move to the border zone a big number of combined units, units and artillery to the attack position. According to canons of military art, breaching fortified areas takes a powerful artillery preparation followed by attack.

Considering all these things, the command of troops in the Far East at first planned a three-day artillery preparations and preliminary airstrikes and created a density of 250 artillery pieces and mortars per one kilometer of the frontage. But it was clear that during a protracted artillery preparation, the enemy, especially in depth, could prepare for repulsing our offensive. A short (60- or 90-minute) artillery preparation would not ensure reliable engagement of the enemy by fire. This question was repeatedly discussed at the meeting of the ranking personnel and agonizing search for the most fitting decision continued.

In the latter part of July, A.M. Vasilevskii and K.A. Meretskov went to the command post of the 5th Army in the vicinity of Kaban'ia (east of Dukhovskaia) to once again discuss the way the launching of an offensive should be done. They were joined by some of the commanders of combined units. Army Commander N.I. Krylov thought the offensive should be launched with no artillery preparations by crossing the border suddenly by a strength of reinforced forward battalions. He suggested that the main forces be kept in depth until the state border was crossed and part of the artillery should be moved closer to the border and kept in readiness to open fire. The plan was finally approved after probing discussions and analysis.

Like the finest operations on the German front, preparations for the Manchurian Operation were exceptionally specific. The utmost care was taken to prepare the operation in secret and launch it suddenly.

The planning of the operation involved a restricted number of persons. The main efforts of the troop commanders and staffs centered on organization, combat, logistic and technical support. Since the forward battalions had a major role to play in this operation, the 1st and 2nd Far Eastern fronts took special care to prepare them.

Command and control was a major problem on the Far Eastern theater.

The vast tracts of land (command stations of the fronts were up to 3,000 kilometers away from the High Command station; the command stations of the fronts were 400 to 1000 kilometers from the command stations of the armies) made communications a challenge. Unlike the other Great Patriotic War strategic operations where main command posts of troops in sectors were set up in a hurry (1941) or members of the Hq SHC were based at command and control facilities of the fronts and used their communications, a fully-fledged main command of the Far Eastern troops was set up (with Marshal Vasilevskii as commander in chief, and General S.P. Ivanov as his chief of staff). It had a command station of its own and its own communications facilities.

Since the operation was being prepared in secret and should come as a surprise, the command and staffs had to take strict measures to conceal the redeployment of troops from the western regions. No one, even the officers of staffs, knew where and for which purposes the troops were being redeployed.

Daily routine in the border zone remained unchanged. Reconnaissance missions were held together with the border guards and the personnel wore the border guards uniform. Protection, access and security procedures were heightened to prevent infiltration of Japanese scouts. The timing of the operation also helped to keep it secret. As captured Japanese generals subsequently said they had expected that Soviet offensive would take place, if at all, not earlier than in September (the driest period), but not in August, when heavy rains begin and unpaved roads turn into mud.

Close attention was paid to selecting the personnel. K.A. Meretskov was reassigned from the Karelian Front to the 1st Far Eastern Front; R.Ia. Malinovskii, from the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the Carpathians to the Transbaikalian Front with a roughly similar terrain. Those selected to command the armies and divisions had superior experience in breaching defense, fighting in operational depth, etc. Ten thousand officers with combat experience were sent from western fronts to reinforce troops in the Far East.

***International Affairs:** How did the deployment of Soviet troops on the Far Eastern theater, their offensive and its completion go off? How did the Soviet Army organize its cooperation with the Chinese forces? How did it organize its cooperation with the Western allies?*

Makhmut Gareev: More than 1.5 million men, 5,000 tanks, 5,000 combat lanes, 30,000 artillery guns and mortars were deployed for the Manchurian Strategic Operation. The core of this force was comprised of troops deployed in the Far East, but it had to be reinforced by moving over standby troops from the German front. To conceal this movement, they began to move first the combined units that were moved, during the war, to defend Moscow and other sectors. The impression was that the troops were returning after the war against Nazi Germany to their permanent deployment garrisoning locations. All told, they

moved to the Far East 400,000 men, 7,000 artillery pieces and mortars, 2,000 tanks and self-propelled guns and 1,100 aircraft.

