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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Let's Raise Military-Scientific Work to the Level of Party Demands, unsigned lead article	1
The Most Important Leninist Principles of Management and Methods of Working With Military Cadres, by Maj Gen V. Domnikov	13
Criticism of the Philosophical Foundations of the Imperialist Military Ideology, by Col K. Spirov	28
Consolidating a Gain in an Offensive Operation, by Maj Gen V. Reznichevko and Col Ye. Bob	45
Radioelectronics and Intelligence, by Maj Gen Engr-Tech Serv A. Matveyev	52
Protection of the Population and Installations of the Zone of the Interior From Radioactive Contamination, by Col B. Timofeyev	64
The War in South Vietnam, by Col I. Moskvina	73
Counterintelligence Activities in the US Army, by Maj Gen R. Simonyan and Col N. Nikolayev	86
A New Book on the Period Preceding the Second Front in Europe, by Col A. Stokov and Lt Col V. Sekistov	98

CPYRGHT

by Col A. STROKOV and Lt Col V. SEKISTOV

Many books have been written on the second front in Europe, dealing with the various aspects of this subject, either specifically, or in connection with the history of World War II as a whole. The military side of the second front has been covered in many textbooks on the history of the art of war. And it is not even possible to list all the articles on the second front published in various Soviet journals.

The appearance of a new book in which this subject is studied in systemized form cannot fail to attract the attention of the reader interested in the history of World War II. This book is a scholarly study, although it is published under a title reminding one of an adventure novel.

Differing from the author's previous work, published in 1960, in which the subject of research was the military events on the western front in 1944-1945, the new book deals with the events of another period -- 1941 - 1943. The presentation is also substantially different. While in the earlier book main attention was paid to the carrying on of the armed conflict by our former allies in the theater of military operations, the main content of the new book is a study of the method of decision by the allies of one of the most important problems of the war for the anti-Fascist coalition -- the establishment of a second front in Europe.

In the introduction to the book, V.M. KULISH has given a brief critical review of Soviet writing on the second front, noting the contributions of authors in the treatment of this subject. At the same time he points out the limited use by them of sources in the first decade following the war, 1946-1956. Thereafter, study of the political and diplomatic problems of opening the second front took place separately from the military problems, which hindered clarification of the complete picture of the interrelations of the policies and strategy of the US and Great Britain, and was an obstacle also to delving deeply into the serious incongruity between the war aims of the alliance as a whole and the selfish interests of the American and British ruling circles. Besides, in the works of some Soviet historians there are contradictory, mutually exclusive judgements as to the attitude of the US government to the war in Europe (p. 29).

In the opinion of V.M. KULISH, the facts and materials collected in the works of Soviet historians, and the conclusions arrived at by them, only prepared the ground for a complete study of the whole history of the struggle for the opening of a second front (. 29). In our opinion, the results achieved by Soviet historians were greater than this.

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Examining the aims of the anti-Fascist war and the interests of British imperialism in 1941 (Chapter 1), the author notes that the aims of the pre-war policies of the governments of Great Britain, France, the US and other countries were determined by one thing -- to direct German-Fascist aggression to the east, and resolve the imperialist contradictions at the expense of the Soviet Union (p. 54).

How can it be explained that during World War II there was formed an anti-Fascist coalition of basically different social and economic systems? The answer is formulated by KULISH with the utmost clarity: "the common danger of enslavement, and the coincidence of military-political aims arising from this..." At the same time, as the book correctly notes, there was inherent in the coalition another tendency, determined by "the contradictions between the participants" (p. 59). This statement flows directly from the statement of Lenin: "War is a variegated, multiform, complicated thing" (Complete Collected Works, Vol. 49, p. 369).

The formation of the anti-Fascist coalition on the basis of common concrete interests did not eliminate the hostility of the ruling circles of the US and Britain to the Soviet Union. This side of their policies, notes the author, was carefully concealed, while it was essentially the determining factor in deciding the matter of the second front in Europe (p. 62).

