

UDC 355.432.1(4)“1945”
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.19.233828

Pavlo TKACHUK

PhD hab. (History), Professor, Rector-Commandant of Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Army Academy, 32 Heroes of Maidan Street, Lviv, Ukraine, postal code 79012 (tkachukpp@ukr.net)

ORCID: 0000-0002-7190-7887

Leonid KRYVYZIUK

PhD (History), Associate Professor, Deputy Head of the Department of Military Training of Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Army Academy, 32 Heroes of Maidan Street, Lviv, Ukraine, postal code 79012 (leonid.krivizuk@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0001-9094-4061

Павло ТКАЧУК

доктор історичних наук, професор, начальник Національної академії сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного, вул. Героїв Майдану, 32, м. Львів, Україна, індекс 79012 (tkachukpp@ukr.net)

Леонід КРИВИЗИЮК

кандидат історичних наук, доцент, заступник завідувача кафедри військової підготовки Національної академії сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного, вул. Героїв Майдану, 32, м. Львів, Україна, індекс 79012 (leonid.krivizuk@gmail.com)

Bibliographic Description of the Article: Tkachuk, P. & Kryvyziuk, L. (2021). The Vistula-Order offensive operation (January 12 – February 7, 1945): Armored and Mechanized troops – the main power of success development. *Skhidnoievropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 19, 174–190. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.19.233828

**THE VISTULA-ODER OFFENSIVE OPERATION (January 12 – February 7, 1945):
ARMORED AND MECHANIZED TROOPS – THE MAIN POWER
OF SUCCESS DEVELOPMENT**

Abstract. *The purpose of the research is to investigate the armored and mechanized troops' combat employment during the Vistula-Oder offensive operation and their contribution to operational art development in the theory and practice of dispersal and large enemy groups destruction. The research methodology is to use a set of methods: dialectical, analytical, historical, biographical, comparative. The methodological approach made it possible to analyze retrospectively the large mobile formations (unit) improvement employing methods while engaging into battle of mobile groups of armies and fronts and during dispersal and large enemy groups destruction, which took place as a single process. As well as the mobile groups' employment during the battle for the tactical zone of the enemy's defense. The scientific novelty of the results is a comprehensive analysis of the process of preparation and conduct of the offensive operation of the two fronts with the use of four tank armies, due to the lack in domestic historiography of special historical generalizations on certain topics within these chronological limits. An objective assessment of the importance of the Vistula-Oder offensive operation for the development of the military art in operations for their massive use of rapid and maneuverable nature, which led to the*

dispersal of the enemy group into parts and their rapid defeat. **The Conclusions.** The Red Army offensive from the Vistula to the Oder was a model of the largest strategic offensive. It developed almost without pauses with an average daily rate of 25 – 30 km per day, and tank armies – up to 70 km. The armored and mechanized troops made a significant contribution to the success of the operation. The tank armies, individual tank and mechanized corps were the main force for the development of success and were a powerful vanguard of the 1st UF and 1st BF, which operated at a significant distance from the combined arms forces. The armored and mechanized troops' combat employment's peculiarity was the use of two tank armies in one operational direction, which increased the strength of the strike groups of the fronts.

Key words: the Vistula-Oder offensive operation, front, tank army, corps.

ВІСЛО-ОДЕРСЬКА НАСТУПАЛЬНА ОПЕРАЦІЯ (12 січня – 7 лютого 1945 р.): БРОНЕТАНКОВІ ТА МЕХАНІЗОВАНІ ВІЙСЬКА – ОСНОВНА СИЛА РОЗВИТКУ УСПІХУ

Анотація. Мета дослідження – дослідити бойове застосування бронетанкових і механізованих військ під час Вісло-Одерської наступальної операції та їх внесок у розвиток оперативного мистецтва з теорії і практики розчленування і знищення крупних угруповань противника. **Методологія дослідження** полягає у використанні сукупності методів: діалектичного, аналітичного, історичного, біографічного, порівняльного. Означений методологічний підхід дав змогу ретроспективно проаналізувати удосконалення способів застосування великих рухомих з'єднань (об'єднань) під час введення у бій рухомих груп армій і фронтів та в ході розчленування і знищення великих угруповань противника, яке відбувалося як єдиний процес. А також використання рухомих груп під час бою за тактичну зону оборони противника. **Наукова новизна** одержаних результатів полягає у комплексному аналізі процесу з підготовки і проведення наступальної операції двох фронтів із застосуванням чотирьох танкових армій, що зумовлено відсутністю у вітчизняній історіографії спеціальних історичних узагальнювальних праць з визначеної тематики у вказаних хронологічних межах. Дано об'єктивну оцінку значення Вісло-Одерської наступальної операції для розвитку воєнного мистецтва в операціях щодо їх масованого застосування зі стрімкого і маневреного характеру, що призвело до розчленування угруповання противника на частини і швидкого їх розгрому. **Висновки.** Наступ військ Червоної армії від Вісли до Одери став зразком найбільшої стратегічної наступальної операції. Вона розвивалася практично без пауз з середньодобовим темпом 25–30 км на добу, а танковими арміями – до 70 км. Значний вклад у досягнення успіху в операції внесли бронетанкові і механізовані війська. Танкові армії, окремі танкові і механізовані корпуси були основною силою розвитку успіху і виступали потужним авангардом 1 УФ і 1 БФ, які діяли на значному відриві від загальновійськових армій. Особливістю бойового застосування бронетанкових і механізованих військ є залучення двох танкових армій на одному оперативному напрямку, чим примножили силу ударних угруповань фронтів.

Ключові слова: Вісло-Одерська наступальна операція, фронт, танкова армія, корпус.

The Problem Statement. During the Belarusian and Lviv-Sandomierz offensive operations in the summer of 1944, the Red Army (CHA) troops defeated large strategic Wehrmacht groups on the central section of the German-Soviet front and reached the border of East Prussia to the Narva River (right tributary of the Vistula).

The troops of the 1st Belarusian Front (1 BF) (Commander, G. K. Zhukov, the Soviet Union Marshal, was appointed on the 16th of November in 1944), operating in Warsaw direction, captured two bridgeheads on the left bank of the Vistula: near Magnuszew and south-west of Puławy. And the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front (1 UF) (Commander, I. S. Konyev, the Soviet Union Marshal), advancing on Lviv-Sandomierz direction, captured a large bridgehead near Sandomierz.

Hence, the Red Army troops withdrawal on the Vistula and the capture of bridgeheads on the left bank of the river created favorable conditions for the offensive in Poznan and Breslau areas (Platonov, 1958, pp. 96–97).

It should be mentioned that Hitler's command paid special attention to the most dangerous for Germany Warsaw-Berlin direction. In order to cover it between the Vistula and the Oder to a depth of 600 km, seven defensive lines were prepared for a long and persistent struggle.

The Red Army troops were replenished with the personnel, military equipment and armaments (PMA) and prepared thoroughly to capture copies of the defensive lines of the German troops built on the ground (Ustinov, 2012 p. 503).

In January at the beginning of 1945, the strategic groups creation was completed. The most powerful was in the direction of the main blow, in particular, in the band, which consisted of the 1st BF, 2nd BF and 1st UF. In the area of 550 km, which accounted for about 25% of the total German-Soviet front, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command rate concentrated 45% of personnel (p), 70% of tanks and self-propelled artillery (icomotive artillery), 43% guns, mortars and warplanes that were part of the active army. The group of mobile troops was especially strong. It consisted of five tank armies out of six, ten separate tank armies (ta) and mechanized corps (mc) out of nineteen. This significantly determined the high maneuverability of troops and the dynamism of offensive operations (Russian archive, 1999, p. 20).