The offensive operation began at 0100 (Khabarovsk time) on 9 August 1945. There were heavy rains in Primor'e at that time which was hard on the troops but at the same time it concealed their movements. The forward battalions escorted by border guards crossed the border quietly without opening fire and, in a number of spots, seized permanent fortifications of the enemy before the Japanese crews managed to man them and open fire.

This facilitated the rapid forward movement of the main forces of first-echelon divisions deep into the enemy defense. In some spots the fighting was protracted, for example, in the area of Grodekovo, where the Japanese had detected the forward movement of our forward battalions and took up defensive positions. Our troops skillfully bypassed such pockets of resistance.

Some of the Japanese pillboxes continued fire for seven or eight days afterwards. This is yet another proof that had the offensive been launched after long artillery preparations instead of launching the surprise attack, the enemy could have taken up defensive positions in all the sectors, the operation and the war, for that matter, could have lasted longer and with much bigger losses.

The entire experience of the Great Patriotic War showed that the better preparations were made for an operation, the less was the number of command and control problems during it. It is, however, impossible to think of everything in advance. The enemy is always there, there may happen unforeseen circumstances or the troops cannot do everything as planned. In the Manchurian operation, successful as it was, there were many instances where the higher authorities had to step in and bring pressure to bear on their subordinates.

Some newspapers (*Novaia gazeta*, No. 57, 2004) suggest that there were no real fighting in Manchuria. But this is not so.

Our troops ran into fierce enemy resistance in a number of spots deep in its defense. In the zone of the 5th Army the resistance was especially strong (this author witnessed it) in the area of Mudanzang. There were instances of stiff enemy resistance in the zones of the Transbaikal and the 2nd Far Eastern fronts. The enemy also launched repeated counterattacks, but they were frustrated by spoiling air attacks and surprise counterstrokes of our troops.

By swiftly pushing their attack, the forces of the Transbaikal Front moved forward, by August 14, to 400-500 km; the 1st Far Eastern Front, to 200-250 km; the 2nd Far Eastern Front, to 100-150 km. The Pacific Fleet landed assault forces in cooperation with the troops of the 2nd Far Eastern Front in Korea, on the Kuril Islands and on Sakhalin.

On August 14, the Japanese command proposed armistice, but hostilities from the opposite side practically did not stop. Three days later, the Kwantung Army received orders from its leaders to surrender, but the orders did not reach everyone at once and in some spots Japanese went on fighting. Many

Japanese officers and men were saying that the emperor could not have given such orders and that what they heard on the radio and read in the leaflets dropped from planes was false. Fighting continued practically until September 2. Most of the Japanese troops were fighting very stubbornly.

Together with a group of officers I was tasked with arranging assistance for the 84th Cavalry Division under General T.V. Dedeoglu, which got encircled and fought on until 7-8 September. In many spots U.S. and British soldiers continued to fight. It was therefore hard to understand why some countries are going to mark the end of the war on August 16.

As the operation unfolded, there were many military-political problems not only before the command authority but also commanding officers, staffs and political agencies of combined units and units over the constant confrontation situations and clashed between the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) and the Kuomintang troops, various political factions in Korea, between Chinese and Korean civilians who welcomed the Soviet troops, and Japanese civilians, etc. It took constant and strenuous efforts to resolve all these questions in a timely manner.

Cooperation with the U.S. armed forces, the Chang Kai-shek government forces and the PLA on the military-political and strategic levels was mainly the responsibility of the General Staff. The commanding authority of the Far Eastern forces, the commanders of combined units and large strategic formations also had to coordinate their actions, especially with regard to air and naval operations. In particular, the command of the 25th Army (under Colonel General I.M. Chistiakov) was in direct contact with American commanders at the time of moving over to the 38th parallel on the Korean Peninsula. Soviet operations were constantly coordinated with the Chinese and Korean guerrillas. This cooperation with the PLA was especially close and candid.

Overall, the painstaking and thorough preparations, efficient command and control during the offensive contributed to the success of this major strategic. As a result, the one-million-strong Kwantung Army was totally defeated. Its losses in killed stood at 84,000 with more than 600,000 taken prisoner. Our troops had 12,031 men killed and 24,425 wounded.

