

Chapter 1 Invasion by the Soviet Forces

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Section 1 Manchuria, North Korea, Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands, and the Northern Territories before the Soviet Invasion

1. Manchuria (and North Korea)

The strength of the Kwantung Army was extremely replenished to the highest level through its career in the summer of 1942 when Japanese offensive in the Pacific Ocean region finished. The strength of the Japanese forces in Manchuria and North Korea was: 16 well organized divisions formed in the conventional way, two tank divisions, one garrison, and one cavalry brigade. The number of military personnel was about 650,000, with 675 tanks, 155 armored cars and 750 airplanes ⁽¹⁾. The moving out of military forces from the Kwantung Army to the Pacific Ocean front had started that September, to repel counterattacks by Allied Forces in the South Pacific region, beginning on Guadalcanal Island. Since then, the Kwantung Army had become a general rearguard, quartermaster depot, and recruit base, sending out trained military forces with equipment and materials, and almost its entire well organized veteran units were diverted and sent out. The total of its military forces continuously extracted until preparations for the decisive battle on the Japanese mainland began in March 1945 was 15 divisions, three newly established divisions, two tank divisions, and two air divisions.

The Japanese army's strategic plan after the Russo-Japanese War was to station an army in Manchuria (the name "Kwantung Army" was first used in 1919). The purpose of this strategic plan was to protect the Japanese rights and interests of Kanto Province (Liaodong Peninsula) and South Manchuria, in the worst case by offensive operations. After the foundation of Manchukuo in 1932, the Kwantung Army took charge of its defense, taking over the concrete

strategic plan to defend all of Manchukuo by offensive operations. In September 1943 when Japan's disadvantageous situation in the war in the Pacific region was becoming clear, the absolute national defense zone concept was adopted for general war guidance, but the central headquarters of the Japanese army did not give any instructions concerning defense against the USSR. In September of the following year, the central headquarters finally ordered the Kwantung Army to change its preparations for military operations from offensive tactics to sustainable defensive tactics. The order emphasized to engage with enemy in front areas along the border. Time, labor and materials expended throughout an entire year were wasted⁽²⁾. On January 17, 1945, based on this order, the Kwantung Army submitted its plan of operation to central headquarters and was instructed to put the greatest possible weight of its military forces at the front. But later, four entire veteran divisions (including one tank division) which had been retained by the Kwantung Army for use as a last resort, as well as three newly established divisions and many units under direct control of the Kwantung Army, were diverted and removed. Due to this, the Kwantung Army's plan of operation had to be changed, and many revisions were made. The Kwantung Army weakened its resistance in border areas and moved its main resistance position back to reduce its defense at the front. This consequently became a major turning point⁽³⁾ in drastically rebuilding the preparations of the Kwantung Army from the beginning, including the construction of new defense positions, moving of headquarters, the moving, extraction and establishment of new units, and the sending of huge amounts of equipment and munitions developed or accumulated in areas near the border, to the rear. On May 30, 1945, part of the Seventeenth Area Army (former Korean army) was added to the Kwantung Army, and military operations against the USSR in Manchuria and North Korea, as well as military operations against the USA, were added to the area of which the Kwantung Army was in charge. New principle of military operation determined by the Kwantung Army on July 5, 1945 was, "If invasion is inevitable, attempt to break up the enemy's invasion by taking advantage of the extensive area of Manchuria, to maintain the important area south of the Lianjing (Dalian(大連) – Xinjing(新京) [Changchun(長春)]) Line and the Jintu [Xinjing – Tumen(圖們)] Line, to draw up a plan to hold the area as long as possible to make execution of

the *Dai Toa* (Greater East Asian) war easy.” Therefore, the Kwantung Army posted quite large military forces in eastern Manchuria and southern Manchuria, but its military forces in the area near the borders became extremely weak. In particular, there was no force available to be posted in the extensive west front area where the main power of the Soviet forces was expected to invade. The Kwantung Army decided to cope with this by air attacks and guerrilla warfare, but this extensive west front area was actually as good as opened already.

The army stationed in Mongolia under the control of the North China Area Army was on the west side of Inner Mongolia, connected to the Kwantung Army’s area, but even here, its key military force of two divisions (including one tank division) were extracted, and the defense of this wide front area was mainly entrusted to the weak Inner Mongolia army. The Kwantung Army was in the middle of changes to its preparations based on the plan of operation completed on July 5th, in order to roughly complete them by the end of September, had just started the preparation of new positions and quite large numbers of personnel inducted by complete universal conscription were en route to their units. With the army in this condition, there was a surprise attack by Soviet forces⁽⁴⁾.

When the Soviet forces invaded, the Kwantung Army had made what outwardly seemed considerable preparations with two aerial brigades, one mobile brigade, two independent tank brigades, nine independent mixed brigades, and a total of 24 divisions including eight divisions raised by the universal conscription of all Japanese men residing in Manchuria since July 1945, five divisions moved in May - July, 1945, seven new divisions established in February 1945 and four new divisions established in 1944, including about 700,000 soldiers (estimated number within Manchuria), about 1,000 artillery cannons and mortars, and about 200 each of actually-usable tanks and air planes. But the quality, equipment, training and the capacity for unity of its soldiers were inadequate, and the actual fighting strength of all the above-mentioned forces was estimated to be equivalent to only about eight and a half well organized veteran divisions⁽⁵⁾. For details, see the “Assessment of the actual military power of the Kwantung Army” appended to the end of this chapter.

The judgment by the Japanese side about Soviet forces was quite accurate concerning

the military force to be used for the attack, and concerning the attack procedures, but there was a problem with its judgment of the timing of the attack.

According to various indications and items of information, the General Staff Office Section 5 (Russia) judged that a strict alert was needed in and after August. On the other hand, Section 12 of the General Staff Office (on April 23, 1945 this section took over the duties previously handled by No. 20 team under direct control of the deputy chief of staff, and took charge of war guidance) expected the USSR to work on mediation to end the war, and the Japanese government and the governing body of the Japanese army generally thought the same way. The Headquarters of the Kwantung Army hoped that Soviet forces would not invade until the Kwantung Army had almost completed its delayed preparations for military operations, and was swayed by wishful thinking based on the assumption that Soviet forces had not completed their attack preparations and by the existence of the *Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact of 1941*. Headquarters felt that the crisis would occur in early autumn so that there would still be enough time to prepare. As a result, the central headquarters and Kwantung Army were struck by a sudden perfectly-timed surprise. The Kwantung Army had fallen behind in all measures⁽⁶⁾.

Manchuria had been playing a hugely important role as a quartermaster depot through its efforts to increase food production and the output of the mining industry and manufacturing industry, and to increase exports to mainland Japan. When air raids on mainland Japan had become severe and the war reached its final stage, Japanese some considered Manchuria safer than the Japanese mainland, and the actual situation was that machines and equipments from evacuated plants, and also war victims, were flowing into Manchuria even in 1945⁽⁷⁾.

At that time, there were about 1,550,000 Japanese (other than military personnel) residing in Manchuria, including Kanto Province. Among them, about 270,000 involved with the Manchuria cultivation group were mostly in the frontier area. Other ordinary Japanese were in urban areas, many in central-south Manchuria. About 150,000 Japanese residents were drafted in the complete universal conscription that started in June 1945 (The targeted number to be drafted was 250,000, but there are no clear data. When the battle with the USSR started, some soldiers were en route to their units. Also, depending on the area, quite large numbers

were released from the draft immediately after the war ended⁽⁸⁾.)

Because both the central headquarters and the Kwantung Army misjudged the timing of the invasion by Soviet forces, preliminary consultations concerning the evacuation of Japanese residing in Manchuria had just started at the level between the army and each province and prefecture, but the USSR invasion occurred sooner than expected, so no liaison or preparation had been completed⁽⁹⁾.

As a result, many Japanese remained in frontier areas and border areas far from cities and railways, and many of the cultivation groups in such remote areas were comprised mainly of the elderly, infants, and women because so many adult males had been conscripted; therefore many dreadful tragedies occurred during their desperate attempts to escape after Soviet forces invaded.

A total of about 100,000 servicemen including one Army and other unit under the control of the Kwantung Army, army and navy personnel, and about 280,000 Japanese civilians, were living in North Korea. The battle between Japanese forces and Soviet forces covered a very limited part of the northeastern area, but Soviet forces advanced into North Korea after the ceasefire and cut off transportation at the 38°N.Lat.; public peace and order worsened, so there were many victims⁽¹⁰⁾.

2. Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands and the Northern Territories of Japan

A very small number of border policemen had been responsible for guarding the Sakhalin border, and there was no preparation for any concrete military operation. At the end of 1939, a new Sakhalin mixed brigade was formed. It started to construct border positions, but in May 1943, the Attu Island guards died honorably defeated in the attack by US forces (to recapture Attu Island) which had become a counterattack in the northeastern area. Therefore the brigade changed the focus of its defense preparations from protecting against Soviet forces to protecting against US forces, and concentrated on the southern area. On February 28, 1945, the 88th Division with three infantry regiments as its core was formed based on the main Sakhalin mixed

brigade. They followed the orders of the area Army, preferentially positioned the main force of the Division in the southern area, and concentrated on preparation of a defense against US forces. In spring and early summer, the movements of Soviet forces in the border area had gradually become more active, and the plan shown by the Division on August 6-7, based on the order (August 3) for operation by the 5th Area Army Sapporo against Soviet forces in case of emergency was, “The defense of the border area will be maintained as much as possible by one infantry regiment to stop the advance of Soviet forces to the south. The southern area will be protected by the main force of the division, but basically the main force of the division will not carry out an intense attack on the Soviet forces on the border⁽¹¹⁾.”

