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STALIN'S BLUNDER OF THE SOVIET DOMINATION OF EUROPE

Annotation. The views of V. Suvorov and his opponent A. Isaev on the events of World War II have been considered. A series of factors, materials of archives that point out the problems related to this topic have been analyzed. Based on the findings of the research a conclusion has been drawn about the correctness of the discourses of well-known historians and the impact of their views on the modern perception of the events of World War II.

Анотація. Розглянуто погляди В. Суворова і його опонента А. Ісаєва на події Другої світової війни. Проаналізовано ряд факторів, матеріалів архівів, що вказують на проблематику цієї теми. За результатами проведених досліджень зроблено висновок про коректність міркувань відомих істориків і вплив їх поглядів на сучасне сприйняття подій Другої світової війни.

Аннотация. Рассмотрены точки зрения В. Суворова и его оппонента А. Исаева на события Второй мировой войны. Проанализирован ряд факторов, материалов архивов, указывающих на проблематику данной темы. По результатам проведенных исследований сделан вывод о корректности рассуждений известных историков и влиянии их взглядов на современное восприятие событий Второй мировой войны.

Keywords: Suvorov, the USSR plan, World War II, Antisuvorov, military state-power, the USSR preponderance, a prompt assault.

Nowadays, there are a lot of discussions that are centered around the point that Hitler attacked the Soviet Russia in June 1941 just as Stalin was preparing to overwhelm Germany and western Europe as part of a well-planned operation aiming to liberate all of Europe by bringing it under the communist rule.

The article analyzes three historical books, "Icebreaker" by V. Suvorov, "The Day M" by W. Mann and C. Yeage, "The Last Republic" by V. Suvorov which represent the actual strategy of Hitler and Stalin and real forces of the USSR and Germany in the time of World War II. According to these books when Hitler launched his "Barbarossa Operation", an attack against Soviet Russia on June 22, 1941, the German forces were able to inflict enormous losses on the Soviets precisely because the Red troops were much better prepared for the war – the aggressive war planned for early July – not the defensive war forced on them by Hitler's preemptive strike.

In "Icebreaker", the deployment of the Soviet forces in June 1941 is presented in detail, describing just how Stalin amassed vast numbers of troops and stores of weapons along the European frontier, not to defend the Soviet homeland but in preparation for a westward attack and decisive battles on the enemy's territory.

Thus, when German forces struck, the bulk of the Red land and air forces were concentrated along the Soviet western borders facing contiguous European countries, especially the German Reich and Romania, in the final readiness for an assault on Europe.

In the second book on the origins of the war, "The Day M" (for "Mobilization Day"), it is shown that between late 1939 and summer of 1941, Stalin methodically and systematically built up the best armed, most powerful military force in the world – actually the world first superpower – for his planned conquest of Europe. Therefore, Stalin's drastic conversion of the country's economy for war actually made war inevitable.

In "The Last Republic", evidence is provided that Stalin was preparing for an aggressive war, in particular emphasizing the ideological motivation for the Soviet leader's actions. The title refers to the unlucky country that would be incorporated as the "final republic" into the globe-encompassing "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", thereby completing the world proletarian revolution.

This plan was entirely consistent with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, as well as with Lenin's policies in the earlier years of the Soviet regime. The Russian historian argues convincingly that it was not Lev Trotsky, but Stalin, his less flamboyant rival, who was really a faithful disciple of Lenin in promoting the world Communist revolution. Trotsky insisted on his doctrine of "the permanent revolution," whereby the young Soviet state would help foment home-grown workers' uprisings and revolution in capitalist countries.

Stalin instead wanted the Soviet regime to take advantage of occasional "armistices" in the global struggle to consolidate the Red military strength for the right moment when larger and better armed Soviet forces would strike into central and Western Europe, adding new Soviet republics as this overwhelming force rolled across the continent. After the successful consolidation and Sovietization of the whole Europe, the expanded USSR would be poised to impose Soviet power over the entire globe [1].