In connection with this indisputable conclusion, never subject to any doubt, the author poses the question as to the real possibilities of opening a second front in Europe in 1941. The British government avoided decision of this question on the pretext of lacking manpower and equipment. But was this really the main reason? To this question, which is the main subject for the first chapter, KULISH provides an answer on the basis of analysis of the relationship of forces in the West existing in 1941. First of all he stresses that conditions for successful opening of a second front improved with the sharpening of the conflict between the USSR and Germany and the rise of the liberation movement of the peoples of the nations occupied by the Fascists (p. 131).

By 22 June 1941 Germany had prepared over 70 percent of all her round forces for the sudden and treacherous attack on the Soviet Union. Irty-eight divisions remained in the West at that time (in France, Belgium and Holland); two German divisions were in North Africa, of which one was a tank division. On the day of Germany's attack on the USSR, in these same countries of western Europe there were still 38 divisions, 2 tank battalions, and, in addition, 8 divisions in reserve for transfer to the Soviet-German front. By documents in archives the author established that on the western front (in August 1941) there were still a tank division and two tank battalions. (p. 83).

What capabilities did Britain have at this time?

According to KULISH'S estimates, based on British sources, in the autumn of 1941 in the British Isles there were 40 completely combat-ready divisions (including 5 armored divisions), 4 armored brigades, 7 infantry brigades, and 20 separate battalions (p. 80). In a memorandum to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on 3 November 1941, Churchill noted the existence in the British Isles of two thousand tanks, and a little earlier -- 25 October -- he wrote to the British minister-resident in the Middle East that "the British air force is already stronger than that of Hitler..." (p. 79).

The author provides some comparative data on the production in Britain and Germany of planes, tanks, guns, mortars and shells in the period between 1940 and 1942, which are evidence of the substantial superiority of the British war industry.

To answer the question as to the actual possibilities of opening a second front in 1941, deeper analysis is required, particularly of the state of the British war economy in 1941.

In examining the Anglo-American strategy of coalition war, the war plans of the US and Britain, and the policy of promises and procrastination with regard to the second front in western Europe (Chapters 2 - 4), the author gives prominence to a detailed presentation of the disputes and discussions of the political and military leaders of the US and Britain. Unfortunately, the works of the author himself are overwhelmed by the numerous and wordy citations, and this makes the book difficult reading.

Of greatest interest in these chapters are the materials on the practical capabilities of US and Britain of opening a second front in Europe in 1942-1943. KULISH, in analyzing correctly and in detail the "strange alliance," to use the expression of bourgeois historians, comes to the conclusion that the anti-Fascist coalition "was formed in a comparatively short time, almost in half a year." The signature of 1 January 1942 of the declaration of the representatives of 26 states "completed the process of forming and formalizing the anti-Fascist coalition" (pp. 58, 135). It seems to us that the chronological limits must be extended by a half-year, since not until 26 May 1942, in London, was there signed the treaty of alliance between the USSR and Great Britain in the war against Fascist Germany and her associates in Europe, and in two weeks (on 11 June) there took place the signing of the Soviet-American agreement "on the principles applicable to mutual assistance in waging war against aggression." By these documents there was finally established the military alliance of the USSR, the US, and Britain. The process of forming the anti-Fascist coalition was completed."⁶

Bourgeois historians distort the true role of the members of the coalition in World War II. The American historian, John Snell, for

CPYRGHT

example, would have us believe that "after 1941 the US became the leading force for the World anti-Fascist front. KULISH's substantiation of the decisive role of the Soviet Union in the formation of the anti-Fascist coalition can very convincingly be set up against the fabrication of Snell. To this it should be added that it precisely the Soviet Union that was, and continued to be to the end, the leading forces of that coalition, for the outcome of the whole World War II depended on the decisive victory of the Soviet armed forces.