When the USSR entered the war, there were about 24,000 servicemen in Sakhalin, mainly in the 88th Division, and the population of ordinary Japanese residing in Sakhalin, including seasonal laborers, was about 400,000. On June 30th, Sakhalin (Karafuto) units of the “National (People’s) Volunteer Organization” were formed in each work place and locality, and after the USSR attacked, some of these became the “National (People’s) Volunteer Combat”. The “Sakhalin Railway Volunteer Combat” (8,799 people), formed on August 1st in the Sakhalin railway bureau, started efforts to maintain railway operation under battle conditions. 3,628 ordinary residents were drafted to provide the defense personnel needed for the local specially established garrison⁽¹²⁾.

The beginning of the defense of the Kurile Islands was also late. Fortifications in the northern Kuriles (Paramusiru) were planned in 1936 and constructed in 1940. Part of the Japanese army advanced here, and starting in 1937 the navy had constructed airfields on Paramusiru, Matsuwa and Tennei (Etorofu Island). After the war between Japan and the USA started, army and navy units were posted to the Kurile Islands as a defense measure against the USA, but the military dispositions in the Kurile Islands were increased, decreased and changed kaleidoscopically according to general situation of war. Japanese military dispositions in the Kurile Islands when the USSR entered the war, were the 91st Division on the two islands of Shumushu and Paramusiru in the northern Kurile Islands, the 41st independent mixed regiment on Matsuwa Island in the central Kurile Islands, the 129th independent mixed brigade on Urup

Island, and the 89th Division on Etorofu Island, Kunashiri Island, Shikotan Island and the Habomai Islands in Japan's Northern Territories.

Nearly all of the navy units had been moved out before the USSR entered the war. (The total number of servicemen remaining was about 60,000.) Two units in the central Kurile Islands had just started preparing to move as ordered on August 2nd to strengthen the military dispositions for the main island of Hokkaido⁽¹³⁾.

A small number of ordinary Japanese residents involved with the Nichiro Fisheries Company were in the northern Kurile Islands, but the majority of ordinary Japanese were living in Japan's Northern Territories. The Japanese population, mainly on Iturup Island, Kunashiri Island, Shikotan Island and the Habomai Islands was around 16,000 when the USSR entered the war. There were also about 10,000 Japanese working for fisheries, but when the USSR entered the war, most of them had withdrawn to Hokkaido⁽¹⁴⁾.

Section 2 The battle between the Japanese Forces and the Soviet Forces

1. Preparation for Invasion by the Soviet Forces

(1) Concentration of Fighting Power in the Far East

Since around June 1941 when the German-Soviet war started, the Soviet Far Eastern forces (The Far Eastern Front and the Zabaikal forces) continuously supplied many forces and soldiers to the German-Soviet battle line. The Far Soviet Eastern forces had become training and recruiting base for the European battle line, like the Kwantung Army for the Pacific war. But the Kwantung Army had sent out many of its carefully picked elite units, and the Kwantung Army itself had become powerless, a mere paper tiger. On the contrary, to guard against Japan, the USSR's Far Eastern force did not reduce its military force at all, keeping over 1,000,000 soldiers with 20 rifle divisions, over 2,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 3,000-4,000

airplanes, as its main force, and working hard on training. Shortly after the German-Soviet war started, the Zabaikal military district force was reorganized into an Front, and in March 1943, the talented General M.A. Pulkaev (М.А.Пупкаев), with experience accumulated on the German-Soviet battle lines, took his post as head of the Far Eastern Front. In August 1943 Primorsky Group was formed in the Far Eastern Front using units stationed in the Primorsky Krai. Due to the situation in which the battle in Europe had turned in the Allies' favor, the duties of the Soviet Far Eastern Front as the base for recruiting and training soldiers were changed to concentrate on preparing to fight Japan from autumn, 1944 ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Some new fighting power concentration for the Far East started in 1945. Units suitable for the concrete requirements for the front for each operation were selected, and full-scale transportation of military forces was done from May to July 1945. The Soviet force would have to break through a zone of strong positions on the eastern front. Marshal K.A. Meretskov (К. А. Мерецков) and staff from the former Karelia Front headquarters with experience in the Mannerheim Line campaign, arrived on April 13, and Meretskov took command of the Primorsky Group, which was separated from the Far Eastern Front and became an independent group. The 5th Army of the 3rd Belarussian Front, which had experienced the battle lines in East Russia, arrived by the beginning of June to join the Primorsky Group.

The 2nd Ukraine Front headquarters (Marshal R. Ya. Malinovskii: Р.Я.Малиновокий) and the 6th Guard Tank Army and 53rd Army of the 2nd Ukraine Front arrived at the western front where a mobile offensive would be needed in steppe, mountainous and forested areas, and the 39th Army of the 3rd Belarussian Front arrived in July at the front in the area northwest of Manzhouli, a fortified zone where a breakthrough was particularly necessary ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Marshal A.M. Vasilevskii (А.М. Василевский), who entrusted with the command of the Soviet Far East Command, arrived with his headquarters personnel in Chita (Чита) by early July. They began their duties and opened the Soviet Far East Command Headquarters according to the order dated July 30th.

On August 5th, the Primorsky Group was renamed the 1st Far Eastern Front, and the former Far Eastern Front, excluding the Coastal Area Group, was renamed the 2nd Far Eastern

Front. The USSR's Far Eastern Command prepared 80 major branch ground divisions (69 rifle divisions, two motorized rifle divisions, one Parachute division, six cavalry divisions, and two tank divisions), 40 tank or mechanized brigades, 32 air divisions, about 1,747,000 soldiers, 29,835 guns and mortars, 5,250 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 5,171 airplanes by the time the USSR entered the war against Japan⁽¹⁷⁾.

The difference in the fighting strengths of the Japanese forces and that of the Soviet forces, which had trained in the Far East and had accumulated battle experience on German-Soviet battlefields, was probably far greater than just the superficial difference in their quantities.

(2) Basic Strategic Concept and Distribution of the Military Power of the USSR

The Soviet Supreme General Headquarters consulted with its general staff office and major commanding officers of the Far East Command, and on June 27, 1945, they determined their basic strategic concept⁽¹⁸⁾ against Japan, of starting to attack on August 20-25 to preferentially destroy the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. The following shows the basic concepts of the Soviet forces concerning the Manchuria operation. Three Red Army Fronts: the Zabaikal Front in the west, the 1st Far Eastern Front aimed at eastern Manchuria, and the 2nd Far Eastern Front in the northeast, would take the offensive from three strategic directions. From the political, economical and military viewpoints, the Soviet forces planned to maintain strength in the operation front heading east from the Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia) and in the operation front heading west from the coastal region, and to occupy central cities in Manchuria: Fengtian (Shenyang), Xinjing (Changchun), Jilin, and Haerbin, cut the main force of the Kwantung Army apart in north Manchuria and central Manchuria, surround each segment by powerful strikes, then destroy the Kwantung Army segments one by one.

In their planning, Marshal Meretskov, supported by N.S.Khrushchev (Н.С. Хрушев), suggested occupying Hokkaido, but there was much opposition to this. In response to a question from I.V.Stalin (И.В.Сталин), Marshal G.K.Zhukov (Г.К.Жуков) said that four Armys full of

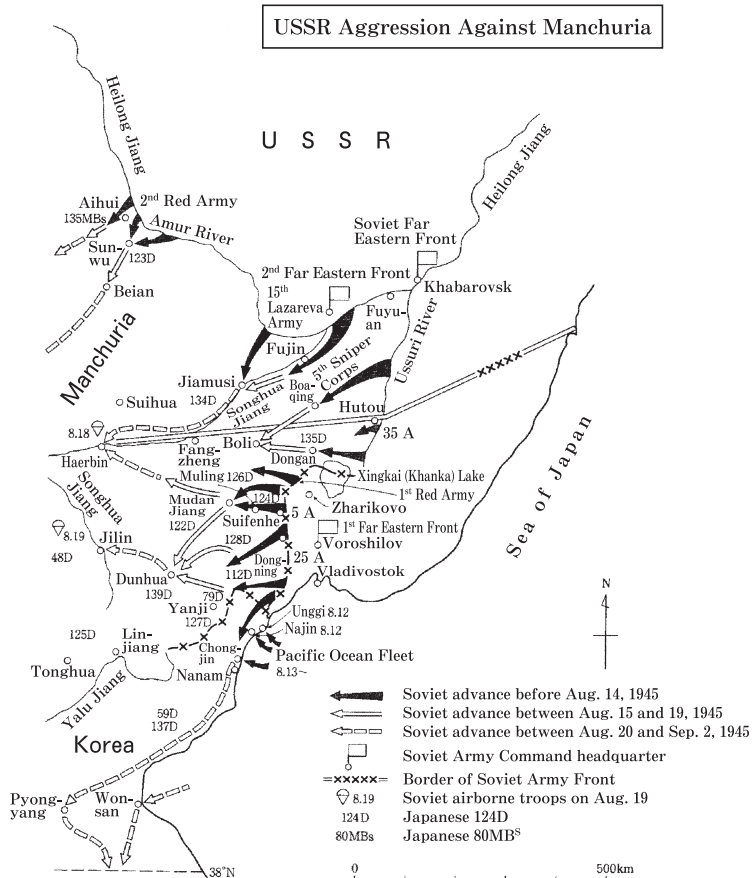
fighting spirit and equipped with cannons, tanks and other firearms would be needed, but Stalin did not announce any conclusion ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The following shows the final organization, military force and equipment of each Front ⁽²⁰⁾. The Zabaikal Front (Marshal R.Ya.Malinovskii: Р.Я.Малиновский) at the western front, the most important point, developed the 36th Army, 39th Army, and 6th Guards Tank Army, 53rd Army and 17th Army, and a Mechanized Cavalry Group from the north, 28 rifle divisions, two Motorized Rifle Divisions, five Cavalry Divisions, two Tank regiments, and 18 Tank or Mechanized Brigades as its main forces, with 8,980 cannons and mortars (mortars of calibers of 50mm or less are not included here or hereafter) and 2,359 tanks and self-propelled guns. Next, another important front, the 1st Far Eastern Front (Marshal Meretskov) in the eastern area, developed the 35th Army and 1st Red Banner Army, 5th Army and 25th Army from the north. Its main forces comprised 31 Rifle Divisions, one Cavalry Division, and 14 Tank or Mechanized Brigades, with 10,619 cannons and mortars, and 1,974 tanks and self-propelled guns. The 2nd Far Eastern Front in the northeast area (General Pulkaev) developed the 2nd Red Banner Army, the 15th Army, and the 5th Rifle Corps from the north, and the 16th Army in Northern Sakhalin; its main elements were 11 Rifle Divisions and eight Tank brigades, with 4,781 cannons and mortars, and 917 tanks and self-propelled guns.