The Analysis of Recent Researches and Publications. Not only historians but also ordinary citizens will always be interested in the German-Soviet War topic, it is still relevant and remains the subject of scientific research by the scientists from different countries. The historiography of the problem of studying the martial arts of the warring parties occupies an important place, as it is quite broad and multifaceted. One of the most numerous is the Soviet historiography and dozens of scientists and researchers covered the issue (Gareev, 1990; Zhilin, 1986; Krivosheev, 1993; Losik, 1979; Lototskii, 1970; Portugalsky, & Runov, 2010; Portugalsky, 2010; Pospelov, 1962; Rotmistrov, 1963; Stokov, 1966; Ustinov, 2012; Shekhovtsov, 1979). The work "The Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War" in four volumes, conducted by the USSR Ministry of Defense General Staff of the Military Science Department of the Military History Department staff, which was previously classified as secret, deserves serious attention. Volume 4 (Platonov, 1958), deals with the preparation and conduct of the Vistula-Oder offensive operation of the 1st BF and 1st UF troops and its impact on the martial arts development. In addition, it is vital to note the massive use of armored and mechanized troops, which gave the offensive a rapid and maneuverable nature. Contributing to the rapid breakthrough of the pre-prepared defense, showed the high art of organizing relentless pursuit to great depths with the forcing of a number of rivers and the capture of large bridgeheads of operational importance.

However, Liddel Hart B., the English military historian, had also quite interesting and opposite opinion concerning the issue (Liddel Hart, 1999). Infantry General of the Army of the Third Reich K. Tippelskirch (Tippelskirch, 1999) in his book, which was written on the basis of personal experience and materials provided by former Wehrmacht generals and officers, gave an important place to the German war with the Soviet Union. Describing the main operations on the Eastern Front, he pointed to the main causes of failures in the war and regarded A. Hitler as the culprit.

A number of works are devoted to the tank troops (Katukov, 1974 *Sovetskie tankovyie voyska 1941 – 1945*, 1973; Rotmistrov, 1972; Radzievskii, 1977), as a kind of troops, which during World War II became extremely powerful, which was entrusted with the major operational tasks. V. Daynes works (Daynes, 2009; Daynes, 2010) were devoted to the armored troops of the Black Sea Fleet, which revealed their history and development, gave an in-depth analysis of their organization, training and combat use of the tank armies during the

German-Soviet War in major operations. Detailed research carried by D. Shein (Shein, 2007; Shein, 2009) was devoted to the battle route of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, one of the first tank armies in the USSR, which passed from Kozelsk to Berlin and Prague. Consequently, the combat operations' analysis in which the army took part, gave us the opportunity to trace the stages of the tank troops management formation.

Furthermore, the prominent Soviet military figures' memories of personal origin sources and especially the direct participants holds an important place in the historiography of the problem, as their data allow to reveal the Red Army activities at the operational and strategic levels (Zhukov, 1983; Katukov, 1974; Krainyukov, 1977; Yakubovsky, 1975). The side view of the enemy was described in the German generals and officers memoirs of (Guderian, 2001; Mellentin, 2005; Hans, 2008).

Additionally, the modern historiography analysis devoted to the period of hostilities during the Vistula-Oder operation can be found in the operational planning documents worked out by the Red Army command in the autumn of 1944 reflected in the 1st BF combat logs (CAMD RF, f. 223, op. 2356, ref. 685) and 1st UF (CAMD RF, f. 236, op. 2673, ref. 2521 (2539); 1st Guards Tank Army (CAMD RF, f. 299, op. 3070, ref. 813); 2nd Guards Tank Army (CAMD RF, f. 307, op. 4148, ref. 369); 3rd Guards Tank Army (CAMD RF, f. 315, op. 4440, ref. 647). Volume 16 (5–4) of the Russian Archive (1999) contains documents and materials that reveal the methodology of decision-making, planning, comprehensive preparation and conduct of strategic and major frontline operations in 1944 – 1945.

In domestic historiography, the research was mainly devoted to the events that took place in Ukraine (Hrytsiuk, 2010; Hrytsiuk, 2015; Kidon, 2018; Panchenko, 2005), and events outside it and a particular type or kind of troops were virtually absent.

The purpose of the publication is to investigate the combat use of armored and mechanized troops during the Vistula-Oder offensive operation and their contribution to the operational art development in the theory and practice of dismemberment and large enemy groups destruction.

The Main Material Statement. The Vistula-Oder strategic offensive operation of the 1st BF and 1st UF troops was carried out with the the 2nd BF left wing troops support and the 4th UF right wing. The purpose of the operation was to defeat Army Group "A", complete the expulsion of the enemy from Poland and create favorable conditions for a decisive strike on the capital of the Nazi Germany, Berlin.

The plan of the operation involved the task of the main forces of the 1st BF and 1st UF powerful deep strikes from the Vistula bridgeheads, the enemy group's dismemberment, its destruction by units and the rapid offensive development in Poznan and Breslav directions (Rotmistrov, 1963, pp. 443–444).

During the period from the 25th of November to the 3rd of December, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command rate gave directives to the fronts to prepare operations in the East Prussian and Warsaw-Berlin areas with a period of readiness for the offensive – on the 20th of January in 1945 (Russian archive, 1999, pp. 174–175, 177–178), and on the 29th of December approved operations' plans for troops of 1st UF and 1st BF (Russian archive, 1999, pp. 185, 187).

On the 6th of January, in connection with the great failure of the Anglo-American troops in the Ardennes, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom W. Churchill addressed J. V. Stalin with a request to provide them with urgent assistance by the Red Army on the offensive "on the Vistula front or somewhere else". The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command

rate postponed the start of the Vistula-Oder operation to the 12th of January (Portugalsky, & Runov, 2010, pp. 5–10).

In order to achieve the goal according to the plan of operation on two fronts, one of the largest offensive groups during the war was created consisting of: all-military armies – 16, air armies (AA) – 2, cavalry corps (CC) – 3, artillery divisions breakthrough (ad) – 12, anti-aircraft artillery divisions (zenads) – 18, artillery brigades (artillery) – 99, guards heavy mortar brigades (g. hmbr) – 6, fortified areas (FA) – 3, etc.

In addition, the groupings of tank troops 1st BF and 1st UF numbered: tank armies (TA) – 4, individual tanks – 5, individual mechanized corps (MC) – 1, individual tank brigades (TBR) – 7, individual tank regiments (TP) and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) – 67.

These formations and associations numbered more than 2,200,000 men, 36,400 guns and mortars, 6,464 tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP), and 4,772 aircraft (Platonov, 1958, p. 98). It should be noted that the supply of land lease played an important role in ensuring the Red Army. In 1944 the Soviet Union received 5,877 aircraft, 3,332 tanks, and 3,122 guns (CAMD RF, f. 35, op. 11325, ref. 530, p. 63).

It was the largest group of tank troops in the entire German-Soviet War to conduct a single offensive operation. Up to 70% of tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) were in tank armies and corps, which were intended for the development of the offensive after the breakthrough of the enemy's defenses, the rest were used for direct support of infantry (DSI) (Sovetskie tankovyie voyska, 1973, p. 241).

English military historian Liddell Garth B. emphasized that due to the increased production of its own tanks, the Red Army increased the number of tank and mechanized corps to develop success. At the same time, the growing number of Joseph Stalin tanks increased the striking power of the Soviet troops. These tanks were fitted with 122-mm guns (the "tiger" tanks had 88-mm guns), and they had thicker armor than the "tigers" (Liddell Hart, 1999, p. 697).