***International Affairs:** Did the Soviet offensive impact on the general course of the war against militarist Japan, especially in the light of the first ever employment of atomic bombs?*

Makhmut Gareev: The entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan in August 1945 (after the defeat of Nazi Germany) and the victorious campaign in the Far East, were of tremendous military-political importance. They, above all, washed away the disgrace of defeat in the 1905 war which weighed heavily on the people of Russia; the seized southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands were returned; the one-million-strong Kwantung Army was destroyed in short order

which hastened Japan's surrender and the end of WWII.

We often hear that the American atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki for no military reason whatever played the decisive part in Japan's capitulation and the role of the Soviet Union in defeating Japan was insignificant. It can be reminded in this connection that in August 1945, Japan's armed forces had nearly 7 million men, 10,000 aircraft and 500 ships, whereas the USA and its allies in the Asia and Pacific region had some 1.8 million men and 5,000 aircraft. Had the USSR not joined in the war effort, the main forces of the Kwantung Army could have been spearheaded against the Americans and the war would have dragged on.

Japan intended to fight to the bitter end. Minister of War Tojo said: "If the white devils land on our islands, the Japanese spirit would withdraw into the great citadel - Manchuria. We have in Manchuria the intact and valiant Kwantung Army, the invincible military toehold. In Manchuria, we will be fighting back even for as long as one hundred years if need be."

Of tremendous importance are the political and military results of the Manchurian operation. The Soviet Army routed the Kwantung Army, the strongest army of Japan. The Soviet Union entered the war against militarist Japan and, making a major contribution to its defeat, hastened the end of WWII. Once again, American leaders and historians more than once said that the war would have continued for at least another year or even two and cost additional millions of lives had not the USSR entered it.

U.S. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote in a memo of 2 June 1945 to Truman: Launching the invasion we will have ... to complete it in an even fierce battle than those in Germany. As a result, we would suffer huge losses and be obliged to leave Japan.

Churchill said that the Soviet government's consent to enter the war against Japan was of tremendous importance for Britain and the USA.

Our common victory over Japan led to the liberation of the peoples of China, to the liberation movement in all of Asia and the Pacific region. Besides, the people of Japan were liberated from the shackles of militarism and entered a new phase of their political and economic development.

The formal surrender was signed on September 2 aboard the battleship USS Missouri. It was signed on behalf of the Soviet government by Gen. Lt. K.N. Derevianko.

***International Affairs:** How was the question of the Kuril Islands viewed after Japan's surrender and at the conference in San Francisco?*

Makhmut Gareev: On the whole the question of the Kuril Islands and generally the question of the so-called Northern Territories is farfetched and is one of the vestiges of the Cold War.

It is sufficient to mention that Roosevelt and Churchill signed on 11

February 1945, without whatever objections, the agreement of the three powers dealing with the Far East which said in no uncertain terms that the USSR's claims should be unconditionally met after the victory over Japan.

As for Japan, the provisions of the Yalta Agreement are binding on Japan based not only on the Potsdam Declaration it signed but also on the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, which writes in stone that Japan recognizes all the decisions and agreements of the WWII Allies, hence it recognizes the Yalta Agreement. This was also recognized in repeated statements made by representatives of the Japanese government.

For example, the head of the treaties and agreements department of the Japanese Diet, Kumao Nishimura said in a statement on 6 October 1951: "So long as Japan had to renounce sovereignty over the Kuril Islands, it forfeited its right to vote on the final solution to the question of the status of their belonging. Since Japan agreed under the peace treaty to renounce sovereignty over these territories, this question, in as much as it is pertinent to Japan, is considered as resolved." Once again it was he who, on 19 October 1951 stressed at a meeting of the House of Representatives committee on the ratification of the San Francisco Peace Treaty: "The territorial limits of the Chishima-Retto (Kuril Islands - *M.G.*) mentioned in the treaty include both the northern Chishima and the southern Chishima." Thus, at the time of the ratification by the Japanese Diet of the San Francisco accord, Japan's legislature stated the fact of Japan's giving up the entire Kuril chain.

The Potsdam Declaration (Item 12) called (after bringing the situation in Japan under control) for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from its soil. But the USA was out to keep part of its forces in Japan. The Northern Territories problems were invented to cover this up.