(3) Speeding up the Start of Participation in the War

On July 16, Stalin, who took part in the Potsdam Conference, phoned Marshal Vasilevskii (A.M. Василевский), the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Far Eastern Command in Chita and asked about the feasibility of setting a date roughly 10 days earlier for starting the offensive against Japan, but Vasilevskii answered that it was too technically difficult, and the date remained as set ⁽²¹⁾.

The first atomic bomb experiment succeeded in the early morning of July 16th, the US time. The exact timing is not clear, but Stalin certainly picked up related information from his intelligence service. When the first meeting between the leaders of the USA and USSR was held



on July 17, Stalin said that the USSR would participate in the war against Japan in the middle of August. When the three major military powers convened on July 24th, the USSR stated that it would be able to prepare to start this military operation in the second half of August, and in response to a question from the USA, answered that the invasion of southern Sakhalin would be its second operation, although the USSR did not clarify its viewpoint concerning the Kurile

USA-USSR cooperative operation area, the Pacific Ocean was determined as the US forces' operation area, and the USA and USSR agreed to set the boundary between Paramusiru Island and Onekotan Island in the Kuriles⁽²²⁾. In fact, US forces were already carrying out vigorous operations in this area. US forces had started to attack the northern Kurile Islands after taking back Attu Island.

From the beginning of 1945, not only did the US forces carry out air raids, but the US fleet also carried out shelling from warships in each area of the Kuriles. In July, US submarines entered the Sea of Okhotsk, surfaced and bombarded various locations on the north Shore of Kunashiri Island, and the east and south shores of south Sakhalin. The situation was such that the USSR could not make the Kuriles area its own monopolistic operation area, and the USSR had to scale back its ambitions.

On July 28 the Soviet Supreme General Headquarters officially announced the duties of each Front and Fleet. Offensive duties were assigned to the Manchurian Front (excluding the Sunwu(孫吳) and Aihui(愛輝) front), and defensive duties and preparations for attack were assigned to the Sakhalin and Kamchatka areas and fleet. The date when the attack would start had not yet been determined. At 4:00 p.m. on August 7, the Supreme General Headquarters ordered that the invasion attacking Japan's forces would start on the morning of August 9. The atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima on the morning of August 6, and was considered extremely likely to accelerate the surrender of Japan, and it is highly possible that the Soviet Supreme General Headquarters hastened to start its attack so it wouldn't "miss the bus"⁽²³⁾.

At 5:00 p.m. Moscow time on August 8 (11:00 p.m. Japanese and Manchurian time, in other words, one hour before the invasion started), V.M.Molotov (В.М. Молотов), the Soviet people's commissar for foreign affairs, the USSR, asked Naotake Sato, Japan's ambassador to the USSR, to meet with him, and notified Sato of the declaration of war. The telegram sent by the ambassador and addressed to the Japanese Government, did not arrive in Tokyo. There is testimony stating that the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the USSR, held that report telegram for an unlimited period of time⁽²⁴⁾. Because of this, the attacks that started in each area along the Soviet-Manchurian border were complete surprise attacks, without any

advanced warning.

2. Invasion by the Soviet Forces

The Soviet reconnaissance troops and advance troops crossed the border and started to invade each front in Manchuria at around 00:00, August 9th. Based on an order from central headquarters, the Kwangtung Army was in the midst of changing its preparations for dispositions that retreated far back from the borders, in order to maintain the mountainous zone on the border of Manchuria and Korea as its core area. The military power positioned in the area near the border was reduced to less than 1/5~1/6 of its previous strength, and many of its cannons for defense had been removed and diverted. The observation posts manned by detachments were quickly destroyed by the surprise attack, and Soviet forces came through the open spaces between individual strong points. Some of the Soviet forces blocked these strong points, while the main Soviet forces started advancing toward inner Manchuria.

On the other hand, the Soviet forces in the Sunwu and Aihui areas on the northeast front and on the Sakhalin and Kurile Island front were still making defensive preparations.

(1) Battle on the Eastern Front

General Seiichi Kita of the 1st Area Army was in charge of the eastern front including what is now part of North Korea (northern half of Hamgyongbuk-do) south of Sanjiang(三江) Province in the Songhua Jiang River Basin. Its military power totaled 10 divisions including the 134th Division under the direct control of General Kita, and the 3rd Army and the 5th Army in parallel, one independent mixed brigade, one border guard unit and one mobile brigade. On the contrary, the invading the Soviet military forces included the total strength of the 1st Far Eastern Front led by Marshal Meretskov, and main strength of the 2nd Far East Front led by General Pulkaev, a total of 36 rifle divisions which, and 18 tank and mechanized brigades mainstay. The Japanese 1st Area Army's position regarding military operation was to have part of the border unit fight

bravely and defend their positions to the death, while the main force would stop and break down the enemy invasion in positions south and north of Mùlénɡ, (穆稜) and, if it became inevitable, the forces would retreat one by one to the southwest, and utilize the mountainous topography there to stop the enemy invasion.

The 1st Far Eastern Front Commander Meretskov pushed the 1st Red Banner Army and the 5th Army as main attackers as far as Mudanjiang, a strategic point in Eastern Manchuria, with the 35th Army positioned on the north side of the main attack force and the 25th Army positioned on the south side of the main attack force as supporting attackers, backing up the wings of the main attack⁽²⁵⁾.

A. The Suifenhe Area: The Japanese 124th Infantry Division and Soviet 5th Army

The Japanese 5th Army (Lt. Gen. Noritsune Shimizu) was supposed to take charge of guarding the border at the front about 600km south of Khabarovsk - north of the Suifenhe, guarding towns on the border along the former East China railway which ran to Vladivostok, and simultaneously occupying main resistance positions from Mùlénɡ 50km east of the Mudan Jiang in the northwest direction to the area around Qixing(七星), using three divisions as the main force, but when the USSR invaded, those divisions were scattered in various locations throughout a wide area.

The entire power of the Soviet 5th Army, led by General N.I.Krylov (Н.И. Крылов), which became the main left wing attack force, attacked the border unit which had as its main forces only two battalions of the Japanese 124th Division (Lt. Gen. Masatake Shiina) facing the enemy on a front 60km long. (The Japanese 5th Army and the Soviet 5th Army clashed here.) The Soviet forces broke through the Japanese fortifications with 260 cannons and mortars, 30-40 tanks and self-propelled guns per 1km of front where it broke through in the area near Guanyuetai(觀月台), about 20km north of the Suifenhe.⁽²⁶⁾ The Soviet forces certainly overestimated the military power of Japanese forces in this border area. The efforts of the Kwantung Army to deceive the USSR and hide its weakened military power had obviously been

quite effective.

Individual advancing battalions of the Soviet 5th Army crossed the border supported by tanks and self-propelled guns, and struck Japanese army positions in surprise attacks. Almost all observation posts and small positions were destroyed by morning. The some Japanese soldiers escaped, but desperate fighting continued in a few positions. At one of these, about 300 soldiers of the 3rd Battalion of the 271st Infantry Regiment, about 200 ex-servicemen, and about 150 Japanese civilians including Katsumaro Aikou, the mayer of Suifenhe town, who did not have time to evacuate, entered the Tianchang Shan (天長山) position, a core position in the Suifenhe area, and this Japanese force drove back the Soviet forces' attack until August 11th with only one 28-cm howitzer, shooting until they ran out of shells.

Soviet forces started heavy bombardment on the 12th, and on the 14th the Japanese position was destroyed by a completely disastrous bombardment by Soviet forces using additional train-mounted cannons. On the 15th, the Soviet infantry men and tanks rushed into the Japanese position and a battle inside the position started; almost all of the Japanese (soldiers and civilians) here were killed or committed suicide, and the position was captured⁽²⁷⁾. The Soviet 5th Army broke through the border position zone and advanced to about 80km from the border by the morning of the 11th, reaching the front at the Mùlěng position of the main force of the Japanese 124th Division. The 5th Army commander Shimizu judged that the main Soviet forces would advance along Binsui (Haerbin-Suifenhe) Line, part of the former East China Railway, and on the 9th he deployed the units extracted from each area to the rear of the 124th Division. In addition, he had the main force of the 126th Division and 135th Division move to the area near Yehe (掖河) on the east bank of the Mudanjiang river, and decided to guard Mudanjiang (urban area). Mudanjiang was a Japanese town and the only central city in Eastern Manchuria, using all the power of the three divisions under his control⁽²⁸⁾.

B. Area West of Khanka Lake (Japanese 126th Division and Soviet 1st Red Banner Army)

The Japanese 126th Division (Major General Kazuhiko Nomizo) was in charge of the front about 100km west of Khanka (Ханка) Lake, and two infantry battalions were posted as the main border guard. The main force was constructing a position in the area near Zixingtun(自興屯), 50km northeast of Mudanjiang. A portion of the Soviet 1st Red Banner Army led by General A.P. Beloborodov(А.П. Белобородов), which formed the right wing main attack force, invaded the open flat lands on the north wing, and the main force was directed to the most notably thickly forested mountainous area in Manchuria in cooperation with the 5th Army on the south wing. Six rifle divisions were the main force, accompanied by over 400 tanks and self-propelled guns. Several thousand vehicles advanced while building a temporary road through thick forest. After the Errenban (二人班) positions at the most northerly end of the Japanese division had driven back the first attack by Soviet forces, they defended their positions to the death according to the firm decision by their commanding officer; About 40 soldiers died honorably in defeat and only one emerged alive. Personnel from many other border observation posts and small positions got out and retreated, suffering some damage. The forward detachment of the main Soviet force broke through about 30km of thickly forested mountainous area by the morning of the 11th, and the forward detachment, with a tank brigade as its main force, immediately started rushing toward the west⁽²⁹⁾.