Against the troops of the 1st BF and 1st UF acted Army Group "A" (from the 26th of January – "Center", Commander – Colonel-General J. Harpe, consisting of: the 9th Army (A), the 4th Tank Army (TA) and the main forces 17 Army). In lane the 1st BF defended the 9th Army, the 1st UF – the 4th Tank Army (TA) and 17 Army. The three armies of the Wehrmacht included the following: divisions – 28 (including tank – 4 and motorized – 2), brigades – 2, infantry battalions (ib) – 4–5. The troops of Army Group "A" numbered up to 400 thousand people (including the rear), more than 4,103 guns and mortars, 1,136 tanks and assault guns, supported from the air 1,050 aircraft of the 6th Air Fleet (AF). In the zone of the future offensive, the ratio of forces and means was in favor of the troops of the Red Army: personnel – 5,5: 1, guns and mortars (without anti-aircraft) – 8,6: 1, tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) – 6: 1, aircraft – 4,5: 1 (Platonov, 1958, p. 98).

The Vistula-Oder offensive operation can be divided into two stages. The first (January 12–17) was a breakthrough of the enemy's strategic defense front in a zone of about 500 km, the main forces of Army Group "A" were defeated, and conditions were created for the rapid development of the operation to great depths. The second (January 18 – February 3) the troops 1st BF and the 1st UF with assistance on the flanks of troops the 2nd BF and the 4th UF during the rapid pursuit of the enemy defeated the enemy's reserves, advancing from the depths, captured the Silesian industrial area and went on a wide front to the Oder, capturing a number of bridgeheads on its west bank. As part of the Vistula-Oder operation, the 1st BF conducted Warsaw-Poznan operation, and the 1st UF conducted the Sandomierz-Silesia frontline operation (Daynes, 2010, p. 236).

Sandomierz-Silesian offensive operation (12.01 – 3.02.1945) was carried out by the 1st UF in cooperation with the 1st BF in order to defeat Kielce-Radom group of the enemy, liberate the southern part of Poland, reach the Oder, capture bridgeheads on its left bank and create favorable conditions for conducting operations in Berlin and Dresden areas (Daynes, 2009, p. 535).

Tasks for the 1st UF troops were defined in the directive № 220271 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command rates on the 25th of November in 1944. Defeat in cooperation with the 1st BF Kielce-Radom group of the enemy, no later than 10-11th day of the offensive to seize the border Piotrkow, Radomsko, Czestochowa, Zawiercie, Mechow, Bochnia. Further develop an offensive in the general direction of Kalit. The main blow by forces of five all-military armies, two tank army (TA), four mechanized corps to strike from the Sandomierz bridgehead in the general direction on Khmilnyk, Malogoshch, Radomsko.

According to some resources, the tank armies were used in order to develop success after a breakthrough in the main direction (Russian archive, 1999, pp. 174–175).

Such an attack posed an imminent threat to the enemy's rear, which opposed the 1st BF, and this greatly facilitated the advance of troops to Poznan, as well as keeping all Silesian industrial facilities intact. J. Stalin personally emphasized the preservation of their commander to the 1st UF (Portugalsky, 2010, p. 69).

The task of the troops of the front was proved by the commander of the 1st UF by directive № 001472 (490) / op on the 23rd of December in 1944 the 4th Tank Army (Commander – Colonel-General D. D. Lelyushenko) to make a breakthrough in the area of 13 A. According to the issued directive, the troops were supposed develop the offensive rapidly in the direction of Pierzhchnica, Piekoszow, Rodoszyce, Rozprza, destroy the retreating enemy and the advancing reserves, take the path of retreat of the enemy's Kielce-Radom group. In the area of Lodz to enter into the combat interaction with the troops of the 1st BF.

Furthermore, the troops were supposed to capture the border of the river Charna Nida at the end of the second day of the operation, go to the area of Bobzha, platform. Rykoshin, Nepahluv and contribute to the blow from the northwest of parts 13 A and 3 guards tank army in order to invade Kielce.

At the end of the third day of the operation, the troops were supposed to go to the area of Rodoszyce, Chermno, Mnin, advanced detachments to seize the crossings across the Pyltysia River in the area of Sulejów, Przedbuż, then to reach the area of Piotrkow, Rozpsz, Gożkowice, and by side and reconnaissance detachments to capture road junctions: Konske, Zharnuv. During the offensive to maintain combat interaction with the right flank units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army.

The troops the 3rd Guards Tank Army (Commander – Colonel-General t/v PS Rybalko) was supposed to introduce a breakthrough in the area of 52 A, in particular, to develop rapidly the offensive in the direction of Duzha, Andrzejów, Wloszczow, Radomsko. One corps was supposed to lead in the second echelon of the army on the ledge on the left. The task of the army was to destroy the retreating enemy, to destroy its respective reserves, to prevent the enemy from occupying the prepared defensive lines on the rivers Nida and Pyltysia. The next day they were to go to the area Zarchisce-Duje, Oksa, Naglovice, Andrzejów.

On the third day of the operation, they were obliged to seize Kruzhel, Secemin, and Modzheve districts, and the advanced detachments were due to capture the crossings on the Pyltysia River in Mosty and Kontsepol sections. In the future, the troops were given the order to capture the area of Radomsko, Plavno, Cadów. From the border of the Pyltysia

River, send a strong side detachment to Czestochowa, as well as to conduct reconnaissance to Wodzisław, Szczekociny, and Lelów, establishing combat interaction with 31 TA 5th Guards Tank Army (CAMD RF, f. 236, op. 2673, ref. 2521, pp. 45–52).

On the 12th of January, at 5 o'clock, the reconnaissance began. The advanced battalions attacked the enemy after a 15-minute artillery barrage. As a result, they captured the first trench quickly, the second met with fierce resistance from the enemy. At 10 o'clock the artillery preparations for the attack began. At this time, BT tanks occupied the starting positions in the infantry battle formations, advanced detachments of tank armies and corps advanced into the starting areas 3 km from the front line. The aviation training was not conducted due to poor visibility conditions. At this time, the last raid was inflicted, after which the infantry and tanks went on the offensive. Hence, advancing rapidly the troops moved into the depths of the enemy's defenses by 6 – 8 km, but before the third position met resistance (Lototskii, 1970, p. 307). In order to complete the breakthrough of the tactical zone of defense quickly and the defeat of the enemy's operational reserves at 14 o'clock were introduced the 3rd Guards Tank Army (6 gv. Tk, 7 gv. Tk, 9 mc, 16 sabr, 57 gv. Otp) and the 4th TA (6 gv. Mc, 10 tk, 93 tbr), and also the 4th Guards Tank Army (Commander – Lieutenant General t / v P. P. Poluboyarov), 25 TA (Commander – Major General t / v Ye. I. Fominykh) and the 31st TC (Commander – Major General t / v G. G. Kuznetsov). As the weather improved, they were supported by the 2nd AA aircraft (Daynes, 2009, p. 536).

Before the operation in the 3rd Guards Tank Army numbered 921 tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) (CAMD RF, f. 315, op. 4440, ref. 647, pp. 10–11; ref. 565, p. 2). In order to strengthen the army of Colonel-General D. D. Lelyushenko was added two heavy regiments “IS-2” and several regiments of self-propelled artillery (SAP). There were 680 units in total in the army (Kostiuchenko, 2004 p. 440).

By the 13th of mid-January, the tank and general armies had completed the breakthrough of the main defensive line, and in several areas and the second line, and the advanced detachments of the 3rd Infantry Division went to the river Nida at a depth of 30 km, from the course forced it, capturing several bridgeheads (Rotmistrov, 1963, p. 452).

