

Conduct of the Offensive: Trans-Baikal Front

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Ten minutes after midnight on 9 August 1945, reconnaissance units, forward detachments, and advanced guard units of the Trans-Baikal Front crossed the border into Inner Mongolia and Manchuria. No artillery or air preparation preceded the attack. Initially, attacking units encountered resistance only in the 36th Army zone, where attack routes traversed fortified Japanese border installations. In other regions, assault units moved forward virtually unopposed. At 0430 main force units advanced on the heels of the assault units (see maps 18—21).¹

On the right flank of the front, Col. Gen. I. A. Pliyev's Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group advanced in two march columns 200 kilometers apart. Forward detachments comprising the 25th Mechanized Brigade and the 43d Separate Tank Brigade led the columns.² By nightfall on 9 August the lead units of the two columns had penetrated fifty-five miles into the arid wastes of Inner Mongolia, southward toward Dolonnor and Kalgan, sweeping aside small detachments of Inner Mongolian cavalry. Farther east,



Pliyev, Issa Aleksandrovich (1903—?), Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group

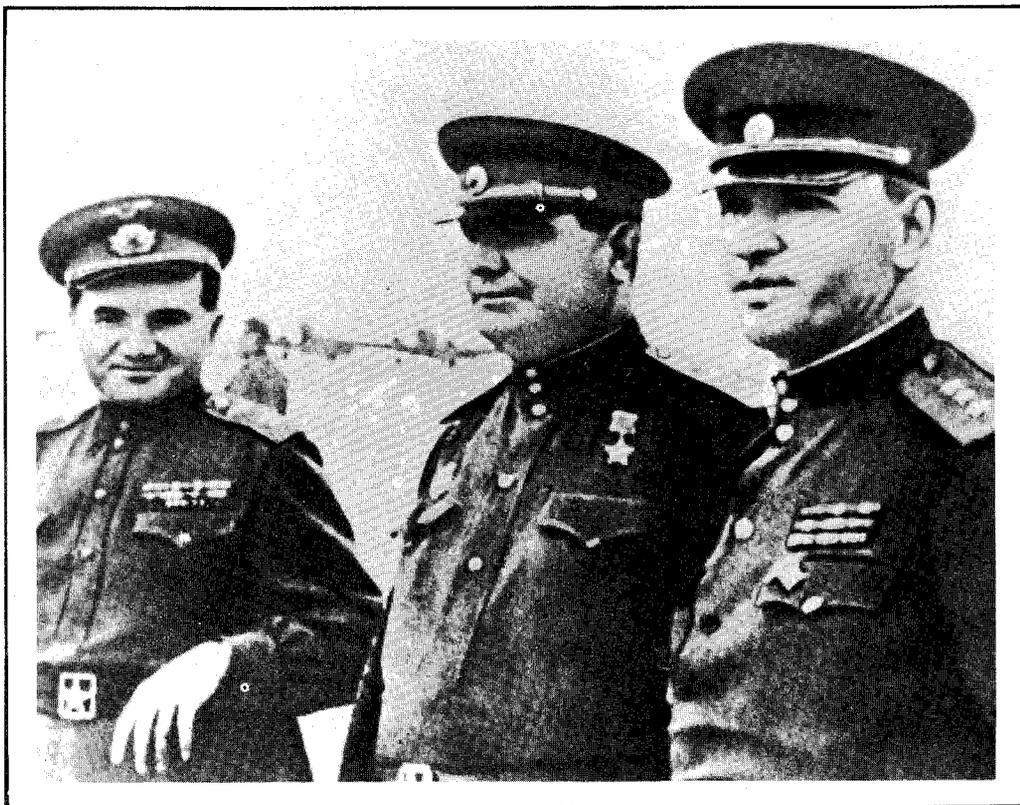
- 1922—joined Red Army.
- 1926—Leningrad Cavalry School.
- 1926—commander, Krasnodar Cavalry School.
- 1933—Frunze Academy.
- 1933-36—chief of Operations Department, 5th Cavalry Division.
- 1936-38—advisor, Mongolian Army.
- 1939—regimental commander, 6th Cavalry Division.
- 1941—General Staff Academy.
- 1941—(Jun) commander, 50th Cavalry Division (Nov 1941 renamed 3d Guards Cavalry Division) (Moscow operations).
- 1941—(Dec) commander, 2d Guards Cavalry Corps.
- 1942—(Apr) commander, 5th Guards Cavalry Corps; 3d Guards Cavalry Corps; 4th Guards Cavalry Corps (Stalingrad, Melitopol, Bereznagovatoe-Snegerevka, Odessa, Belorussia operations).
- 1944—(Nov) commander, 1st Cavalry-Mechanized Group (Budapest, Prague operations).
- 1945—commander, Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group.
- 1946—army commander.
- 1953—first deputy commander, North Caucasus Military District.
- 1958—commander, North Caucasus Military District.
- 1968—(Jun) inspector-advisor, General Inspector Group, Ministry of Defense.

the 17th Army of Lt. Gen. A. I. Danilov also entered Inner Mongolia virtually unopposed. Its forces advanced in two columns with the reinforced 70th and 82d Tank Battalions as forward detachments. By nightfall the 17th Army forward detachments had advanced some seventy kilometers, with the main columns trailing twenty kilometers to the rear.³