The Japanese living in the separate areas of Manchuria had to attempt to evacuate and their travels in confused circumstances were filled with suffering and claimed many victims. About 1,300 people from the Hadahe (哈達河) cultivation group (mixture of members of from the whole country, including nearby cultivation groups and the Japanese civilians) in the area east of Jixi (雞西), suffered one of the many tragedies. They started to evacuate in the rear of what remained of the 126th Field Artillery Regiment, which was retreating from Didao (滴道) while receiving severe blows from the unremitting attack by Soviet airplanes. These Japanese were caught in the fight between the Japanese Field Artillery Regiment and Soviet forces

(forward detachment of the 1st Red Banner Army) that had already advanced to Mashan(麻山), east of Linkou(林口), on the 12th, and it was reported That Soviet tanks were coming up from the rear, blocking their escape route. The leading central group left about 40 healthy men as storm troopers, and the majority of these Japanese people, including Yoji Kainuma, the leader of the group, committed suicide. The remaining men actually carried out a raid using Japanese swords. Most were killed and only a few came back alive. Those killed in action and by suicide, including women and children, are considered to have totaled more than 450 victims for this group alone⁽³⁰⁾.

C. Area north of Khanka Lake: Japanese 135th Division and Soviet 35th Army.

The Japanese 135th Division (Lt. Gen. Yoichi Hitomi) was in charge of the Ussuri (Уссури) River front from the north bank of Khanka Lake to the area 60km south of Khabarovsk, the main force of two infantry regiments was arranged in Hulin(虎林) and Dongan(東安), etc., the main complement of two battalions from the main force was posted to guard about 400km of the border, and most of an infantry regiment was constructing a position in the area near Qixing, 50km north of Mudanjiang. The 15th border guards under direct control of the Japanese 5th Army were concentrated in the Hutou (虎頭) fortification.

Very early on the 9th, the Soviet 35th Army (Lt. Gen. N.D. Zakhvatayev (Н.Д. Захватяев), with three rifle divisions and two tank brigades as its main components) immediately started to cross the Amur River while bombarding the Hutou fortification, and by the evening of the 10th it had driven the Japanese force outside of the fortification back. After the failure of their violent attack during the night, one rifle regiment and one position guard unit with ample support by artillery applied a siege to each position the Japanese had constructed. A grand total of 1,900 persons, including about 1,500 soldiers from the 15th border guards, and a total of 400 other Japanese including members of soldiers' families, Manchurian Railway employees, and members of the "Hikari" cultivation group, remained in the Hutou fortification and made efforts to fight a defensive battle, but could not communicate with upper-level

headquarters, and refused Soviet advice to surrender. After all the soldiers in the Huxiaoshan(虎嘯山) position at the most westerly end had died honorably in defeat on August 26th, all resistance by Japanese forces ended ⁽³¹⁾. Soldiers in five of the isolated observation posts in the vast wetland zone northeast of Khanka Lake are assumed to have died in honorable defeat. In one case, previously unreported, 30 soldiers in the Huanggang(黃崗) observation post fought bravely to the end under circumstances in which they were completely surrounded and isolated with no help whatsoever; All of these soldiers died honorably in defeat, as shown by the USSR's own war history ⁽³²⁾. Other observation posts were damaged, but many soldiers managed to get out of them and retreat.

D. Area south of Dongning District (Japanese 3rd Army and Soviet 25th Army, etc.)

The Japanese 3rd Army (Lt. Gen. Keisaku Murakami: four divisions, one independent mixed brigade, one mobile brigade as the main force, of which one division and one independent mixed brigade came under the direct control of the 1st Area Army after the USSR attacked) was in charge of a front extending over 200km from the area near Dongning (東寧) about 40km south of the Suifenhe, to the estuary of the Tumen(圖們) River, and its main force was arranged in major resistance positions 30-80km back from the border. For direct defensive preparation for the border, there was one independent infantry battalion in each of the Guoliang (郭亮) and Gouyu(勾玉) positions east of Dongning, one in the Shenghong(勝鬪) Position southeast of Dongning, And one infantry regiment stationed in the area near Wujiazi(五家子), close to the southern part of what is now North Korea. Other than these, only a very weak force of observation posts was arranged at wide intervals.

For this front, the Soviet 25th Army (headed by Lt. Gen. I.M.Chistyakov (И.М.Чистяков), initially had four rifle divisions and one tank brigade as its main force; accompanying the advancement of this operation, five tank and mechanized brigades were added) invaded, supported the south wing of the main attack (Soviet 5th Army), and developed

their attack toward the southwest in preparation for moving south along the east coast of Korea, according to its assigned duty.

Soviet forces started surprise attacks on observation posts along the border in the Dongning area at about 00:00 on August 9, detouring to avoid the powerful point positions of Japanese forces. The main Soviet force advanced southwest along the Xingning (Xinxing:新興-Dongning) Line using the tank brigade as its Forward Detachment.

The observation posts suddenly attacked by Soviet forces were destroyed instantly. Many soldiers of the Japanese border guard units retreated as ordered, suffering some damage. 660 soldiers, the 786th Independent Infantry Battalion of the 132nd Independent Mixed Brigade were posted to the Guoliang and Gouyu positions. From the morning of August 10th, the Guoliang position, near the highway, was attacked by a large Soviet force and reached the crucial stage. There was no time to escape, and nearly the entire over 80 Japanese there, including soldiers their family members, and cultivation group members, committed suicide using explosives. Some of those remaining soldiers got together at the Gouyu position and continued to fight, but their position was cut apart and squeezed by Soviet forces in a pincer action, leaving many dead or injured. This position reached the crucial stage and those who could walk were forced to leave it, but immediately after this nearly all of them were killed when the position was attacked by Soviet forces⁽³³⁾. Soviet forces applied severe cannon bombardment and aerial bombing and concentrated many heavy cannons on the Shenghong position where there were about 1,000 soldiers, mainly from the 783rd Independent Infantry Battalion of the 132nd Independent Mixed Brigade. The Soviet infantry men attacked on the 14th, but Japanese guards drove the enemy back while enduring continuous heavy bombardment and bombing. Their storm troopers bravely attacked the Soviet forces, causing them great confusion. Soviet forces forced an already-interned staff officer from the 3rd Japanese Army to enter the guards' position and deliver the ceasefire order, and the guards suspended hostilities⁽³⁴⁾.

Every Japanese division posted on a major approach route tried to hold off advancing Soviet forces, and fierce battles started in each of these places. The weaker Japanese forces set

up positions mainly on high ground, but Soviet forces broke through along major highways, and when Japanese forces ceased firing as ordered, the Soviet Forward Detachment advanced to the near of Yanji(延吉), and prepared to intercept almost all liaisons between Manchuria and the eastern part of North Korea.

In battles with the overwhelmingly powerful Soviet forces, soldiers fought it out till their weapons became mere scrap, after which many of the Japanese involved in these battles committed suicide. Some Japanese were attacked during their tragic attempts to escape, and some deliberately committed suicide due to extreme exhaustion. There were an enormous number of tragic incidents involving Japanese throughout Manchuria. In one tragic case an entire military unit committed suicide after giving up hope of returning to their motherland after the ceasefire. The 79th Division's Engineer Regiment was in the area near Tumen on the east side of Yanji. Major leaders of the regiment, including the regimental commanding officer, committed suicide. The soldiers of the 3rd Company were divided into a suicide group and a group that did not participate in the mass suicide. The suicide group, including the company's commanding officer, did not want to surrender, and about 40 soldiers died simultaneously on command in an explosion they had set themselves. Also, the Dongning Heavy Artillery Regiment under direct control of the 3rd Army in the area near Tumen followed the artillery tradition of sharing the fate of their cannons; all soldiers one by one climbed onto cannon vehicles and cargo trucks loaded with explosives, and simultaneously committed suicide by blowing themselves up⁽³⁵⁾.

On August 12th, the Reconnaissance Detachment and the Marine Brigades of the Soviet Pacific Ocean Fleet landed at Unggi (雄基) and Najin (羅津), close to the northern end of east coast of North Korea. The Detachment advanced along the east coast of North Korea from Manchuria and occupied Unggi and Najin with the Soviet 25th Army. After the 13th, the Soviet Pacific Ocean Fleet Marine Brigades also landed at Chongjin(清津), south of the above-mentioned locations. The Japanese Forces in the Nanam division district counterattacked and chased them to the water's edge, putting them in a critical situation at one point, but the Soviet forces reinforced their strength, and the Japanese forces ceased firing on the 19th as

ordered⁽³⁶⁾.