The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (of a military alliance) concluded in 1960 and directed against the USSR and the PRC further hampered the finding of a solution to the question of borderline between Japan and the USSR. Professor A.A. Koshkin justly remarked that any territorial concessions to Japan, in the military-political environment of the Cold War in the Far East, could have caused the widening of territories occupied by foreign troops. Faced with the unwillingness of the Japanese government, with the USA behind it, to honor the provisions of the joint declaration and estimating the signing of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty as a hostile act, the Soviet government announced that the question of territorial settlement with Japan after World War II had been resolved under appropriate international agreements.

Characterizing Japan's policy toward the USSR, California University Professor Tsueshi Hasegawa said: The changes in the Cold War years did not take place in Soviet-Japanese relations, they took place in the USA which was trying to avoid anti-Americanism and Japanese nationalism. ... The problem of Northern Territories made it possible to integrate Japan into the U.S. global strategy and, while channeling Japanese nationalism away from itself, to direct it

against the Soviet Union. In other words, all these political speculations betray intrigues and geostrategic interests of the USA rather than genuine Japanese interests. Admittedly, the Soviet government's position was not always flexible enough either. In my opinion, despite the USA's crafty designs, the USSR still had opportunities to work more persistently for taking part in the signing of a peace treaty with Japan.

Things have reached a point where not only the media but also government and international figures are making statements which revise the results of WWII and undermine fundamental accords signed by the Allies and the United Nations, and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE.

One of the recent resolutions of the European parliament speaks of restoring to Japan the Northern Territories occupied by the former Soviet Union at the close of WWII and being currently occupied by Russia.

I wonder why the European parliament should worry about the Kurils, which are so far away from Europe, and not about restoring Gibraltar to Spain, the Falkland Islands to Argentina, Vilnius to Poland, etc.? By the same token, under the Yalta accords, Klaipeda went to Russia and Lithuania has no right to it whatever having split off from the USSR.

Generally speaking, the attempts to revise the basic decisions and accords defining the results of WWII, especially those dealing with territorial questions, may rekindle many of the old and new differences and problems and bring the world again to a more explosive situation than before World War II and likely to entail even more unpredictable consequences.

***International Affairs:** The Japanese press has been asking questions, especially in recent times, about the fate and position of the Japanese POWs in the USSR after Japan's surrender. What could be the answers to these questions in the light of what we know today?*

Makhmut Gareev: During the war with Japan (9 August - 2 September, 1945) the Soviet forces took prisoner 639,635 officers and men, 65,245 of whom were released on the military command's instructions between August and September 1945; 15,986 POW died of wounds and diseases in the camps. According to the then-NKVD, a total of 546,086 persons were shipped to the USSR. The same figures were cited by V.P. Galitskii, who specially studied this question (*Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, 1990, No. 6).

By the end of 1956, they repatriated 577,567 Japanese, with most of them, or more than 400,000, having been shipped back to Japan between 1945 and 1948. For different causes, 62,068 POWs died in captivity, including 15,986 who died in the POW camps of the front. After 1956, there remained in POW camps 1,036 Japanese convicted for various war crimes.

Later, they also cited somewhat different figures. Why this inconsistency?

The troops were officially instructed to take prisoner only members of the Japanese military personnel. But it proved difficult to do, and sometimes quite impossible to tell police and public servants from military men and determine their identity during combat operations and during the taking of cities and other built-up areas. Some changed into civilian clothes and some preferred to be taken prisoner by Soviet troops rather than to remain among the Japanese.

Based on the SHC Order No. 15147 of 23.10.1945, the commanders of the fronts issued instructions to release from the camps and let go to their homes former men and officers of the army of the state of Manchukuo, people of Chinese, Korean, Manchu, Mongol and other nationalities with the exception of Japanese and Russian White-Guard emigres. This proves as groundless the allegations that all sorts of people were brought and kept in the POW camps, including.

An order on shipping to the USSR 500,000 POWs was signed on 23 August 1945.