On 11 June 1942 Roosevelt "made a public announcement that the second front would be opened at the end of 1942."⁸ The next day there was published a communique about the Soviet-Anglo-American negotiations, in which it was stated that "complete agreement has been reached as to the urgent tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942." This solemn promise the governments of the US and Britain did not keep.

KULISH presents the interesting stenographic record of the Soviet-American negotiations in Washington on 30 May 1942, in which it is recorded that Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff, said frankly that the US had well-trained troops, ammunition, air power, and armored divisions, and that the only difficulty was that of transportation (p. 211).

The shortage of tonnage, particularly of specialized ships, was repeatedly advanced as the pretext for putting off the invasion of France in 1942, and at the same time the construction of these ships was deliberately delayed.

Maguir, the British historian, would have us believe that just the publication of this communique "made Hitler transfer troops from Germany to France."⁹ From the data presented in the book we are reviewing, one can easily be convinced that quite the opposite was true. By 16 June 1942 the number of German troops in western Europe had been reduced from 36 to 29 divisions (p. 214). Germany had about 80 percent of her ground forces on the Soviet-German front at that time. In just four months (November 1942-February 1943), from France alone, 9 of the most combat-ready divisions were transferred to the Soviet-German front, and altogether during that period, from France, Belgium, Holland and Germany taken together 27 divisions and one brigade were transferred (pp. 305-306).

Instead of fulfilling their solemn obligation to open a second front in Europe in 1942, the Anglo-American allies, on 8-12 November 1942, landed their troops in north and northwest Africa. Snell tries to convince us that this landing "brought the hour of victory nearer."¹⁰ In actuality, the landing of American and British troops in Algeria and Morocco pursued the aim of postponing the opening of a second front in Europe, in order thereby "to maintain the existence of the Soviet-German front as long as possible. . . , and also to solve the problems of the Near East and the Mediterranean in the interests of monopolistic capital" (pp. 269-270).

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And Snell does not conceal the latter aim. He writes that the 8 November
landings were intended to be a surprise attack on the coasts of Britain
and the US in the Mediterranean basin."¹¹

The forces and equipment of the allies, intended for invasion across the English Channel, were sent not to the British Isles, but to other, secondary theaters, and mainly to the Mediterranean. By 31 December 1942 the US had sent to overseas theaters of war 1,065,000 men, but there were only 172,000 Americans in the British Isles (p. 209).

In 1943 there were 10.5 million men in the armed forces of the US, and in those of Great Britain (without the colonies and dominions), over 3.8 million (p. 360). However, instead of the planned build-up of American forces in England to the amount of one million men by 1 April 1943, it was decided to send only 150,000 there (p. 276). By the end of February 1943 there were 107,000 Americans in the British Isles, and further reduction of the number of US troops in Britain resulted in the fact that by the end of summer, 1943, there remained there only one American division (p. 301).

By 1 June 1943 the total number of American and British troops in the Mediterranean theater increased to 520,000 men (9 Divisions) and 4,087 planes (p. 345). The concentration of such large amounts of forces and equipment has been used by bourgeois historians (McElwee, for example) to consider the Mediterranean theater a real front. To support this thesis, they simply write, without taking the trouble to produce any evidence, that as a result of the taking of Sicily "the Germans were forced to remove part of their best divisions from the eastern front and transfer them for the defense of their lines in the Mediterranean basin."¹² In this case the documentary data provided in Kulish's book may be used against McElwee. In September and October 1943, the German command, as a result of losses of their picked troops in the battle at Kursk, transferred to the Soviet-German front 17 more divisions, of which 2 were from Italy, 6 from France, 1 from Yugoslavia, and the rest from Germany (p. 332).

Along with a clarification of the political aspects of problems of the second front in Europe, the book reveals a great deal about the working out of the political plans of the allies in the anti-Fascist coalition.