E. The Defensive Battle in Mudanjiang (the Main Forces of Japanese 5th Army versus Soviet 5th Army and 1st Red Banner Army)

Front units of the Soviet 5th Army crossed the Mùlén River on August 11, fiercely attacked the position of Japanese 124th Division on the west side of Mùlén starting on the morning of the 12th, and made a breakthrough along the Mudanjiang highway within the same day. Soviet forces had broken through the Japanese units hastily sent from each area along the highway, and the spearhead of the Soviet forces that broke through reached Madaoshi(磨刀石), 12km from Yehe. However, the Soviet forces were stopped by the Kobayashi Detachment, constituted mainly of military cadets who had been hastily sent out. The Japanese 124th Infantry Division also continued to fight on both sides of the highway where Soviet forces had broken through. Meanwhile, the Japanese Forces called up the 126th Division from the area near Zixingtun and the main force of the 135th Division from the area near Qixing, and formed a second Mudanjiang defense line in the area near Yehe. When the advance unit of the Soviet First Red Banner Army closed in the north side of Yehe, the Japanese 135th Division (mainly one infantry regiment and an artillery regiment) which had just advanced to the position on the previous day stopped the advancing Soviet force. The Soviet 5th Army broke through the Kobayashi Detachment, attempted to develop and send its military forces and material forward that same day, and on the 14th it started a full-scale attack on the Japanese 126th Division, positioned on the east side of Yehe. On the 14th, the Soviet 1st Red Banner Army on the north side of Yehe prepared for an attack, and restarted its full-scale attack on the 15th, but the Japanese 135th Division held its position well with only a small military force. The Japanese 126th Division barely checked the attack of the Soviet 5th Army with its increasing military forces⁽³⁷⁾.

The Japanese 5th Army received permission from the First Area Army to retreat on the night of the 14th, and the evacuation of about 60,000 Japanese who had gathered in Mudanjiang was almost completed, so the 5th Army began to retreat on the night of the 15th. Their main

forces (126th and 135th Division) retreated to Hengdaohezi (横道河子), 60km west of Mudanjiang, and received the ceasefire order on the 17th. In the confused battle circumstances, the retreat order was not delivered to the 278th Regiment of the 126th Division. Its Regimental Commander, Hajime Yamanaka, had decided to not retreat even one step unless he received a definite order. After the main Japanese forces retreated, he and his soldiers bravely fought on alone all day on the 16th under circumstances in which their regiment was surrounded and heavily outnumbered by Soviet forces. All of these soldiers were killed in action⁽³⁸⁾ except for a few who were able to get out after midnight as commanded by the last order of their regimental commander, who committed suicide.

We can say that the 278th Infantry Regiment succeeded in its role as a rearguard, fighting to the death to protect the main division forces which were retreating.

The Japanese 124th Division fought continuously in the Mùlóng position, but was isolated by Soviet forces, so they retreated to the south in a mountainous area. On August 22, their main forces negotiated with Soviet forces in Ning'an(寧安), 20km south of Mudanjiang, and were disarmed.

Even in this period, the Japanese continued to encounter tragedy on their evacuation routes as they attempted to reach Mudanjiang. Each of several cultivation groups from Baoqing (宝清) prefecture, Dongan Province in the eastern area, with a group from Hulin prefecture, continued their painful escape, making many sacrifices along the way. And at last they found their way to the former site of the *Sado* cultivation group (which had already escaped) in the suburbs of Boli (勃利) town, Boli prefecture, west of Baoqing prefecture. On August 24, some of the group members, who were stressed to the limit, burned up a small Soviet airplane that had accidentally landed there, and on August 26 they shot at and burned a Soviet truck that was displaying a white flag. The leaders of the cultivation groups consulted each other and decided to commit group suicide due to their feeling of despair because they had no hope of being able to return to their motherland. On the 27th, Soviet forces entirely surrounded these groups and shot at them with guns and cannons. Many including the aged, women and children, died in this attack or killed themselves. The number of Japanese people who entered this former site of the

Sado cultivation group is not clear, but is considered to have been approximately 2,500, of whom about 1,500 are assumed to have been killed there.⁽³⁹⁾

F. Area along the Songhua Jiang River (The 134th Division under direct control of the Japanese 1st Area Army versus the Soviet 2nd Far Eastern Front's 15th Army, etc.)

The Soviet 2nd Far Eastern Front invaded the area north of this section along the Songhua Jiang. The Front (General Pulkaev) used tactics of advance to Haerbin by planned to the 15th Army as a main body. In addition, The Front used tactics by the 2nd Red Banner Army, headed toward Qiqihaer(齊齊哈爾) from the Blagoveshchensk (Благовещенск) area and the 5th Rifle Corps heading toward Baoqing from the Amur River bank in the eastern area as supportive body. Among these, the attack by the 5th Rifle Corps was really a supplementary operation to strike the small and weak Japanese border observation sentry posts dispersed far away from the 135th Division of the previously-mentioned 5th Army.

The Japanese 134th Division (Lt. Gen. Jin Izeki) was in charge of the area extending about 500km along the Amur River banks and the Songhua Jiang river basin about 400km from the confluence to upstream Fangzheng(方正). There were small, weak observation posts along the Heilongjiang River banks. The main strength of each infantry battalion was posted at Hegang (鶴崗) on the left bank of the Songhua Jiang River and in the area near Fujin (富錦) on the right bank of the Songhua Jiang River. In addition, the main force was constructing a position in the area near Fangzheng. The Soviet 15th Army, Lt. Gen. S.K.Mamonov (С.К. Мамонов: three rifle divisions and three tank brigades as the main forces, with support from the small Amur Fleet) forcibly crossed the Amur River in the area near its confluence with the Songhua Jiang River, breaking through the Japanese forces, then extended its amphibious operation using both army and navy to develop attacking forces in the directions of Fujin, Jiamusi and Haerbin⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Soviet forces started to cross the river at 1:00 a.m., August 9th. A total of about 190

Japanese, including about 100 women and children who lived in Fuyuan (撫遠) only 60km from Khabarovsk and on the banks of the Amur River, was suffered the full-scale landing attack supported by bombardment from the Soviet fleet. As a result, almost all of the Japanese were killed⁽⁴¹⁾. Many other observation posts retreated before Soviet forces attacked. After that, the Soviet battalions advancing on land, and Soviet river ships on which army soldiers were loaded, cooperated in advancing along the Songhua Jiang River. The Small Japanese Forces positioned in front of the 134th Division put up a lively fight and delayed the advancing Soviet forces. Many of the Japanese who lived in the area near Jiamusi escaped on the Suijia (Suihua[綏化]-Jiamusi) Line. The 134th Division headquarters and the Japanese forces stationed in Jiamusi retreated 150km rearward to Fangzheng as planned. Soviet forces made a full-scale landing attack on Jiamusi on the 16th, but this was after the Japanese forces had withdrawn. The main force of the 134th Division gathered in the area near Fangzheng and was disarmed on the 25th. As Japanese people who lived in the area and could not utilize the railway, etc., they escaped on foot and were attacked by Soviet forces and local robbers. Many of these Japanese were killed or injured, and some committed suicide. Some of the cultivation groups that escaped on foot were totally annihilated, and about half of the members of many other groups were killed or went missing. Among the roughly 9,000 people who entered Fangzheng Camp, said to have some of the most particularly terrible conditions in all of Manchuria, over half suffered greatly in dreadful circumstances. Large numbers of them committed suicide, died of sickness, were kidnapped by Soviet soldiers, or became the wives of native people. Many of those who remained alive escaped from the camp, and suffered again great distress along their escape routes⁽⁴²⁾.

(2) Battle at the north front (Sunwu and Aihui Areas: the 123rd Division of the Japanese 4th Army and Soviet 2nd Red Banner Army)

The 4th Army (Lt. Gen. Mikio Uemura) under direct control of the Kwantung Army took charge of the north front in the Sunwu and Aihui areas and the northwest front in the Hailar (海拉爾)

and Pokuto (博克圖) areas. The main force of the 123rd Division (Lt. Gen. Teijiro Kitazawa) was posted to the main position in Sunwu, the main force of the attached 135th Independent Mixed Brigade (Maj. Gen. Junosuke Hamada) was posted to the Aihui position (about 30km north of Sunwu), some powerful forces were posted to the Erzhan position (about 30km west of Sunwu), and there were many lookouts, guards, and observation posts along about 200km of the Heilongjiang River banks. In addition, some powerful forces were posted at essential points on the front and wings of the main Sunwu position. The Soviet 2nd Red Banner Army [Lt. Gen. M.F. Telëkhin (М.Ф.Телëхин), three rifle divisions, three tank brigades as the main forces] divided its military force into two groups, one heading for Sunwu-Beian-Haerbin, and the other group heading for Aihui-Nenjiang (嫩江)-Qiqihaer. The Soviet 2nd Red Banner Army initially made defensive preparations, then in the early morning of the 11th started to cross the river and immediately carried out vigorous attacks on each Japanese position in the front and on the wings, followed by fierce attacks on the Aihui and Erzhan positions. There were many victims while the cultivation groups scattered in remote areas were evacuating, but in the Heihe and Sunwu areas where many Japanese lived, almost all of them were able to evacuate via the Beihei (Beian-Heihe) Line. The guard units in each position on the front and wings of the main Sunwu position fought bravely even when they suffered great damage. The major force of the 123rd division in the main position repelled the attack of some Soviet forces, and while they were preparing for a large-scale counterattack in the evening on the 15th, they received the information about the end of the war, and while they held almost all positions, they ceased firing on the 16th. The Aihui position was attacked from the 13th, and the Erzhan position was vigorously attacked from the 15th. The ceasefire order was delayed due to the interruption of radio communications, but Japanese forces ceased firing on the 21st after continuing to fight fiercely, holding the majority of their positions⁽⁴³⁾.

Each of the riverbank observation post sentries and cultivation group members in remote areas continued their tragic struggles to evacuate. In particular, the “Heihe Great Aomori” cultivation groups (about 70km east of Sunwu, a union of three cultivation groups sent from Aomori prefecture) met a tragic end. 470 people, including infants, mainly members of the

families of these cultivation groups, started to evacuate on August 13. Soviet forces already occupied many places, so they fled into the Hsiao-Khing-an Ling, but became extremely exhausted because of the difficult topography and because they could not obtain any food. Therefore, they had to leave behind 106 people including the aged, women and children who could not endure the march, building a shed as a temporary shelter for them and leaving them with enough food for 10 days, promising them to come back later to pick them up (All 106 are assumed to have died there). The other members of the cultivation groups continued to walk through the Hsiao-Khing-an Ling, completely exhausting their physical and mental strength. When they finally emerged onto flat land, they were attacked by local bandits, and their possessions were plundered by USSR soldiers. It's said that only 134 returned to Japan⁽⁴⁴⁾.