After forcing Nida the 6th Guards Tank Army and the 7th Guards Tank Army continued the offensive in the western and northwestern directions in order to perform the immediate task, to capture the crossing and the bridgehead on the west bank of the Pylыtsia River. During the 14th and 15th of January 9 mechanised corps remained on the west bank of the Nida in the area of Brzegi-Motkowice, providing access to the west bank of the Nida troops 52 A. The army command feared that the enemy forces of its operational reserves (16 TD, 17 TD and 20 MD) will be able to organize a strike along the river Nida in order to cut off the main forces of the 3rd Guards Tank Army between the Nida and the Pylыtsia, met the troops of 52 A, advancing to the river Nida at pre-prepared positions on the west bank of the river (Shein, 2007, p. 259).

The advanced detachments of the 4th TA, which broke away about 15 – 20 km from the main forces of the army, crossed the Charna Nida River and a counterattack ensued with the advanced units of 24 enemy tanks. Advanced detachments of the first echelon corps – 16 mbr and 63 GTA attacked the enemy in the flank and rear. With decisive action, they disrupted the organized exit of the 24th TA connections to the planned deployment line. The enemy was forced to enter the battle of its main forces not simultaneously but sequentially.

The Commander of the 4th TA units, in particular, the 10th Guards Tank Army, 6 mechanized corps in interaction with the 6th Guards Tank Army and the 3rd Guards Tank Army carried out the maneuver, inflicted flank blows on the 17th tank division (TD) of the enemy,

which was defeated after a fierce battle on the 13th of January. With the approach of 16 TD, it was also chained 49 MBR from the front in the area of Radomice. The main forces of the 4th and 14th of January struck on the right flank of the 16th Infantry Division. The next day, the remains of 24 TK were surrounded and destroyed in the area south of Kielce. The enemy lost up to 180 tanks and assault guns, and a combination of the 4th TA – about 130 tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP). The defeat of a large group of Wehrmacht in an extremely short time helped the 1st UF troops of the left-wing successfully develop an offensive in Krakow direction, and the 1st BF troops using the moment of counter battle struck a powerful blow at the enemy from Magnuszew and Puławy bridgeheads (Radzievskii, 1977, pp. 137–138).

German General K. Tippelskirch described what was happening the follows: “The blow was so strong that it repulsed not only the divisions of the first echelon but also large enough mobile reserves ... Front 4 TA was torn to pieces ... enemy tank formations ... made a comprehensive maneuver on Kielce” (Tippelskirch, 1999, p. 686). And the former colonel-general of the Wehrmacht's tank troops G. Guderian (Chief of the General Staff since July 1944) stated that the breakthrough was successful, and the enemy penetrated deep into our defense, and on January 13 successfully expanded the breakthrough west of Baranov in the direction of the Ring North. The 3rd and 4th Guards Panzer Armies of the Cha entered the battle. On this section of the front, the enemy concentrated thirty-two SD and eight tank corps. This was the strongest group of forces and means during the whole war on a minimally narrow section of the front. (Guderian, 2001, pp. 535–536, 552).

According to the combat report № 0014 and the operational report № 0013 on the 13th of January, the 1st UF captured 900 prisoners in two days of fighting. 40 tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) were destroyed, 379 guns, 116 tanks, about 1,000 cars, ammunition depots, etc. were seized (CAMD RF, f. 236, op. 2673, ref. 2521, pp. 101, 114).

According to the decision of the commander of the 1st UF to the defeat of a group of Wehrmacht troops in the area of Kielce joined 3rd Guards Tank Army and 13A, as well as 25 tank corps and part of the forces of the 4th TA. Supported by aircraft during on the 14 and 15 of January, defeated the enemy and at the end on the 15th of January captured Kielce (Platonov, 1958, pp. 133–134).

In Czesochowa's direction, the 3rd Infantry Division TA, 52A and the 5th Guards Tank Army troops. And pursuing the enemy, they advanced 25 – 30 km and forced the Pilytsia River. The courageous actions of the 2nd Panzer Battalion (TV) (Commander – Major S. V. Khokhryakov) of the 54th Infantry Division deserve special attention 3rd Guards Tank Army, being in the main detachment quickly moved forward, bypassing the enemy's strongholds, skillfully maneuvering on the battlefield, destroying the enemy in its path. Hence, 31 tank corps, operating in the offensive zone of 5 Guards Tank Army forced the river Pilytsia and captured the bridgehead on its left bank, and 59A in interaction with the 4th Guard Tanks Army continued the offensive on Krakow (Pospelov, 1963, pp. 71–72).

At the end of the day on the 17th of January, the troops of the 1st UF defeated the main forces of the 4th TA and in cooperation with the 4th UF defeated 17A of the enemy, advanced 150 km and completed the next task 4–5 days ahead of schedule (Daynes, 2010, p. 434).

The achieved successes created favorable conditions for the development of the offensive on Wrocław and for the attack on the flank and rear of Krakow Wehrmacht group (Platonov, 1958, p. 135).

As a result of the fighting on the 17th of January, the troops of the front occupied 910 settlements, including the cities of Wierzbno, Sulehów, Kamieński, Skała, Wolbrom,

and Pylytsia. During the day, more than 3,000 captured Germans were taken prisoner, including the headquarters and commander of 17 Tank Divisions – Colonel Brooks, as well as 200 guns, up to 50 tanks, etc. (CAMD RF, f. 236, op. 2673, ref. 2521, p. 176).

The Red Army troops' rapid deep breakthrough was a complete surprise to the Wehrmacht leadership. General I. Harpe, accused of the catastrophe on the Vistula, was removed from command of Army Group A and replaced by General F. Scherner; General T. Busse was appointed commander of 9A instead of the removed General S. Luttwitz (Shekhovtsov, 1979, p. 75).

In order to thwart the enemy's plan, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command rate on the 17th of January (directive № 11 006) clarified the plan of further actions 1 UF – to develop an offensive on Wrocław, no later than on the 30th of January to reach the Oder and capture the bridgeheads on its left bank, no later than on the 20th – 22th of January to capture Krakow, then to advance in the direction of the Dombrowski coal basin (Russian archive, 1999, pp. 190–191).

The commander of the front, without delaying the preparation, after receiving the directive gave the order to conduct further hostilities (Krainyukov, 1977, p. 415), (directive № 0024 / op) ordered the troops 3rd Guards TA and 4th Guards TA pursue the enemy rapidly, smash the reserves, rear, headquarters, so as not to give the enemy the opportunity to occupy and gain a foothold on the prepared defensive lines on the eastern border of Germany. Troops of the 4th TA were invited to seize the Ravich and Trachenberg frontiers by the end of the day on the 25th of January. In the future, be ready to force the Oder to the northwest of Wrocław (Kireev, 1976, p. 96).

The Wehrmacht command withdrew its remnants 4 TA and 17 A (up to eight divisions, including one tank) to the west, seeking to organize the defense of the Silesian industrial area (Platonov, 1958, p. 153).

In addition, while carrying out the task, the troops of the right-wing of the 1st UF developed a rapid offensive in the direction of Wrocław. On the left-wing of the army 59 A, 60 A and 4th guards Tank Army on the 19th of January captured Krakow. In the area of Keben part of 6 mechanized corps on the 25th of January forced the river and captured the bridgehead to 30 km along the front and up to 15 km in depth. The troops 4 TA, pursuing the enemy, on the morning on the 24th of January, went to the Oder ((Daynes, 2010, p. 435).