Stalin realized quite well that, given a free choice, people of the advanced Western countries would never voluntarily choose communism. It would therefore have to be imposed by force. His bold plan, Stalin further decided, could be realized only through a world war. And these suppositions are affirmed by Stalin's speech:

"The experience of the last 20 years has shown that in peacetime the Communist movement is never strong enough to seize power. The dictatorship of such a party will only become possible as the result of a major war.

Later on, all the countries who had accepted protection of resurgent Germany would also become our allies. We

Furthermore, as Soviet theoreticians had always insisted, Communism could never peacefully coexist over the long run with other sociopolitical systems. Accordingly, Communist rule inevitably would have to be imposed throughout the world. So integral was this goal of the "world revolution" to the nature and development of the "first workers' state" that it was a cardinal feature of the Soviet agenda even before Hitler and his National Socialist movement came to power in Germany in 1933 [2].

Stalin chose to strike at a time and place of his choosing. To this end, the Soviet development of the most advanced offensive weapons systems, primarily tanks, aircraft, and airborne forces, had already begun in the early 1930s. To ensure the success of his bold undertaking, in the late 1939 Stalin ordered to build up a powerful war machine that would be superior in quantity and quality to all possible opposing forces.

His first secret order for the total military-industrial mobilization of the country was issued in August 1939. A second total mobilization order, this one for military mobilization, would be issued on the day the war was to begin [3].

The German "Barbarossa" attack shattered Stalin's well-laid plan to "liberate" all of Europe. In this sense, Stalin "lost" the Second World War. The Soviet premier could regard "merely" defeating Germany and conquering eastern and central Europe only as a disappointment.

Stalin revealed his disappointment over the war outcome in several ways. First, he had Marshal Georgiy Zhukov, not himself, the supreme commander, lead the victory parade in 1945. Second, no official May 9 victory parade was even authorized until Stalin's death. Third, Stalin never wore any of the medals he was awarded after the end of the Second World War. Fourth, once, in a depressed mood, he expressed to members of his close circle his desire to retire now that the war was over. Fifth, and perhaps most telling, Stalin abandoned work on the long-planned Palace of Soviets [3].

For decades the official version of the 1941 – 1945 German-Soviet conflict, supported by establishment historians in both Russia and the West, has been something like this:

Hitler launched a surprise "Blitzkrieg" attack against the woefully unprepared Soviet Union, fooling its leader, the unsuspecting and trusting Stalin. The German Führer was driven by lust for "living space" and natural resources in the primitive East, and by his long-simmering determination to smash "Jewish Communism" once and for all. In this treacherous attack, which was an important part of Hitler's mad drive for "world conquest," the "fascist" aggressors initially overwhelmed all resistance with their preponderance of modern tanks and aircraft.

This view, which was affirmed by the Allied judges at the postwar Nuremberg Tribunal, is still widely accepted in both Russia and the United States. In Russia today, most of the general public (and not merely those who are nostalgic for the old Soviet regime), accepts this "politically correct" line. For one thing, it "explains" the Soviet Union's enormous World War II losses in men and materiel. It explains the quote – "History is written by winners", because of which the actual history is hidden in order to exaggerate real facts.

Contrary to the official view that the Soviet Union was not prepared for war in June 1941, in fact, Suvorov stresses, it was the Germans who were not really prepared. Germany's hastily drawn up "Barbarossa Operation" plan, which called for a "Blitzkrieg" victory in four or five months by the numerically inferior forces advancing in three broad military thrusts, was doomed from the outset.

Moreover, despite the fact that Germany has conquered half of Western Europe prior to overwhelming the USSR, Germany nevertheless remained lacking raw materials (including petroleum) essential in sustaining a drawn out war of such dimensions.

Another reason for Germany's lack of preparedness was that its military leaders seriously under-estimated the performance of Soviet forces in the Winter War against Finland, 1939 – 1940. They fought, it must be stressed, under extremely severe winter conditions – temperatures of minus 40 degrees Celsius and snow depths of several feet – against the well-designed reinforced concrete fortifications and underground facilities of Finland's "Mannerheim Line." In spite of that, it is often forgotten, the Red Army did, after all, force the Finns into a humiliating armistice [4].