KULISH provides interesting information in citing an article by I. N. ZEMSKOV¹³ on the conversations of the Soviet ambassador in London, I.M. Mayskiy, with the British political leaders, Eden and Beaverbrook. In these talks there were the first references to the necessity of landing operations in northern France. But the development of strategic plans proceeded in a different direction. Churchill and the chiefs of staff concentrated all their attention on the Mediterranean theater.

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CPYRGHT

strategic plans of the allies with the general principles of the joint Anglo-American strategy, already formulated back at the meetings of military representatives which took place from 29 January to 29 March 1941 (commonly called "ABC"). In the principles of the British draft of the joint strategic plan there was recognition that "the most important theater of military operations is the European theater, and here victory must be achieved first of all." However, the book notes -- and this is very important -- that carrying out of this task was made dependent on strengthening the colonial positions of Great Britain in the Near and Middle East (p. 94).

The US had her own plans in the Mediterranean basin and other areas of the world, dictated by American imperialistic interests: extending her positions in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean at the expense of fallen France and weakening England. These strategic aims of US military leadership were set forth in an appendix to the political "Program of Victory." By 14 May 1941 there was developed and approved an American war plan ("Rainbow-5") in which an offensive against Germany was not indicated as an immediate aim. "In this respect the American plans coincided with the British" (p. 97).

At the Atlantic conference of Roosevelt and Churchill (10-15 August 1941) it was confirmed that the general strategic concept outlined in the "ABC" meeting was correct. Further strategic planning was considered at the first Washington conference at the end of December 1941. Soviet representatives were not invited, because the US and British leaders "were avoiding coordinated operations in Europe of the armed forces of all the countries of the anti-Fascist coalition" (p. 113). From this it is easy to understand the nature of strategic planning in 1942-1943.

US and British military leaders were working out several plans for invasion across the English Channel, but for two years these plans remained just training exercises for the planning agencies.

The participants in the first Washington conference recognized that Germany was enemy No. 1, but winning the war was planned for 1943 or 1944. Therefore strategic planning was based on the idea of gradually tightening the ring around Germany. Beginning with Africa, it was planned to advance across the Mediterranean into Italy, and finally into Germany.

The author concludes his examination of the strategic planning of Britain in 1941 with the correct and never-disputed conclusion: "It may be considered as established that during the whole second half of 1941 the government and the military command did not even consider the mission of invading the continent of Europe with major British forces for the purpose of opening a second front" (p. 129).

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Kulsh also provides a detailed description of the Anglo-American armed forces in carrying out their joint operations. The solution by the allies of this problem is of great theoretical and practical interest. If a new world war should arise, it would be a war of two coalitions. At the conference in Washington there was formulated the principle of unity of command. The author correctly notes that this principle was a reflection of objective necessity, and undoubtedly was a favorable factor, but Anglo-American imperialist contradictions prevented it from being carried out completely. The book tells about the establishment at the first Washington conference of the Joint Council of Chiefs of Staff, composed of "the chiefs of the American and British staffs of the army, navy and air force," but since the British could not be constantly in Washington, they were represented by John Dill (p. 146).

A more precise outline of the strategic command of the armed forces was as follows: making up the Joint Staff of chiefs of staffs were, from the US, chief of staff of the army, Gen Marshall; chief of staff, and later simultaneously also commander-in-chief, of the air force, Gen Arnold; Chief of Naval Operations, Adm King, and later, Adm Stark; and from July 1942, chief of the personal staff of the President, Leahy. From Great Britain it was the British Joint Staff Mission, headed by John Dill (in addition to him there were three other high-ranking officers).¹⁴

The mission of the Joint Staff included working out problems of conducting the war and developing the military strategy of the two countries. The staff was subordinate to the political leadership, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. They both took a direct and very active part in the decision of all problems of waging the war.¹⁵ Practical operation of the apparatus of joint command began in March 1942. The whole world theater of war was divided into spheres of responsibility in accordance with the political interests of the US and Britain. The British sphere included Africa, the Middle East, India, and Southeast Asia. The American sphere was the western hemisphere and the area of the Pacific, with Australia and China. The responsibility was joint. In the course of the war the US was able to penetrate into the sphere of interest of Britain.¹⁶

The staffs of the operational and strategic commands in the theaters of military operations included both American and British officers.