The troops' 3rd guards Tank Army on the 18th of January, the offensive resumed. On 19th of January, 55 guards Tank Army 7 guards Tank Army, 53 guards Tank Army 6 guards Tank Army in cooperation with compounds 52 A occupied Wielun. 91 guards Tank Army 9 mechanized corps interaction with 69 mbr up to 12 hours. On the 19th of January, Osyakuv took over. After the 91st guards Tank Army captured the bridgehead on the left bank of the Warta River and held the crossing (CAMD RF, f. 3442, op. 1, ref. 81, p. 35). And at noon on the 20th of January took possession of Zlochev (CAMD RF, f. 3442, op. 1, ref. 81, p. 35). And at noon on the 20th of January took possession of Zlochev (CAMD RF, f. 315, op. 4440, ref. 647, p. 71).

Furthermore, the German command did everything in its power to keep Silesia, a powerful military industrial base. Fierce battles broke out on the approaches to it. The advance of the 1st UF troops slowed down. On the night of the 20th – 21st January, the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division TA received information about strong enemy resistance on the former German-Polish border.

The commander of the 1st UF on the 21st January returned to the 3rd Guards Tank Army. And to the south and set a task: to strike along the eastern bank of the Oder, to capture Oppeln and cut off the enemy's escape routes to the river. The troops of the 3rd Guards Tank

Army executing the order inflicted a flank blow on the enemy group, which acted before the 5th Guards Tank Army. And the rapid exit to the Oppeln area cut off the communications of the Silesian enemy group. The Red Army troops hovered over the entire enemy group in Silesia, which forced the Wehrmacht command to hastily withdraw troops in front of the 5th Infantry Division (Platonov, 1958, p. 154). During the day, the troops of the front advanced up to 30 km, in the depths of Germany – 23 km (CAMD RF, f. 236, op. 2673, ref. 2521, p. 9, 10 (t. 2)). And on the 23rd January, they captured the city of Oppeln. By their actions, the tankers contributed to the rapid exit to the Oder in the 5th Guards Tank Army. And, which after the crossing consolidated the achieved success.

As a result, rapid maneuver of the 3rd guards Tank Army and to the south and the blow to the enemy's rear was unexpected for the German command, and this forced to send against the tank army significant forces from Silesian group.

After the liberation of Oppeln 3rd guards Tank Army received a new task with a swift blow in the direction of Bischofstal, Nicholas to go to the rear of the main Silesian group and by the end on 24th of January to capture the area of Rybnik, Nicholas, and then attack Yavozhno, to meet troops 59 A, and part of the forces the east bank of the Oder in the direction of Rybnik and prevent the approach of enemy reserves from the west and southwest (Rotmistrov, 1963, p. 463).

Moreover, the 7th Guards Tank Army overcoming the fierce resistance of the enemy on the north bank of the river Klodnitsa, occupying Bischofstal, crossed the river and about 2 hours. On the 25th of January, he continued his movement in the direction of Rybnik, and at 9 p.m. Gleiwitz took possession on the 24th of January. The 7th Infantry Division was able to reach Rybnik only on the morning of the 27th of January, and the 9th Infantry Division met fierce resistance from the enemy, was forced to stop. The current situation forced the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division to enter into battle the second echelon (6th Infantry Division), which was tasked with reaching the western outskirts of Katowice.

Despite the resistance of the enemy, on the 27th of January, they managed to occupy the area of Mykolayi, Vyry, with a 9 mechanized corps connection. Due to the vigorous actions of the mobile troops, the roads through which part of Silesian group left the encirclement were blocked. In order not to damage the industrial area, the commander of the 1st UF decided to leave the passage for the enemy so that he could go to the south and southwest, where it was planned to defeat him in open combat. For three days the troops of 3rd guards Tank Army destroyed certain groups of the enemy in the areas of Rybnik and Nikolay. Hence, on the 30th of January by order of the commander of 3rd guards Tank Army began the withdrawal of the 6th guards Tank Army and the 7th guards Tank Army from the battle in the Gross Strelitz area began to put the mat unit in order ((Daynes, 2010, pp. 437–439).

On the morning of the 25th of January, the advanced units of the 4th TA crossed the Oder and, after a fierce battle, captured the northern outskirts of Keben. Later, artillery and part of the 6th Infantry Division tanks were transferred to the bridgehead. At the end of the 28th of January, the main forces of the corps, in cooperation with the 13 A formations, overcame the enemy and reached the frontier of Bredelwitz, Queisen, Deisklau, and Hochbauschwitz. Hence, on the 29th of January at the site 6 mechanised corps crossed the 10th guards Tank Army went on the offensive, during the fierce fighting together with the 147th Rifle Division (RD) 13 A occupied Steinau (Daynes, 2010, p. 505).

The offensive of the 1st UF forces forced the enemy to retreat hastily through the abandoned passage. On the 29th of January, Silesian industrial area was completely cleared of German troops (Lototskii, 1970, p. 314).

Thus, the 1st UF troops defeated 4 TA and the main forces of the 17A Wehrmacht, in cooperation with the 1st BF and the 4th UF liberated the southern regions of Poland, including Silesian industrial area and moved the fighting to the territory of Germany.

The Sandomierz-Silesian operation is an example of a deep front operation. The troops of the 1st UF advanced 400–500 km. Success was achieved through the massive use of forces and means, which contributed to a powerful blow during the breakthrough and the development of the offensive to great depths with the forcing of a number of rivers.

The tasks for the troops of the 1st BF to conduct the Warsaw-Poznan operation were defined in the directive № 220275 VGK rates on the 28th of November in 1944. The immediate task of the front: to defeat the Warsaw-Radom group of the enemy and no later than 11–12th day of the offensive to capture the border Łódź. Further, develop the offensive in the general direction of Poznan. The main blow by the forces of four general armies, two TA, one KK to strike from the bridgehead on the river Pyltsia in the general direction on Białobrzegi, Skierniewice, Kutno. Part of the forces (at least one army and one or two TC) to advance in a northwesterly direction in order to break through the enemy's defenses in front of the right-wing of the front and with the assistance of 2 BF defeat the Warsaw group of the enemy and capture Warsaw.

The second blow was planned to be struck by the forces of two armies, two tank corps and one KK from the bridgehead southwest of Pulawy in the direction of Radom, Tomaszów, and Łódź. Part of the forces to attack in the direction of Shidlovets, towards the blow of the 1st UF in order to interact with the latter to defeat the Kielce-Radom group of the enemy (Russian archive, 1999, pp. 177–178).

Taking into account the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the Commander of the 1st BF decided to strike the main blow from the Magnushev bridgehead with forces of 61 A, 5th Shock Army (ShA), 8 Guard Army, 3 Shock Army (ShA), the 1st Guard Tank Army (Commander – Colonel-General t / v M. Ye. Katukov), the 2nd Guards Tank Army (Commander – Colonel-General S. I. Bogdanov) and KK in the direction of Kutno.

The 1st Guard Tank Army received the task of the operation on the 2nd of January: “A rapid exit to the northern bank of the Pyltsia River, and later to the river Bzura in the area of Lowicz to ensure the 1st BF success from the encirclement and destruction of the Warsaw group of the enemy: to destroy enemy reserves their connection with the besieged Warsaw group. With the withdrawal of the army in the area of Kutno to take a starting position for the development of the offensive on Poznan” (Katukov, 1974, p. 340).