(3) Western Front Battle (The Japanese 4th Army and 3rd Area Army versus Soviet forces)

The only Japanese forces near the border were the 119th Division and the 80th Independent Mixed Brigade on the front in northwestern Hailar which belonged to the 4th Army, and on its south side, the 107th Division which belonged to the 44th Army under the control of the Third Area Army, was at the front in Arxan (阿爾山), for the western front, which if shown as a straight line would extend for over 1,000 km. Against these Japanese forces were ranged the invaders, all of the Zabaikal Army, the strongest segment of the Soviet Far East forces. Marshal Malinovskii, the Commander-in-Chief for the Zabaikal front, planned to carry out his main attack using the 39th Army, 6th Guards Tank Army and the 17th Army from the north for the first line, with the 53rd Army on the second line. He planned to make the main attack in the direction of Xinjing from the south side of the Japanese forces' Arxan position zone in the Greater Khingan mountains, and to apply a supportive attack using the 36th Army on the north side of the main attack in the direction of Hailar, with another attack by the Cavalry Mechanized Brigades on the south side of the main attack in the direction of Dolonnur (多倫) and Zhangjiakou(張家口).

A. Hailar and Pokuto Areas (the Japanese 119th Division, 80th Independent Mixed Brigade versus the Soviet 36th Army)

The main force of the Japanese 80th Independent Mixed Brigade (Major General Tokie Nomura) was posted in the Hailar position about 100km from the border, and the main force of the 119th Division (Lt. Gen Kiyonobu Shiozawa) was posted to the Greater Khingan mountains position in the Yilikede (伊列克得)-Pokuto about 100km east of the Hailar position, with part of the division posted along about 300km of the border as surface or ground inspection units, observation units and guard units. The Soviet 36th Army, Lt. Gen. A. A. Luchinskii (A. A. Лучинский: seven rifle divisions, one tank brigade as the main force), applied its main attack from Starotsurkhayty over 100km northeast of Manchuri, simultaneously applying supportive attacks from Manchuri to Hailar⁽⁴⁵⁾.

After 00:00 on August 9, Soviet forces made sudden strikes on the small and weak Japanese units posted along the border, while the main Soviet force simultaneously rushed toward Hailar. No one returned alive from eight of the 17 observation posts, where every man is assumed to have died honorably in defeat. The main Japanese guard unit force started to retreat, was suddenly pursued by the Soviet forces, and suffered severe damage. The Soviet tank brigade rushed south from the Starotsurkhayty area, running about 100km, and intercepted Japanese forces behind Hailar within that day. There were many victims among Japanese who lived in the border area and remote areas, but about 6,000 Japanese who lived in Hailar, that is, the majority of the Japanese residing in that area, were able to evacuate by rail before the Soviet forces cut off the Japanese communication line at the rear of Hailar. The 80th Independent Mixed Brigade divided its ranks and posted 5,000 soldiers to positions in Areas 1 to 5, originally constructed to be guarded by 30,000 soldiers, while some soldiers made volunteer attacks outside of their positions. They maintained a large portion of these positions while completely surrounded by Soviet forces, and endured vigorous attacks by Soviet forces. They weighed the various items of information received, and ceased firing on the 18th. Meanwhile, an unfortunate tragedy occurred. Over 50 Japanese, members of the families of police squad

members and prefectural government officials, were helped to retreat by the Amugulang(阿穆古朗)border police squad near Nomonhan, and were accommodated in the Hailar No. 3 area position, but, unknown to their husbands and fathers who were fighting just in front of them, all of them committed suicide using grenades without waiting for the ceasefire. The Soviet 36th Army's large military force was restricted to surrounding and attacking the Hailar position, and could not immediately assign a large military force to the attack headed east. In the Da-Khing-an Ling, the Japanese 119th Division which had obstructed the Soviet breakthrough by step-by-step attacks on the Soviet forces, ceased firing on the 17th as ordered⁽⁴⁶⁾.

B. Arxan and Wuchagou Area (the Japanese 107th Division versus the Soviet 39th Army)

Among the Third Area Army forces responsible for the western front, only the location of the Japanese 107th Division (Lt. Gen. Koichi Abe) protruded into an area close to the border. Part of this division was posted at Arxan. Its main force was posted at Wuchagou(五叉溝), and it also manned observation posts along the border. The main force of the Soviet 39th Army, Gen. I. I. Lyudnikov (И.И. Людников: nine rifle divisions, one tank brigade two tank regiments as its main forces), planned to advance from south of Arxan, intercept the path of retreat of the Japanese Forces in the Arxan and Solon (索倫) areas, and to use part of its forces to directly attack the Arxan position.

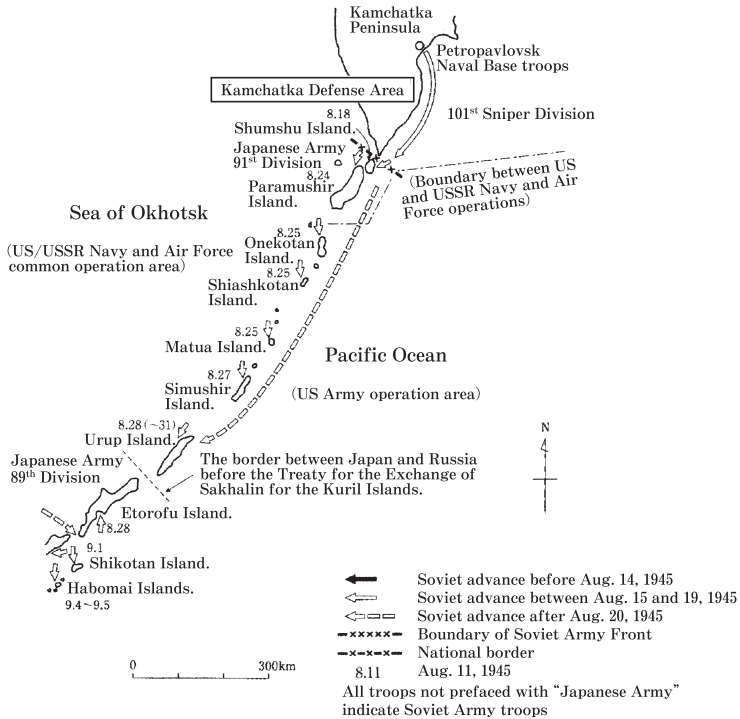
On the 12th, Soviet forces conquered the mountainous area south of the Arxan position, and intercepted the rear of the Japanese Forces in the area near Solon 200km east of the mountainous area, although the Japanese who lived in Arxan and Wuchagou near the border were able to evacuate by rail on the 9th. The retreat order came too late for the Japanese 107th Division, which was attacked from both front and rear in Xikou(西口), 40km east of Wuchagou. After desperate fighting on the 14th and 15th, they escaped toward the mountainous area in the north, the only possible path for retreat. On August 25 – 26, while continuing their difficult trek to escape, during which many soldiers dropped out and were left behind due to fatigue and a

shortage of food, the Division encountered the Soviet 221st Rifle Division at Haoshitai (号什台) about 100km of Xikou and defeated a part of them. At the request of Soviet forces, the Kwantung Army sent a Japanese liaison officer accompanied by a USSR army officer, and conveyed the ceasefire order, and the Japanese 107th Division and the Soviet rifle division were able to cease firing just before they crushed each other⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Some Japanese were able to evacuate safely by rail from areas near the border, but in the Xingan (興安) area in the rear, Japanese who had delayed their evacuation encountered troubles that resulted in large numbers of victims. About 1,200 Japanese who lived in the eastern half of Xingan town, started to evacuate on the 11th under the command of Councilor Ryozo Asano of the “Banner (traditional administrative division in Manchuria, equivalent to prefecture).”

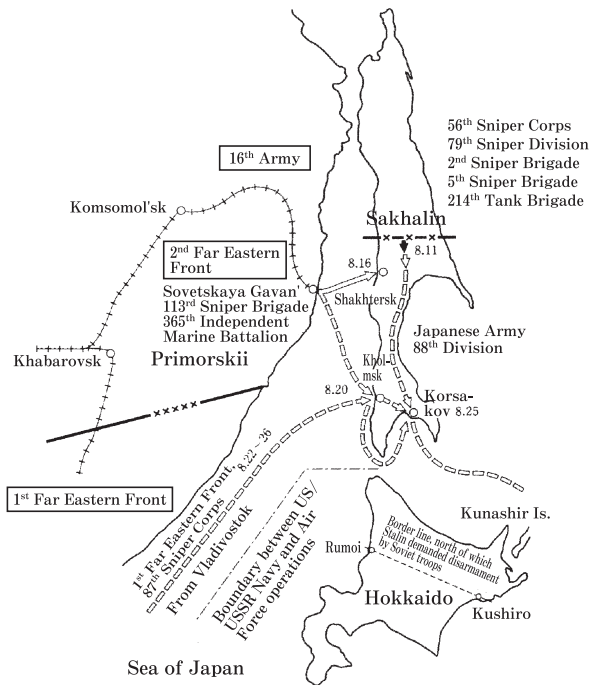
The Xingan Army (Manchurian Army) had requisitioned 30 carriages, so they changed their schedule to use the railway. On the 14th, when they reached the area near Gegenmiao (葛根廟), Soviet tanks appeared. Councilor Asano approached them and was shot and killed by machine-gun fire. After that, the number of tanks increased to over 10, the machine-gun fire continued, and about 1,000 Japanese were killed by machine gun fire or killed themselves. About 200 Japanese were able to escape, and it is assumed that about 90 women and children were left in the area near this site. The 964 members of the Tokyo *Ebara-go* cultivation group near Xingan were late in assembling from their scattered villages. They headed south on the 16th while fighting from time to time against local bandits who surrounded them. On the 17th, Soviet tanks stopped in front of them and aimed cannons at them. In this situation, the Japanese were surrounded and attacked by local bandits for over seven hours, and many of them were killed in the fighting or committed suicide. Almost everyone who got out of there was killed; about 800 people from this group were killed or went missing. It is said that the leader of these local bandits was killed by the Mongolian Army the following year, in June 1946. Also, the Tokyo *Butsryu-kou* cultivation group (about 700 members) near Xingan, started to evacuate on the night of the 12th, and it is assumed that they were attacked by Soviet forces in the area west of Taonan, Longjiang (龍江) Province on the 25th. Almost all of them were killed⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Soviet Aggression Against Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands



C. Da-Khing-an-Ling and Rehe Mountain area (Forceful Advance by Soviet Zabaikal Armored Group)

The Japanese 44th Army (three divisions mainly including the 107th Division) of the Third Area Army was in charge of the western front, and the 108th Division under direct control of the 44th Army was the military force facing west, but other than the 107th Division, the main forces of the 44th Army were far to the rear, so the vast border area was actually already open to liberation by the USSR. The 108th Division was in Rehe(熱河) Province and did almost no fighting against Soviet forces. The Four Armies of the Soviet Zabaikal Front main attack group



(The 39th Army overlapped the previously-mentioned forces) included 18 rifle divisions, two motorized rifle divisions, one parachute division, one tank division, 13 tank and mechanized brigades and two self-propelled gun brigades as its main components, and planned to apply its main attack from south of the Arxan position zone, quickly break through the Greater Khingan Mountains, and occupy the central area of Manchuria including Xinjing and Fengtian (Shenyang).

Soviet forces crossed the border at around 00:00 on the 9th and advanced in the best possible conditions, meeting no resistance whatsoever. But because of the terrain and worsening weather, the 6th Guards Tank Brigade, the core of the main attack force, consumed more fuel than estimated. After it emerged in the eastern foothills of the Da-Khing-an Ling it stopped there

until the morning of the 13th. Soviet forces collected fuel from other individual units and supplied the fuel to the forward detachment to allow it to move forward, but the speed of advance was greatly decreased. Under circumstances in which there was absolutely no ground resistance by Japanese forces, the 2nd Japanese Air Army started air attacks on the Soviet forces column on the 12th. As stated in the Soviet-side military history⁽⁴⁹⁾ quite a large number of Japanese airplanes used up all their ammunition, and their pilots made sacrifice attacks on the Soviet tanks.

E. Inner Mongolia Area (the Japanese Forces Stationed in Mongolia and the Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group)

The Soviet-Mongol Cavalry-Mechanized Group, Gen. I. A. Pliev (И.А. Плиев: five cavalry divisions, two tank and mechanized brigades, one motorized rifle brigade as the main forces) formed up in double file and advanced into Inner Mongolia at around 00:00 on the 9th, aiming to reach Zhangjiakou and Dolonnur while eliminating the resistance from Inner Mongolian forces. On the 19th, Soviet forces struck the *Maruichi* position of the Japanese forces' 2nd Independent Mixed Brigade, stationed in Mongolia less than 30km from Zhangjiakou (Commander Lt. Gen. Hiroshi Nemoto had been ordered to take up the post of Commanding General of the North China Area Army concurrently with his post as Commanding General the Mongolia Garrison Army, because Gen. Sadamu Shimomura had been appointed Minister of War). Japanese forces stationed in Mongolia had already learned of the atrocities committed by Soviet forces in Manchuria, and were preparing to evacuate all Japanese residents who were gathering in Zhangjiakou. The 2nd Independent Mixed Brigade in the Maruichi position asked Soviet forces to allow a period of grace for their evacuation, but this request was not granted. The Brigade knew of the end of the war. Obeying orders from Commander Nemoto, they voluntarily joined together and resisted the Soviet forces until the 21st. After the evacuation of nearly 40,000 Japanese from Zhangjiakou was completed, the brigade left its position and retreated south of the Great Wall⁽⁵⁰⁾.

(4) Battles on Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands:

The Advance of Soviet Forces into Northern Territories of Japan

Following the successful advance of its operation in the Manchurian area, the Soviet Far East Command started a South Sakhalin operation on the morning of August 11. The 2nd Far Eastern Front's 16th Army, Maj. Gen. L.G. Cheremisov (Л. Г. Черемисов: one rifle division, three rifle brigades, one tank brigade, two independent tank battalions as the main forces), and North Pacific Ocean fleet, Vice Admiral V.A. Andreev (В.А. Андреев: small naval vessels, one fleet air squadron, one marine brigade, etc.), took charge of the operation. The main force of the 16th Army including its 56th Rifle Corps (the entire military force of the 16th Army excluding one rifle brigade) started the invasion by crossing the Soviet-Japan border at 50° N. Lat., moving along the central military road on the morning of August 11th. The main force of the Japanese 88th Division (Lt. Gen. Juichiro Mineki) for the defense of Sakhalin was in the southern section. The main portion of the 125th Infantry Regiment was the only unit in the border area. It firmly guarded the *Mt. Happoyama* main position, and also burst out of this position and fought desperately, engaging directly with Soviet forces on the approach road, stopping the organized southward advance of Soviet forces, until they received the ceasefire order on the 18th⁽⁵¹⁾.

But the overall ceasefire in the Sakhalin area was delayed Compare the other Manchuria. One reason for this was that Imperial Headquarters had set the date for the directive, "Approval for local ceasefire negotiations and handing over of weapons" as the 16th for the Kwantung Army, but in consideration of the situation in the theater of operation, it had set the date of this directive for the 5th Area Army as the 19th. A greater cause of the ceasefire delay was that battles had been extended to various locations due to violent attacks by Soviet forces starting on August 15th. Against this, the Japanese 5th Area Army was watching for the invasion of Soviet forces into Hokkaido, and strictly instructed the 88th Division to continue fighting in self-defense.

Soviet forces landed one rifle battalion and one marine battalion at Lesogorsk

(Лесогорск) in the northern area of the west coast from SovGavani (СовГавани) on the opposite shore.

In addition, one rifle brigade and one marine battalion were landed at Kholmsk (Холмск) on the 20th. Soviet forces attacked the city, which had almost no defense preparations, with shelling from warships, after which the brigade and the battalion landed and fiercely attacked the city. Many ordinary Japanese residents were killed or injured by indiscriminate random shooting⁽⁵²⁾. Considering the use of force to be inevitable, the chief of staff of the Japanese 88th Division went north accompanied by a very small military force to protect the evacuation of residents whose withdrawal had been delayed, and made desperate efforts to stop or delay the advance of Soviet forces to the south, but the Soviet forces did not readily withdraw.

However, the Japanese 5th Area Army, which earlier had ordered the 88th Division to defend southern Sakhalin to the death in self-defense, followed instructions from Imperial Headquarters and issued the directive, “Approval for local ceasefire negotiations and handing over of weapons” late at night on the 20th, and the 88th Division made a ceasefire agreement with the Soviet Forces in Makarov (Макаров) at a little past noon on the 22nd. When the 25th Infantry Regiment, located east of Kholmsk, sent out its military envoy without making any resistance, almost all its soldiers were shot and killed. On the 21st – 22nd, there was a fierce battle to stop the advance of Soviet forces headed toward Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (Южно-Сахалинск) and Korsakov.

Military envoy members sent according to the Division’s order on the evening of the 22nd were also shot, and fell down, but were eventually able to come to an understanding with the Soviet forces, and the ceasefire was confirmed by early morning on the 23rd⁽⁵³⁾.

During this period, the Sakhalin Office handled its functions with the cooperation of the army, navy, railway bureau, and ship operation association, and the urgent transporting of Japanese to Hokkaido started on the 13th. About 76,000 of the evacuees got out as planned by the Sakhalin Office before Soviet forces prohibited movement outside the island. After that, about 24,000 residents got out of Sakhalin through their own efforts. Soviet forces started

preparations for a Hokkaido landing operation on the 19th. On the 22nd, three Japanese ships fully loaded with evacuees were attacked by Soviet submarines off *Rumoi* on the US forces side of the boundary of USA-USSR navy and air force operations. Two ships were sunk, and one was greatly damaged; there were about 1,700 victims. In addition, about 2,000 civilians including those in Kholmsk were victims of the air raids and ground battles throughout Sakhalin. Soviet forces advanced to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on the 23rd and to Korsakov on the 25th⁽⁵⁴⁾.

On the night of August 15th, after Japan accepted the *Potsdam Declaration*, Marshal Vasilevskii, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Far East Command, ordered the operation to occupy the Northern Kuriles to be carried out. The main force of one rifle division belonging to the 2nd Far East Front Kamchatka defense area, Maj. Gen. A.P. Gnechko (А.П. Гнечко), with the cooperation of the Pacific Ocean Fleet's Petropavlovsk Navy base corps, Captain D.G. Ponomarev (Пономарев), landed on Shumushu Island at the northern end of the Kurile Islands under supporting fire. The main force of the Japanese 91st Division (Lt. Gen. Fusaki Tsutsumi) stationed on the island, immediately ordered the main force of the tank regiment to counterattack in self-defense against the invading force of unknown nationality which had landed and carried out a violent assault in heavy fog in the early morning, and compressed the Soviet force that had landed. In addition, the Japanese prepared a counterattack using the main force of the division, but an order saying "Suspend battle, move to self-defense fighting" arrived from the Area Army. The Division suspended its active counterattack, and changed to purely defensive battle tactics. After that, the 91st Division attempted to hold its position firmly against the attack of Soviet forces while sending out military envoys one after another from the evening of the 18th, but negotiations did not materialize. The 5th Area Army seems to have conveyed the order, "Approval of local ceasefire negotiations and handover of weapons" to the 91st Division on the 20th, earlier than for Sakhalin, based on the directive from Imperial Headquarters on the 19th. They officially signed the ceasefire agreement on August 21st on a Soviet warship off *Kashihara*⁽⁵⁵⁾.