It is always a mistake to underestimate your enemy. However, Hitler made this critical miscalculation. In 1943, after the tide of war had shifted against Germany, he admitted his mistaken evaluation of Soviet forces two years earlier.

To prove that it was Stalin, and not Hitler, who was really prepared for war, V. Suvorov, as a respectful historian, compares German and Soviet weaponry in mid-1941, especially with respect to the all-important offensive weapons systems – tanks and airborne forces. It is a generally accepted axiom in military science that attacking forces should have a numerical superiority of three to one over the defenders. Yet, as V. Suvorov explains, when the Germans struck on the morning of June 22, 1941, they attacked with a total of 3,350 tanks, while the Soviet defenders had a total of 24,000 tanks – that is, Stalin had seven times more tanks than Hitler, or 21 times more tanks than would have been considered sufficient for an adequate defense. Moreover, V. Suvorov stresses, the Soviet tanks were superior in all technical respects, including firepower, range, and armor plating [5].

As it was, Soviet development of heavy tank production had already begun in the early 1930s. For example, as early as 1933 the Soviets were already turning out in series production, and distributing to their forces, the T-35 model, a 45-ton heavy tank with three cannons, six machine guns, and 30-mm armor plating. By contrast, the Germans began development and production of a comparable 45-ton tank only after the war had begun in mid-1941.

By 1939 the Soviets had already added three heavy tank models to their inventory. Moreover, the Soviets designed their tanks with wider tracks, and ability to operate with diesel engines (which were less flammable than those using conventional carburetor mix fuels). Furthermore, Soviet tanks were built with both the engine and the drive in the rear, thereby improving general efficiency and operator viewing. German tanks had a less efficient arrangement, with the engine in the rear and the drive in the forward area.

When the conflict began in June 1941, Germany had no heavy tanks at all, only 309 medium tanks, and just 2,668 light, inferior tanks. For their part, the Soviets at the outbreak of the war had at their disposal tanks that were not only heavier but of higher quality [5].

In the spring of 1941, Hitler had specifically ordered that a Russian military commission had its own tank schools and factories; in this order he had insisted that nothing be concealed from them. The military commission was so insistent on this point that eventually our manufacturers and Ordnance Office officials concluded: "It seems that the Russians must already possess better and heavier tanks than we do." It was at the end of July 1941 that the T-34 tank appeared on the front and the riddle of the new Russian model was solved.

Then, Russians introduced their giant Klim Voroshilov tanks into action near Raseiniai (Lithuania). The models weighing 43 and 52 tons surprised the Germans, who found the KVs nearly unstoppable. One of these Russian tanks took 70 direct hits, but none penetrated its armor.

Germany took on the Soviet colossus with tanks that were too light, too few in number, and inferior in performance and fire power. And this disparity continued as the war progressed. In 1942 alone, Soviet factories produced 2,553 heavy tanks, while the Germans produced just 89. Even at the end of the war, the best-quality tank in combat was the Soviet IS ("Joseph Stalin") model.

Even more lopsided was the Soviet superiority in airborne forces. Before the war, Soviet DB-3f and SB bombers as well as the TB-1 and TB-3 bombers (of which Stalin had about a thousand had been modified to carry airborne troops as well as bomb loads. By the mid-1941 the Soviet military had trained hundreds of thousands of paratroopers for the planned attack against Germany and the West. These airborne troops were to be deployed and dropped behind enemy lines in several waves, each wave consisting of five airborne assault corps (VDKs), each corps consisting of 10,419 men, staff and service personnel, an artillery division, and a separate tank battalion (50 tanks). Suvorov lists the commanding officers and home bases of the first two waves or ten corps. The second and third wave corps included troops who spoke French and Spanish.