The 2nd Guards Tank Army after forcing troops of the 5th Shock Army (ShA) river Pyltsya, was tasked to cross the river and enter the breakthrough in the area: Gniejewice, Goszczyn, striking the rear of the Warsaw group of the enemy, in the general direction of Mszczonow, Zyrardów, Sokhaczew, Gostytin and capture the following territories: on the first day – Oddzial, Zhirarduv, Volya Penkoshevskaya, and with strong advanced detachments (AD) to capture airfields and crossings across the river Bzura (near Sokhachev), on the second day – Kirshteinov, Rybno, Zakshev, Dembuvska; on the third day – Sanniki, Guri, Gostynin, Strzelce, Luszyn. In the future – to attack Koval, Brzeszc-Kujawski, Radzejow, Inowroclaw (CAMD RF, f. 307, op. 4148, ref. 369, pp. 2–3).

On the 14th of January, troops of the 1st BF went on the offensive. From the Magnushevsky and Pulavsky bridgeheads, after 25 minutes of artillery training of all artillery of shock groups, 22 advanced battalions and 25 infantry companies went on the offensive. The combat reconnaissance with such powerful artillery support was used for the first time. Advanced

battalions for two hours of combat wedged into the enemy's defense for 2 – 3 km. Using the achieved success, the 1st BF Commander introduced the main forces into battle (Rotmistrov, 1963, p. 455).

On the first day of the offensive, troops advancing from the Magnushev bridgehead wedged themselves into the enemy's defense up to 12 km. In parts of 26 Guards Rifle Corps (RC) 5 Guards Shock Army captured a 60-ton bridge across the Pylыtsia River, which was later crossed by tanks of the 2nd Guards Tank Army (9 Guards Tank Army, 12 Guards Tank Army, 1 mechanized corps, 6 Guards Tank Army). There were 840 tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) in the army (CAMD RF, f. 307, op. 4148, ref. 369, p. 2).

To develop the achieved success, 11 tank corps (Commander – Major General T / V I. I. Yushchuk) and 9 tank corps (Commander – Lieutenant General T / V I. F. Kyrychenko) were put into battle. Overcoming the enemy's resistance, the 69 A and 33 A troops, in cooperation with the tank corps, broke through the tactical defense zone at the end of the day and advanced 22 km. BP tank groups played an important role in breaking through the enemy's defenses. For example: only in one 69 A per 1 km of the front the number of tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) was 312 SD 42 units, 134 SD 23, 274 SD 36, 77 sd – 15 (Losik, 1979, p. 105).

On the morning of the 15th of January, the German command, seeking to stop the troops of the Red Army, brought into battle from its reserve the main forces of 40 tank corps, which were defeated and repulsed (Lototskii, 1970, p. 309). On the 15th of January, at a depth of 15 km, it was put into action in the 8th lane and the 1st Guards Tank Army (8 mechanized corps, 11 Guards tank army, 64 Guards Tbr, 19 sabr, 11 Guards Vtp) (Gareev, 1990, p. 16) and was tasked to develop an offensive on Łódz, and later on Poznan (Zhukov, 1983, p. 179).

By the end of the day, the advanced units of the army had advanced to a depth of 25 km and captured the crossing over the Pylыtsia River in Sokul area. Hence, the 8th Guards Tank Army used the success of the tankers and by the end of the day fought on the front Bialobrzegi, Mokrosek, (excl.) Edlinsk, (excl.) Stanislawice.

11 tank corps 69 A in interaction with 25 armed corps by the end of the day broke into the eastern outskirts of Radom, advanced units of 9 tank corps, which was introduced in the strip 33 A, also approached the town of Radom.

During the two days of the offensive, the 1st BF strike groups broke through the enemy's tactical defense zone to its full depth and defeated the troops of the 8th Army Corps (AC), 56 Tank Corps and 40 Tank Corps. The breakthrough reached up to 30 km in the area of the Magnuszew bridgehead and 50 km in the Pulawy bridgehead. By the end of the 15th of January, the breakthrough areas on the bridgeheads merged.

According to the 1st BF Commander's decision, the main efforts of the front troops were focused on completing the defeat of the main forces of the 9 A enemy and the development of the offensive in Łódz direction (Platonov, 1958, pp. 140–141).

The troops of the 1st Guards Tank Army developing the offensive in the western direction, they repulsed the enemy and went to the Pylыtsia River for up to 20 hours. On the 16th of January, the main forces crossed the river and captured the Nowe Miasto (CAMD RF, f. 299, op. 3070, ref. 813, p. 33).

On the 16th of January from the bridgehead on the river Pylыtsya was put into battle 2nd Guards Tank Army (Strokov, 1966, pp. 476–477). At the end of the day, the main forces of the 2nd Guards Tank Army went to Sokhachev in the rear of Warsaw group of the enemy and cut off his escape to the west. The tank armies were supported from the air by pilots of 16 AFs.

The tank armies successful actions contributed to the liberation on the 17th of January by the troops of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, 61 A and 47 A, the capital of Poland – Warsaw. All-military armies after overcoming the tactical zone of defense and the introduction into battle of the 1st Guards Tank Army and the 2nd Guards Tank Army sought to expand the breakthrough front and quickly eliminate the enemy's hotbeds of resistance. And in order to prevent separation from the tank armies, they were followed by mobile units from the tank units that supported the infantry previously (Daynes, 2010, p. 243).

On the sixth day of the offensive of the 1st BF troops and on the fourth 1 UF, an operational breakthrough of the enemy's defense was made at the front 500 km and to a depth of 100–160 km. The troops of the fronts defeated the main forces of Army Group A, seized large industrial centers and important strongholds of the enemy's areas: Warsaw, Radom, Kielce, Radomsko, Czestochowa, and so on. Thus, favorable conditions were created for the rapid development of the operation at great depth and at a high rate (Platonov, 1958, pp. 143–144). Given the rapid development of the operation, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command rate clarified the tasks of the fronts on the 17th of January. As a result, the 1st BF received the task to seize the border Bydgoszcz-Poznan not later than on the 2nd–4th February (Zhukov, 1983, p. 184).

At the end of the 17th of January, the 1st BF Commander, assessing the situation, ordered the tank armies and individual tank corps and armed corps to enter the line of Tork, Kolo, Warta as soon as possible, to anticipate the reserves in capturing the prepared lines of defense. The tank armies and tank corps were due to reach the specified border no later than in three days. Hence, the 1st Guard Tank Army left a slight cover from the side of Łódź and moved the main forces to the west rapidly. The shore of the Warta River. The 9 tank corps and 11 tank corps to bypass Łódź from the south, also to advance on the river Warta, and to capture Kochatkysh with advanced parts. The cavalry corps to follow the tank troops (CAMD RF, f. 299, op. 3070, ref. 813, p. 37).

The troops of the 1st Guards Tank Army continuing the offensive in the west and north-west. pursuing scattered the enemy's groups, on the 23rd of January they fought for the city and the fortress of Poznan. The next day, the main forces went to the frontier: Klein, Glenin, Ovinskaya, Tsavada, Ratay (east bank of the Warta River), destroyed the enemy, prepared a crossing over the Warta River for the tankers. The units that crossed the river decided to cut the roads in order to prevent the enemy's departure from the Poznan area to the north, south and south-west (CAMD RF, f. 299, op. 3070, ref. 813, p. 52).

The 2nd Guards Tank Army continued the offensive, broke the enemy's resistance on the west bank of the river Bzura, on the 18th of January crossed the river developed a rapid offensive in the north-west direction and up to 17 hours after fighting more than 30 km, they captured a large settlement and a railway and highway junction of roads – Lovych, large n.p. Kernozya, Lyushin, Lazniki, Osmolin, Sanniki (CAMD RF, f. 307, op. 4148, ref. 369, pp. 16, 18).

The pace of persecution increased. After overcoming the third (guard) defensive line in the east, the tank armies reached the fourth (Poznan) by the 22nd of January. The next day 2nd Guards Tank Army with the 2nd guards KK mastered the city of Bigdosh. The tank armies broke away from the general army up to 100 km, and from their supply bases – up to 350 km (Lototskii, 1970, p. 311).