In November-December 1945, after most of the Soviet troops left Manchuria (with the exception of Port Arthur and Dal'nii), there came an order to leave there part of the troops and Japanese POWs until the spring of 1946. For example, the 5th Army stationed in Manchuria's north there were 71,895 POWs as of 5 October 1945 and they were formed into 57 construction battalions. Once these battalions were shipped to Khabarovsk and Barnaul, there remained in the camps 14,895 POWs. They were provided with all the authorized food, clothing and related gear supplies. The amount of food supply for them was based on the rations that existed in the Japanese army. Talking about the POW problem, we should also take into account the difficult situation that prevailed, in particular, the fact that civil war in China intensified. Chang Kai-shek, for example, tried to delay the departure of the Soviet troops fearing that the towns and areas left by them would be occupied by supporters of the CPC. But the fate of the POWs also depended on whether the Soviet troops should leave or stay.

To objectively study the POW issue, one should try to imagine being in the shoes of the political leadership and command of that time. The war was over, the Japanese army surrendered, what should be done with more than 600,000 POWs? The answer seems to be plain: Send them back to Japan. But, first of all, how to do it if the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan responding to an urgent request from the Allies. It was fighting together with them but the peace treaty was concluded without the USSR's participation. There was no official agreement between the USSR and Japan on ending the war. Both our allies and Japan did all to artificially complicate the situation.

From the point of view of international legal norms, one can blame the Soviet Union for having delayed the return of POWs. But when the USSR, which lost in action 36,000 servicemen and made a major contribution to defeating militarist Japan, was pushed aside from the process of settling the situation sur-

rounding that country in violation of the allied accords on the participation of Soviet troops in controlling Japanese territory, a nation with self-respect has the right to keeping at least some leverage in postwar affairs in Japan. The POW issue was used to a certain extent to serve this purpose.

At any rate, it is plain that Japan's unwillingness to conclude a peace treaty with the USSR, its patently pro-American and anti-Soviet policy, which was sometimes contrary to Japanese interests, largely hampered solutions to the Japanese prisoners of war issue.

Second, from the strictly practical point of view, the Soviet Union could not hand over to Japan its POWs even it wished.

First of all, whom was it to hand them over to? There was no independent Japanese administration. It would have been absurd to hand over the Japanese POWs to the American command. In German territory in 1945, our troops deliberately let the retreating German troops enter the Allies' zone in a number of instances. As transpires from the now published British documents that Churchill issued instructions to give them weapons and employ in possible combat actions against Soviet troops. Our command had some information related to that even back then and had to be on the alert.

Besides, the POWs could have been sent to Japan only by sea. Our country did not have the required number of sea-going vessels for transporting a half-a-million strong army. But despite all these circumstances, it began shipping POWs to Japan as early as 1946.

Discussions of the technical aspect of the question (apart from the military-political aspects) raised the possibility of leaving the POWs in Manchuria and turning them over to China. But at that time governments in China changed frequently and there was no reliable Chinese administration to run POW camps. Besides, when it was only rumored that they could be handed over to China, the Japanese, especially generals and senior officers, implored representatives of our command that they should not do that on any account. They said bluntly, they would not surrender to the Chinese. When one of the camps in the area of Dunhua was temporarily transferred to the authority of Kuomintang troops, as our troops began to pull out) the Chinese drove the prisoners out, killed some of them and seized the stock of food left in the camp by our troops.

When in September 1945, there came the orders to screen and release from the camps civilian employees and workers of the Japanese army, who were not on military service, and most of them feared to leave their camps or refused to leave.

The Japanese POWs observed all their national customs and holidays in their camps, there was self-government and they run their own services, there were amateur talent activities, they issued their own newspapers and had clubs for different activities. If one thinks about the difficult conditions our own people were living in during the first years after the war (the food situation in a number of areas was worse than in the camps for Japanese POWs) it's a sin to be too

resentful about us and make some or other claims against us.

Based on all those circumstances, the Soviet leadership decided to have the main part of the POWs sent to Soviet territory and put them in NKVD camps. Not all of them, of course, were sent to Siberia. They were sent to other areas, including Central Asia where winters are not as fierce.

In his book "Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan" based on Japanese sources Herbert Bix says that the idea for the internment of Japanese POWs and using their labor in rebuilding the Soviet economy (practically implemented in Siberian camps) did not originate in Moscow but among Emperor Hirohito's inner circle. Its members thought it was possible to use Japanese POWs as labor in paying war reparations to the USSR.

All the seriously ill POWs, above all those with infectious diseases, were left in Manchuria in specially equipped camps and in the local Chinese authorities' care. The observance of the conditions of confinement were monitored by small teams of Soviet NCOs and officers.