Because the German attack prevented these highly trained troops from being used as originally planned, Stalin converted them to "guards divisions", which he used as reserves and "fire brigades" in emergency situations, much as Hitler often deployed Waffen SS forces.

On the eve of the outbreak of the 1941 war, the Soviet forces had been provided topographical maps only of frontier and European areas; they were not issue maps to defend Soviet territory or cities, because the war was not to be fought in the homeland. The head of the Military Topographic Service at the time, and therefore responsible for military map distribution, Major General M. K. Kudryavtsev, was not punished or even dismissed for failing to provide maps of the homeland, but went on to enjoy a lengthy and successful military career. Likewise, the chief of the General Staff, General Zhukov, was never held responsible for the debacle of the first months of the war. None of the top military commanders could be held accountable, because they all had followed Stalin's orders to the letter.

A lot of people have certain doubts about the degree of trust to Suvorov' theory. Alexei Isaev, the author of "Antisuvorov" took the actual value, and restored the real picture of the events which happened during World War II.

The book is an analysis of the theory of Suvorov claiming that the tragic events of 1941 were a consequence of the planned "liberation campaign" in Europe. Isaev analyzes Suvorov' facts and quotations, their validity and interpretation [2].

The main explanation of the Soviet official history is as follows:

1. The great advantage of the Germans in the development of military technologies and manpower.
2. A surprise attack on the peaceful unprepared for war Soviet Union.
3. Two-year German experience of modern warfare in Europe.
4. The conquered part of Europe fully worked on Hitler.

The encountering of Suvorov and Isaev is presented in a plenty of examples, one of them is that describing the preparation of the Stalinist army for war, Suvorov writes that Germany explored the territory of Russia. Germany was forbidden to be shot down, they were treated as honored guests. However, Soviet pilots did the same. A certificated pilot Zakharov told how he flew and looked and examined Germany along its territory.

Then after a certain period of time the truth was revealed as Isaev says. Zakharov did not fly deep in the foreign territory but along the boundary line without crossing it, and watched what was happening in the border zone [6].

Criticizing Suvorov, Isaev agreed with him in the main thing – Isaev also believes that the Soviet Union had planned to liberate Germany prior Germany started war. Isaev contests that the USSR' peaceful sleep was suddenly alarmed. In 1941 the Red Army was preparing to attack. If it had been preparing for the defense, it would have been another story and World War would have resulted in another outcome.

In the author's opinion A. Isaev is just jealous of Suvorov with black envy because Suvorov' theory is very popular and is widely recognized by a lot of historians.

A. Isaev said: "The real story of the war is a much more interesting tale than that told by official sources. If you want to know the real history of the war, do not read Suvorov' tales – they are not interesting, neither should you read the official story – you'll slip debris, therefore you'd better read me, only me and nobody else!"

Recognizing the fact of having presented the results of the analysis in a bit caustic and sarcastic mode and with great bitterness the author thinks that if Suvorov' claims are essentially correct, every officially taught person has a perfect right to be bitter for having been misled and misinformed for decades.

From the author's standpoint A. Isaev' theory is not convincing: in some things he is right, however, the overall tone of Isaev' book as compared with Suvorov's ones did not impress him much. Suvorov, in most episodes, much better and clearly explains and proves what A. Isaev tries to fight off with official facts, constantly praising himself and teaching Suvorov how to write historical articles.

The author believes that Suvorov deserves gratitude for his important dissection of historical legend, but his work is not without defects. For one thing, such suggestions of the achievements of the Soviet military industrial complex, and the quality of Soviet weaponry and military equipment, are exaggerated, perhaps even panegyric. For another thing, the Soviet engineers developed a knack for successfully modifying, simplifying and, often, improving Western models and designs.

The author considers Suvorov's version of the USSR's win in the Great Patriotic War to be lacking in patriotism, however, disclosing a new side of the War, according to which the Great War enforced Stalin to refuse from his insane plans of the "world revolution" which looks more reliable and convincing in comparison with Isaev's disproofs that do not have proper background.

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