The 2nd Guards Tank Army in the area of Shubin and the 1st Guards Tank Army in Poznan area were forced to stop due to lack of fuel. During this time, they were approached by general armies.

The Wehrmacht troops at all costs sought to stop the Red Army's troops offensive in Berlin direction. From the 23rd of January, 1st Infantry Division and the 2nd Infantry Division

troops were conducting intense battles in order to break through the Poznan defensive line, the Pomeranian shaft and the Mezeret UR for several days (Daynes, 2009, p. 544).

The 1st BF troops continued a successful offensive. On the 28th of January connection the 2nd Infantry Division on the move overcame the fortifications of the Pomeranian Wall. On the morning of the 31st of January, the advanced detachment of 1 mechanized corps (219 TBR) reached the Oder north of Kustrin, near Kinitz.

After heavy fighting on the 29th of January, the 1st Infantry Division troops overcame the Odra River, entering the German territory. The advanced detachment of the 11th Guards Tank Army (44 GV TBR), went to the Oder and captured the bridgehead on its left bank near Heritz. With the approach to the river of all military armies the 1st Guards Tank Army and the 2nd Guards Tank Army were withdrawn from battle and regrouped on the right-wing of the front, where they took part in the defeat of the Pomeranian enemy group (Daynes, 2010, p. 343).

On the 1st of February, the 1st BF troops continued the offensive, on the right flank fought fierce battles with the enemy, who defended zealously, in the center went to the Oder, part of the forces forced the river and fought to expand the bridgehead, breaking the left flank against the enemy areas, the advanced units of mobile troops reached the east bank of the Oder, southeast of Frankfurt (CAMD RF, f. 223, op. 2356, ref. 685, p. 25).

In early February, the fiercest fighting took place on the Oder River. By the 3rd of February, the troops of the front (5 UA, 8 Guards Army, 69 A and 33 A, 1st Guards Tank Army and the 2nd Guards Tank Army) reached the Oder River in the strip from Ceden to the Glogau district (demarcation line with the 1st UF). The struggle for the expansion of bridgeheads on the Oder was extremely intense. The enemy carried out 5 – 7 counterattacks daily with force from a company of up to two battalions each. And all this was complicated by the temporary advantage of the enemy in the air, due to the lack of airfields near the Oder River for the Red Army aircraft.

With the 1st BF troops withdrawal on the Oder River and the capture of bridgeheads on its left bank, its frontline operation was successfully completed.

These were extremely difficult times for the German command. There was a lack of material and human resources, the divisions were turned into combat groups. “Elderly people and boys aged 14 and 15 are being driven to Volkssturm conscription stations. The last reserves?” The losses of only 21 tons from the 6th of June in 1944 to the end of January in 1945 reached 15 thousand (Hans, 2008, pp. 378–379).

The Red Army troops defeated groups of Wehrmacht troops covering Berlin area. To stop the 1st UF and 1st BF offensive, the German command was forced to abandon offensive operations against Anglo-American troops in the West and sent 29 divisions and 4 brigades to Poland, but this did not save the enemy from a crushing defeat (Zhilin, 1986, pp. 264–265). A total of 35 divisions were destroyed during the lightning operation, and 25 suffered heavy losses. The Red Army losses amounted to only 193,125 people, of which 43,251 – irreversible, tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) – 1,267, the average daily – 56 (Krivosheev, 1993, pp. 213, 372).

In his memoirs about the events of early 1945, former Wehrmacht general Friedrich von Mellenthin, describing the Red Army’s actions during the offensive in Poland, does not hide his emotions “It is impossible to describe everything that happened between the Vistula and Oder in the first months of 1945. Europe has known nothing like this since the fall of the Roman Empire” (Mellentin, 2005, p. 413).

480 formations and units of the Black Sea Fleet were awarded the honorary titles of Warsaw, Łódz, Krakow and others. The 4 TA for the stability and courage shown by

the personnel, and skillful execution of combat missions was renamed into the Guards (Rotmistrov, 1972, p. 105).

The Concussions. The Red Army offensive from the Vistula to the Oder was a model of the largest strategic offensive operation. It developed almost without pauses with an average daily rate of 25 – 30 km per day, and tank armies – up to 70 km.

The Vistula-Oder operation was characterized by a decisive form of combat operations – inflicting powerful frontal strikes on various sections of the front, carried out at considerable depths and at high speeds, and this allowed to quickly break through the enemy's defenses, dismember his strategic group and destroy each. At the same time part of the troops of the fronts through the rapid development of a breakthrough in the flanks reliably provided the main forces of the flanks from the north and south.

Armored and mechanized troops made a significant contribution to the success of the operation. Their widespread use added to the offensive actions rapid and maneuverable. The introduction into battle of several powerful mobile groups at the beginning of the offensive led to the dismemberment of the enemy group into parts and their rapid defeat. The tank armies, individual tank and mechanized corps were the main force for the development of success and were a powerful vanguard of the 1st UF and the 1st BF, which operated at a significant distance from the all-military armies.

The tank corps were put into battle on the first day of the offensive, used to complete the breakthrough of the mainline of defense, which provided a high rate of overcoming the tactical zone of the enemy's defense. Tank armies of the 1st UF were put into battle on the first day of the operation before the third position of the mainline of defense, and the 1st BF – on the second or third day after the breakthrough of the tactical zone. The peculiarity of the combat use of armored and mechanized troops is the use of two tank armies in one operational direction, which increased the strength of the strike groups of the fronts. Especially the tankers showed themselves in the pursuit of the enemy.

The tank armies of three-corps had a two-tier structure, and two-corps – in one echelon, allocating strong reserves. Their introduction was planned in a strip of 12-16 km by four routes. Separate tank corps were built in two echelons with the allocation of reserves. The launch was planned on two routes in the 6-7 km lane. In the tank armies, the advanced detachment as a part of the reinforced TBR was allocated from each corps of the first echelon, and the tank army was separated from the individual tank army. Mobile groups were created in those armies in which the tank armies did not operate.

The BP tanks played an important role in increasing the striking power of infantry units. Their density was the 1st UF 21, and the 1st BF – 25 units on 1 km of the front. The use of BP tanks had its own peculiarities. According to the requirements of Order № 325 issued on the 16th of October in 1942, individual tank formations and units were used centrally, and in this operation tanks and self-propelled artillery regiments (SAP) were added to the infantry battalions. The individual tanks were assigned to the infantry platoons. Such use of BP tanks became possible due to their increase and acquisition of skills of commanders of infantry units.

Acknowledgements. The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to all members of the editorial board for the given advice during the preparation of the article for publishing.