The Soviet forces that invaded the Kurile Islands from Kamchatka took until August 24th to occupy Shumushu Island and Paramusiru Island and carry out disarmament. They

started moving south through the Kurile Islands on the 24th, and reached Urup Island on the 28th. Maj. Gen. Gnechko declared the completion of battle action on August 31. A rifle brigade from the 2nd Far Eastern Front's 16th Army landed at Kholmsk on Sakhalin, and one division of the 1st Far Eastern Front's 87th Rifle Corps, transported to Sakhalin for a Hokkaido landing operation, landed on Iturup Island on August 28, and landed on Kunashiri Island and Shikotan Island on September 1st. Small Soviet forces advanced units even occupied the Habomai Islands on September 4th-5th due to a crossing of orders, but this did not create any political problem. Therefore, upper-level headquarters evaluated this positively, and gave *ex post facto* approval⁽⁵⁶⁾. Since then, the situation in which the Northern Territories of Japan have been unilaterally occupied by the USSR and its successor, the nation of Russia, has continued until today.

3. The End of the War

Based on the decision by Emperor Hirohito, the Japanese government sent notice of its final acceptance of *the Potsdam Declaration* during the night of August 14, and the speech by the Emperor himself concerning the end of the war was broadcasted at noon on August 15. But the USSR issued a "Declaration to continue war" under the name of its Chief of General Staff, General A.I. Antonov (А.И. Антонов), and continued operations in each location as described in this chapter. As of August 15th, Soviet forces had advanced some distance into Manchuria from its borders, but the greater part of Manchuria including important sites in central and southern Manchuria, remained untouched. Soviet forces had been stopped just after they entered the border in Sakhalin, and had not yet taken even one step onto the Kurile Islands. The Soviet forces considered that they definitely needed military occupation as an established fact, in order to make sure of their harvest under the secret Yalta Agreement.

The Commander-in-Chief and all staff officers of the Headquarters of the Kwantung Army met on the night of the 16th. Based on the order from central headquarters, they confirmed an immediate ceasefire and immediately delivered the ceasefire order to each

substructure. The main bodies of each army at the front in contact with Soviet forces, negotiated with the Soviet forces confronting them and ceased firing on the 17th-18th. But due to the interruption of radio communications, the ceasefire order was not delivered to some units, which continued resistance in their areas. The Kwantung Army General Headquarters sent its Chief of Staff Hikosaburo Hata and other officers to Zharikovo (Жариково) in Soviet territory close to the eastern border on the 19th, and made a ceasefire agreement with Commander-in-Chief Vasilevskii and other commanders (order actually received). Unrelated to this, a special mission including its leader, Colonel I.T. Artemenko (И.Т. Артеменко), Chief of Operations Section of the Zabaikal Front, arrived at Xinjing by air on the 19th. The 1st Far East Front was sent parachute to Haerbin on the 18th, and Jilin on the 19th. The Zabaikal Front sent paratroopers to Fengtian on the 19th, to Lushun and Dalian on the 22nd and two brigades advanced to Lushun on 24th, transported by rail⁽⁵⁸⁾.

Soviet forces speeded up their schedule and hastily participated in the war, but Japanese forces ceased firing faster than estimated. Therefore, Soviet forces very hastily occupied all of Manchuria, Korea north of the 38°N. Lat. parallel, southern Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands, and even Etorofu Island, Kunashiri Island, Shikotan Island, and the Habomai Islands, which were Japan's own Northern Territories. The greater part of this occupation was done after Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and the ceasefire. The last occupation, of the Habomai Islands, was done on September 4th - 5th after the official instrument of surrender had been signed on board the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

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(57) *Известия*, 16 август 1945 (*Izvestiya*, 16 August 1945).

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Assessment of the actual military power of the Kwantung Army

Assessment standards

This assessment is included in the Japanese Demobilization Bureau's *Taiso Sakusen Kiroku*, (*Record of Operations Against the Soviet Union*), Volume1 (Note 5), based on the ideas of Lt. Col. His Imperial Highness Prince Tsuneyoshi of Takeda who was a staff officer of the Kwantung Army until July 1945 when he attempted to reorganize the military power of the weakened Kwantung Army. The military power of the 12th Division was taken as 1, the standard for the military power of the best organized veteran division selected. This division was a strong, carefully picked division with a long tradition, formed in Kurume in 1898. From 1936 it was the Kwantung Army's core division for eastern border defense. This division was transferred to Taiwan in 1944 because the Pacific area battle situation had suddenly intensified.

The division standards considered not only the number of soldiers recruited, but also the quality of these soldiers (differences between servicemen in active service, servicemen in the first reserve, and conscripts, their home towns, etc.). The standards also considered equipment and its quality, in addition to intangible elements such as education, training, solidarity, military spirit, and discipline.

Details of the formation of divisions in this period show they were not uniform, but an ordinary division other than a guards (public peace and order) division was constituted of three infantry regiments, a ranger battalion, a field (mountain) artillery regiment, an engineers regiment, transport regiment, signal, sanitary, and other logistic units and organs. The full complement of a division in wartime formation was around 15,000 men but there were fairly great variations in numbers. An independent mixed brigade was constituted of four or five independent mixed battalions, a ranger battalion, artillery, engineer, signal and transport units, etc., and the full complement of a brigade in wartime was 6,000 to 7,000 men.

The following shows the actual military power calculated for 24 divisions and nine

independent mixed brigades under Kwantung Army control when Soviet forces invaded, for each period of formation, as judged by the Kwantung Army Headquarters at that time using these standards. (Place names in parentheses show the divisional district responsible for recruiting, etc.)

1. Four new divisions established in Manchuria in June to October 1944

107th Division (Hirosaki) 0.6, 108th Division (Hirosaki) 0.65, 112th Division (Kurume) 0.4, 119th Division (Tokyo) 0.7, Total: 2.35.

2. Seven new divisions established in Manchuria in February 1945

122nd Division (Tokyo) 0.35, 123rd division (Nagoya) 0.35, 124th Division (Sendai) 0.35, 125th Division (Hiroshima) 0.2, 126th Division (Kumamoto) 0.2, 127th Division (Utsunomiya) 0.2, 128th Division (Kanazawa) 0.2, Total: 1.85.

3. Five divisions (one division from Korea, four divisions from China) transferred in and after May 1945.

The 79th Division transferred from Korea was 0.4 (This division was formed in Nanam, Korea in March 1945, and Nanam).

The 39th Division (formed in Hiroshima in 1939, Hiroshima) transferred from China, was 0.8.

Also, the 59th Division (formed in China in 1942, Tokyo) was 0.4, the 63rd Division (formed in China in 1943, Utsunomiya) was 0.4, and the 117th Division (formed in China in 1944, Tokyo) was 0.4, total: 2.4.

Three divisions: the 59th Division, 63rd Division and 117th Division, were guards (public peace and order) divisions. Compared to an ordinary division formed of three infantry regiments, four independent infantry battalions in two-brigade formation, and a trench mortar corps instead of artillery regiment. They were inferior in fighting power and mobilization power, but the main constituents of these divisions were units that had already been stationed in China before being reorganized into divisions, and they had abundant battle experience. The full complement of a division in wartime formation was about 12,000

soldiers.

4. Eight new divisions established in Manchuria in and after July 1945

The new 134th Division, 135th Division, 136th Division, 137th Division, 138th Division, 139th division, 148th Division, 149th Division (Manchuria was in charge of recruiting for each of these divisions) were established by the complete universal conscription of adult males in Manchuria. The average for each of these divisions was 0.15, total: 1.2.

5. Nine new independent mixed brigades (all established in Manchuria)

The new 79th (Nagoya) and 80th (Osaka) Independent Mixed Brigades were established in February 1945. Each was formed of five independent mixed battalions and was calculated as 0.15. Each of the new 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th and 136th independent mixed brigades (Manchuria was in charge of recruiting all these brigades) was established in or after July 1945 by the drafting of all adult Japanese males, and each brigade was formed of four independent mixed battalions, 0.1, total: 1.0.

6. When the above-mentioned divisions and brigades are totaled, they give a grand total of 8.75 divisions.

Shown in this way, they appear to be forces the actual military power of which was judged to be low, but as shown in the text, each force fought well and desperately when attacked by Soviet forces. To confirm their actual fighting power, we need to mention some of their actions. The total fighting power of the 124th (0.35), 126th (0.2) and 135th (0.15) divisions was equivalent to 0.7 of a standard division, but we should not forget their good fighting in the defensive battle on the Mudanjiang front in eastern Manchuria, and their gallant fight to protect the Japanese being evacuated from Mudanjiang.

Similarly, the 132nd Independent Mixed Brigade's (0.1) vigorous fighting in each isolated position on the Dongning front in eastern Manchuria, the desperate fight by the 112th Division (0.4) that stopped the enemy force trying to break through the Hunchun front in the southeast, the 123rd Division (0.35) which fought gallantly on the Sunwu and Aihui fronts in the northeast, the 135th Independent Mixed Brigade (0.1) which maintained its main position,

and the isolated 107th Division (0.6) which fought well until August 29 to maintain the unity of all soldiers on the Arxan front in the west. Also in the west, the 80th Independent Mixed Brigade (0.15) fought strongly, and firmly guarded the Hailar position to the end, and the 15th Border Guard Unit (not included in the previous calculations, but with a fighting power of considerably less than 0.1) in the Hutou position in the eastern area, refused to surrender under an all-out siege by Soviet forces, and continued to fight until August 26, with its soldiers finally dying honorably in defeat. These records of the Japanese in the Showa Era should be treasured in our memories.