A study of the experience of the operation of the allied staffs is of more than just historical interest. For example, one of their main difficulties proved to be the lack of a common military language. American and British officers spoke the same language, but it was unexpectedly discovered that different terms were used for identical concepts, which frequently lead to confusion and misunderstanding. It was necessary to compile a common dictionary.¹⁷

CPYRGHT

With records on the Anglo-American operations actually carried out in the Mediterranean basin in 1942-1943, the author, unfortunately, limits himself to just a chronological record of events. However, the political aims of the ruling circles of the US and Britain permeated not only the planning of military operations but also the whole course of military actions. Politics influenced not only the goals of operations, but also the methods and forms of carrying out military operations as a whole.

The political aims of the US and Britain excluded a determined waging of the war against Germany, since they were not interested in shortening the period of bringing World War II to an end. This explains the passive, waiting-out nature of the Anglo-American strategy during the war.

Turning his attention to his main purpose -- revealing "the real reasons why the governments of the US and Great Britain delayed till June 1944 the invasion of Europe -- the author has arrived at the following important conclusions:

The political and military leadership of the US and Britain was to blame for frustrating the invasion of the European continent in 1942-1943, despite the real possibilities that existed for accomplishing it. Thereby the ruling circles of the western countries, in essence, helped Germany wage war against the USSR.

-- The US and British governments regarded a second front only as the final blow in finishing up the war in Europe, leaving the Soviet burden to bear the main burden of the war.

-- Our former allies not only did not want to shorten the war, but even strove to drag it out for the sake of mutual exhaustion of both Germany and the Soviet Union. This is what determined the character of Anglo-American strategic planning during World War II.

-- The opening of the second front in western Europe took place in 1944, because by then to postpone it was not without danger to the interests of the ruling circles of the US and Britain, since the Red Army might, with its own forces, accomplish the defeat of Fascist Germany and liberate the peoples of Europe from Fascist slavery.

Kulish's book, as a whole, deserves commendation. It has expanded the arsenal of facts of Soviet historiography on the opening of the second front in Europe, and serves the cause of struggle against hostile bourgeois ideology and falsification of history. However, it would be incorrect to say that it has completely exhausted the subject. The interests of the science of military history and exposing bourgeois falsification of the history of the past war requires further study of the politics and strategy of the US and Britain on the matter of a second front in Europe in 1941-1943

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study. Appropriate sources for strategic planning. Such problems as the influence of politics on the character of military operations in the Mediterranean basin, the military-economic capabilities of the US and Britain in 1941-1943, and in connection with this, more complete evidence of the possibilities of opening a second front in Europe in that period -- especially in 1941-- still await further research, utilizing new sources, and foreign publications. Unfortunately, most of the books of foreign authors used by Kulish were published before 1960 (of 150 named, only eight were published in the period 1960-1964).

Offensive missions on the ideological front require that Soviet historians retain the initiative, including in the field of deep study of World War II, especially of the subject of opening a second front in Europe in 1941-1943.

Notes:

1. V.M. Kulish. Vtoroy front. Operatsii v Zapadnoy Yevrope v 1944-1945, (The Second Front; Operations in Western Europe in 1944-1945), Voenizdat, 1960 476 pp.; D. Kraminov. Pravda o vtorom fronte. Zapiski voyennogo korrespondenta (The Truth About the Second Front; Notes of a War Correspondent), Karel'skoye gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo, 1960, 232 pp.