Funding. The authors did not receive financial assistance for research, preparation and publication of the article.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Daines, V.** (2009). *Bronetankovyie voiska Krasnoi Armii [Bronetankovyie voiska Krasnoy Armii]*. Moskva: Yauza: Eksmo, 640 p. [in Russian]
- Daines, V.** (2010). *Sovetskie tankovyie armii v boiu [Soviet tank armies in combat]*. Moskva: Yauza: Eksmo, 800 p. [in Russian]
- Gareev, M. A.** (1990). *Boevoi sostav Sovetskoi armii. Chast V. (Ianvar-sentiabr 1945 g.) [Combat composition of the Soviet Army. Part V. (January-September 1945)]*. Moskva: Voenizdat. 216 p. [in Russian]
- Guderian, H.** (2001). *Vospominaniia soldata [Erinnerungen eines Soldaten]*. Smolensk: "Rusich", 446 p. [in Russian]
- Hans, von Luke.** (2008). *Na ostrye tankovoho klyna. Vospomynaniya ofytsera pantservaffe [On the tip of a tank wedge. Memories of a Panzerwaffe officer]*. Moskva: Yauza: Exmo, 544 p. [in Russian]
- Hrytsiuk, V.** (2015). *Stratehichni ta frontovi operatsii na terytorii Ukrainy u 1943 – 1944 rokakh [Strategic and frontline operations on the territory of Ukraine in 1943 – 1944]* [V. M. Hrytsiuk, O. E. Lysenko, R. I. Pylyavets, S. V. Sydorov]; resp. ed. O. E. Lysenko. Kyiv, 508 p. [in Ukrainian]
- Hrytsiuk, V.** (2010). *Stratehichni ta frontovi operatsii Velykoi Vitchyznianoï viiny na terytorii Ukrainy [Strategic and frontline operations of the Great Patriotic War on the territory of Ukraine]*. Kyiv, 150 p. [in Ukrainian]
- Katukov, M.** (1974). *On the tip of the main strike [Na ostrie glavnogo udara]*. Moskva: Voenizdat, 429 p. [in Russian]
- Kidon, V.** (2018). *Kyivska nastupalna operatsiia 1943 roku: istoriohrafia [Kyiv offensive operation of 1943: historiography]*. (PhD tesis). Kyiv, 417 p. [in Ukrainian]
- Kireev, N.** (1976). Forsyrovanye Odera 4-y tankovoi armiei [Forcing the Oder by the 4th Panzer Army]. *Voenna-ystorycheskyi zhurnal – Military History Journal*, 4. [in Russian]
- Kostiuchenko, S. A.** (2004). *Kak sozdavalasia tankovaia moshch Sovetskoho Soiuza [How the tank power of the Soviet Union was created]*. In 2 books. Book 2. Moskva: AST Publishing House LLC; SPb.: LLC "Polygon Publishing House", 559 p. [in Russian]
- Krainyukov, K. V.** (1977). *Oruzhye osobovogo roda [Weapons of a special kind]*. Moskva: Voenizdat, 671 p. [in Russian]
- Krivosheev, G.** (1993). *Grif sekretnosti snyat: Poteri Vooruzhennyih Sil SSSR v voynah, boevyih deystviyah i voennyih konfliktah: Statisticheskoe issledovanie [Secrecy eliminated: Losses of the Armed Forces of the USSR in wars, hostilities and military conflicts: Statistical study]*. Moskva: Voenizdat, 415 p. [in Russian]
- Liddell Garth, B. G.** (1999). *Vtoraia mirovaia voina [World War II]*. Moskva: AST, SPb.: Terra Fantastica, 926 p. [in Russian]
- Losik, O.** (1979). *Stroitelstvo i boevoe primeneniye sovetskikh voysk v godyi Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyni [Construction and combat use of Soviet troops during the Great Patriotic War]*. Moskva: Voenizdat, 414 p. [in Russian]
- Lototskii, S. S.** (Ed.). (1970). *History of wars and military art. Textbook for higher military educational institutions [History of wars and military art. Textbook for higher military educational institutions]*. Moskva: Military Publishing, 560 p. [in Russian]
- Mellentín, F. V.** (2005). *Tankovyie srazheniya 1939 – 1945 gg: boevoe primeneniye tankov vo Vtoroi mirovoi voine [Tank battles of 1939 – 1945: combat employment of tanks in World War II]*. Moskva: AST; St. Petersburg: Polygon, 437 p. [in Russian]
- Panchenko, P. P.** (2005). *Ukraina v polumi viiny. 1941 – 1945 [Ukraine in the flames of war. 1941 – 1945]*. Kyiv: Ukraine, 560 p. [in Ukrainian]
- Platonov, S. P.** (Ed.). (1958). *Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennyih Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voine 1941 – 1945 gg. [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War 1941 – 1945]*. Vol. 4. Moskva, 872 p. [in Russian]
- Portugalsky, R. & Runov, V.** (2010). *1945. Blitzkrieg Krasnoi Armii [1945. Blitzkrieg of the Red Army]*. Moskva: Eksmo: Yauza, 384 p. [in Russian]
- Portugalsky, R.** (2010). *"Kotly" 45-go ["Entrapments" 1945]*. Moskva: Yauza: Eksmo. 384 p. [in Russian]

Pospelov, P. N. (Ed.). (1962). *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyni Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941 – 1945 gg.* [History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941 – 1945]. Vol. 4. Moskva: Voenizdat, 726 p. [in Russian]

Radzievskii, A. (1977). *Tankovyi udar: tankovaia armiia v nastupatelnoi operatsii fronta po opytu Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* [Tank strike: the tank forces in an front offensive operation based on the experience of the Great Patriotic War]. Moskva: Military Publishing, 290 p. [in Russian]

Rotmistrov, P. A. (1972). *Vremia i tanki* [Time and tanks]. Moskva: Military Publishing, 336 p. [in Russian]

Rotmistrov, P. A. (Ed.). (1963). *Istoriya voennogo iskusstva* [History of military art]. Vol. 2. Moskva: Voenizdat, 720 p. [in Russian]

Russian archive. (1999). *Velikaia Otechestvennaia: Stavka VGK: Dokumenty i materialy: 1944 – 1945* [The Great Patriotic War: Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials: 1944 – 1945]. Vol. 16 (5–4). Moskva: TERRA, 368 p. [in Russian]

Shein, D. (2007). *Tanki vedet Rybalko. Boevoy put 3-y Gvardeyskoy tankovoy armii* [The tanks are being led by Rybalko. Combat path of the 3rd Guards Tank Army]. Moskva: Yauza; Eksmo, 320 p. [in Russian]

Shein, D. (2009). *Tankovaya gvardiya v boyu* [Tank guard in battle]. Moskva: Yauza; Eksmo, 480 p. [in Russian]

Shekhovtsov, N. I. (1979). *Istoriia Vtoroi mirovoi voiny 1939 – 1945 gg.* [History of the Second World War 1939 – 1945]. Vol. 10. Moskva: Voenizdat, 544 p. [in Russian]

Sovetskie tankovyye voyska. (1973). *Sovetskie tankovyye voyska 1941 – 1945. Voенно-istoricheskiy ocherk* [Soviet tank troops 1941–1945. Military history sketch]. Moskva: Voenizdat, 334 p. [in Russian]

Strokov, A. A. (Ed.). (1966). *Istoriya voennogo iskusstva* [History of military art]. Moskva: Voenizdat, 656 p. [in Russian]

The Tsentral'nyy arkhive Ministerstva oborony Rossiyskoy federatsii [The Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation – **CAMD RF**]

Tippelskirch, K. (1999). *Istoriia Vtoroi mirovoi voiny* [History of the World War II]. Moskva: AST, 796 p. [In Russian].

Ustinov, V. I. (2012). *Politicheskie tainy Vtoroi mirovoi* [Political secrets of the Second World War]. Moskva: Algorithm, 576 p. [in Russian]

Yakubovsky, I. (1975). *Zemlia v ogne* [Earth on fire]. Moskva: Military Publishing house, 567 p. [in Russian]

Zhilin, P. A. (ed.) (1986). *Istoriya voennogo iskusstva* [History of military art]. Moskva: Military Publishing, 446 p. [in Russian]

Zhukov, G. K. (1983). *Vospominaniya i razmyishleniya. T. 3* [Memories and Reflections. Vol. 3]. Moskva: Izdatelstvo Aгенstva pečhati Novosti, 352 p. [in Russian]

*The article was received May 16, 2020.
Article recommended for publishing 19/05/2021.*