As for the conditions of confinement and food for the POWs in Soviet camps on Chinese territory, I can state with complete authority that they basically were up to the official norms. First of all, directive of the HQ SHC No. 11 126 of 17 August 1945 signed by Stalin and Antonov said: "The Japanese POWs should be treated well" (Archives of the CPSU Central Committee, file No. 2-45, sheet 169).

Whatever you may say, orders were to be strictly obeyed at the time. I have to admit though that it was very difficult to create normal conditions for POWs in the winter of 1945-1946.

Picture the situation in November-December 1945, when part of the troops had left to the USSR and the remaining troops were ordered to stay on in Manchuria. With the onset of freezing weather it was an uphill task to provide and run facilities not only for the POWs but also for our own troops.

Our politicians and diplomats should at least draw some lessons from this episode in history. In history everyone usually commits blunders and diplomats alone get the applause. But in this case, some of those people who so easily and carelessly changed the schedule of withdrawing the troops from China should have been aware that there were the prisoners of war or how hard it was to provide facilities for a great number of troops in new places and, even more difficult, to build camps for the prisoners of war. Curiously, the same thing happened when Soviet troops were being pulled out from Germany and other countries, and it is happening today with regard to our troops in Georgia or the Trans-Dniester region.

The Japanese as a rule officially refused to think of themselves as prisoners of war. This is explainable because ending up a prisoner of war is regarded in the Japanese army the worst of disgrace. For example, many of the prisoners returned to Japan by the Soviet Union after the Khalkin River combat in 1939 were executed by Japanese themselves. The view that Japanese soldiers should

not be referred to as prisoners of war is groundless. The Soviet Union was in a state of war with Japan and both countries conducted combat operations. There were prisoners of war and all norms of international law applied to them on the whole.

The deplorable fact of detaining the Japanese POWs until 1956 was not entirely the Soviet Union's fault. Under the 1929 Geneva and the 1907 Hague conventions, prisoners of war should be released after the termination of the act of war. The USSR and Japan concluded an agreement on termination of the state of war between themselves as late as 19 October 1956, but no peace treaty has been concluded yet. In the light of all this, it is simply inappropriate to blame Russia alone for the hardships of former Japanese prisoners of war and the unsettled postwar relations between Russia and Japan remain unsettled.

***International Affairs:** Why is it that we rarely remember those who died or simply heroically fought against Japan compared to those who fought in the war against Germany? In fact they were the Soviet soldiers and officers shipped to a new front from the territory of Nazi Germany that they liberated.*

Makhmut Gareev: Your remark is correct in principle.

The war against Japan had the same goals as the Great Patriotic War - the elimination of an external military threat. The national defense plan was based on a single strategic concept of opposing the military threat in the west (Germany) and in the east (Japan). The main objective, in the event of aggression, was to rout the enemies one by one, and this was done.

I think the State Duma's decision to no longer mark September 3, Day of Victory over Japan, is wrong.

September 3 was made a public holiday by the Edict of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on 2 September 1945. The edict is still in force. And the fact that this day is not mentioned in the federal law "On Days of Military Glory of Russia" cannot abolish the historic event. In actual fact, September 3 remains a Day of Military Glory, marking one of our outstanding victories. This is no reproach to the vanquished but it should serve as a warning to those who are trying to revise the results of World War II.

We have respect for the Japanese people, their soldiers who fell victim to the reckless militarist policy. The interests of our nations and of international stability do not call for incantations and declarative repentance, but for an objective assessment of all that happened in order that we should not stay stuck in the groove of mutual recriminations and should instead think more about the future, about how to pool efforts to combat together the common threats of today.

SHORTLY BEFORE THE FESTIVITIES to mark 1000 years of Kazan, Makhmut Gareev sent Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiev a telegram which says among other things: "This great occasion is symbolic not only of our ancient

history, the deep age-old roots in Eurasia and the Volga-Kama land, but also of the manifest rebirth of our people within the framework of today's Russian Federation."

A lot of credit for this, he says, goes to the leader of the republic and his associates and to all those "who faithfully follow the path embarked upon through the ages of much suffering." In his telegram, Makhmut Gareev wishes all people in Tatarstan "unity and more dedicated efforts in the building of new life."