2. Vtoraya mirovaya voyna 1939-1945 gg. Voenno-istoricheskiy ocherk (World War II; A Military-Historical Outline), Voenizdat, 1958, pp. 643-660, 712-716; G.A. Deborin. Vtoraya mirovaya voyna. Voenno-politicheskiy ocherk (World War II; A Military-Political Outline), Voenizdat, 1958, pp. 195-204, 285-290; V.G. Trukhanovskiy. Noveyshaya istoriya Anglii (Most Recent History of England), Sotsekgiz, 1958, pp. 399-406, 409-410; Ye. I. Rybkin, Voyna i Politika (War and Politics), Voenizdat, 1959, pp. 102-105; V.L. Israelyan, Diplomaticheskaya istoriya velikoy otechestvennoy voyny (Diplomatic History of the Great Patriotic War), Izdatel'stvo instituta mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy, 1959, pp. 70-80, 129-215; Ocherki novoy i noveyshey istorii SSHA (Outlines of Modern and Most Recent History of the United States), Vol. II, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960, pp. 285-297, 302-312; Porazheniye germanskogo imperializma vo vtoroy mirovoy voyna. Stat'i i dokumenty. (The Defeat of German Imperialism in World War II. Articles and Documents), Voenizdat, 1960, pp. 163-177; N.N. Yakovlev, Noveyshaya istoriya SSHA (Most Recent History of the USA), Sotsekgiz, 1961, pp. 356-394; Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945 (History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941-1945), Voenizdat, Vol. II, 1963, pp. 177-190; Vol. III, 1964, pp. 491-509; Vol. IV, 1962 [sic], pp. 507-544; Uroki istorii neoproverzhiy (The Lessons of History are Irrefutable) Voenizdat, 1964, pp. 147-172; and other works.

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1956
Russkaya taina. (Istoriya vtorogo fronta v Yevrope (A Secret Revealed: History of the Period Preceding the Second Front in Europe)), Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1965, 470 pp.

CPYRGHT

4. Referring to the archives of the Ministry of Defense of the USSR, the author calls attention to some inaccurate data on this subject in the second volume of Istoriya velikoy otechestvennoy vojny 1941-1945 (History of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945) and in the work of Yu. I. Vol'skiy published in the collection, Voprosy novoy i noveyshey istorii (Problems of Modern and Most Recent History), Izdatel'stvo Akademii Obshchestvennykh Nauk, 1958, pp. 77,82. The Military-History Division of the Military-Science Administration of the General Staff, analyzing the same documents of the archives of the Ministry of Defense, came to the conclusion that in the Western Theater of Military Operations in June 1941 there were 39 German divisions and 2 tank brigades, and in North Africa, 2 German tank divisions. Sbornik materialov po sostavu, gruppirovke i peregruppirovke sukhoputnykh voysk fashistskoy Germanii i fashistskoy Italii vne sovyetskogermanskogo fronta za period 1941-1945 gg. (Collection of Materials on the Composition, Disposition, and Redisposition of the Ground Forces of Fascist Germany and Fascist Italy, Other than on the Soviet-German Front, During the Period 1941-1945), first edition, 1963, pp. 8-12.

6. [5 missing] Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voyna Sovetskaya Soyuz 1941-1945. Kratkaya istoriya. (The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941-1945) a Brief History, Voenizdat, 1965, P. 149.

7. John Snell, Illusion and Necessity, p. 103.

8. Ibid., p. 111.

9. E. Maguir, Dieppe: August 19, London, 1963, p. 187

10. John Snell, Illusion and Necessity, p. 112

11. Ibid.

12. McElwee. The Battle of D-Day. London, 1965, p. 24.

13. I. Zemskov, "Diplomaticheskaya istoriya vtorogo fronta" (Diplomatic History of the Second Front), "Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn", 1961, No. 8.

14. American Military History, 1607-1958, Washington, 1959, p. 382

15. A. Buchanan, The United States and World War II, vol. 1. New York, 1964, p. 144.

16. G. Smith, American Diplomacy During the Second World War, 1941-1945, New York, 1965, p. 22.

17. B. Smith, Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions in Europe, 1944-1945,

New York, 1956
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