Danilov, Aleksei Il'ich (1897—?), 17th Army

1917—joined Russian Army; Alekseev Military School.
 1918—joined Red Army; platoon, company commander (southwest, western fronts).
 1920—company commander; chief of regimental school.
 1924—Vystrel course.
 1931—Frunze Academy.
 1931—division chief of operations; chief of staff, 29th Rifle Division; chief of staff and commander, 49th Rifle Corps.
 1940—(Jul) deputy commander, Kiev Military District's PVO (air defense) forces.
 1941—(Jun) chief of PVO, Northwestern Front.
 1941—(Oct) chief of staff, 21st Army (Kharkov operation).
 1942—(Jun) commander, 21st Army.
 1942—(Oct) chief of staff, 5th Tank Army (Stalingrad operations).
 1943—(May) commander, 12th Army (Donbas, Left Bank of Ukraine, Zaporozh'e operations).
 1943—(Nov) commander, 17th Army (Mongolia).
 1946-68—army commander; chief of high academic courses at General Staff Academy; assistant commander of Trans-Baikal Military District.
 1968—retired.



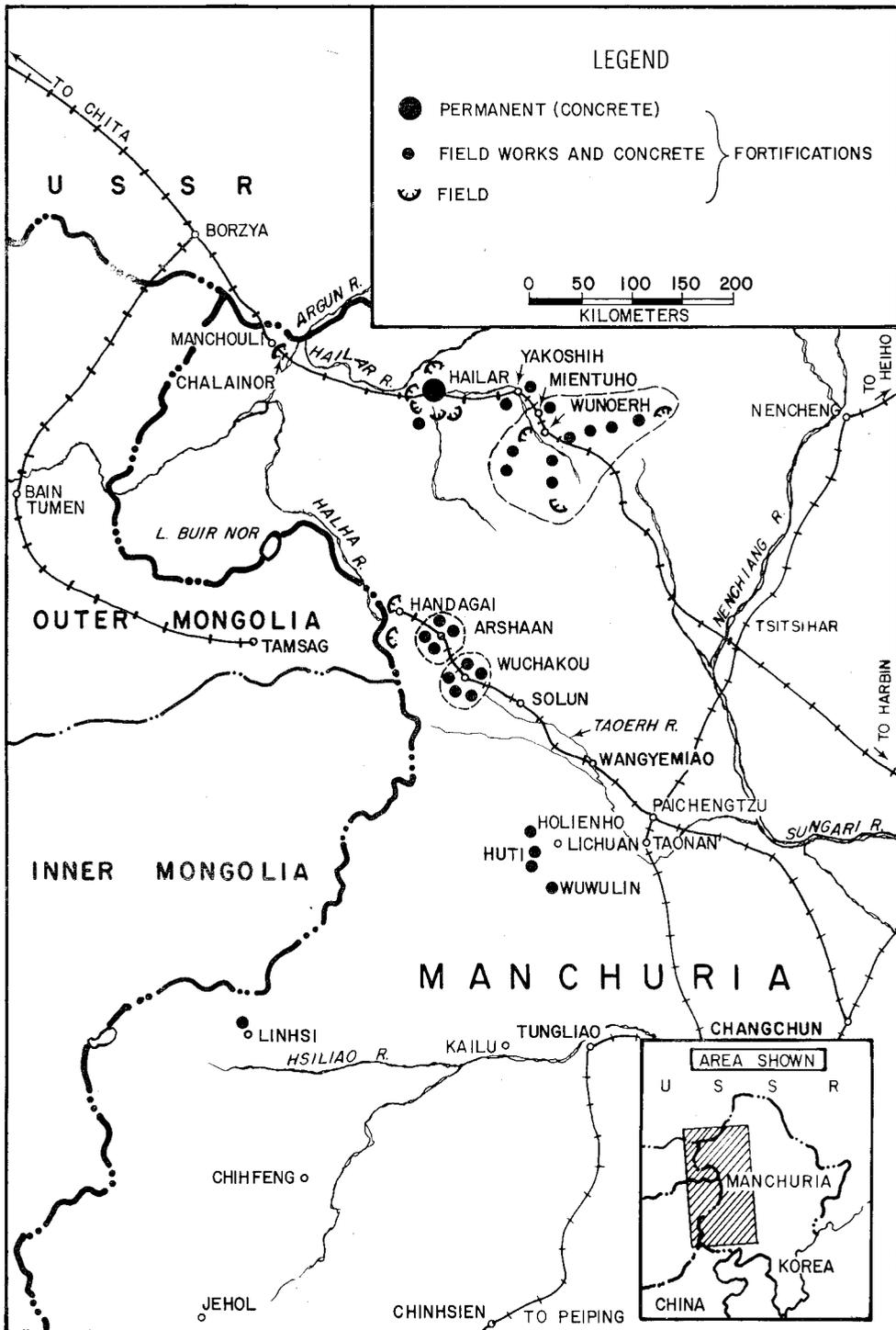
Commander of 6th Guards Tank Army, A. G. Kravchenko (center), accompanied by Commander of the 12th Air Army, S. A. Khudiakov (left), and Commander of Armored and Mechanized Forces of the Far East Command, M. D. Solomatin (right)

Kravchenko, Andrei Grigor'evich (1899—1963), 6th Guards Tank Army

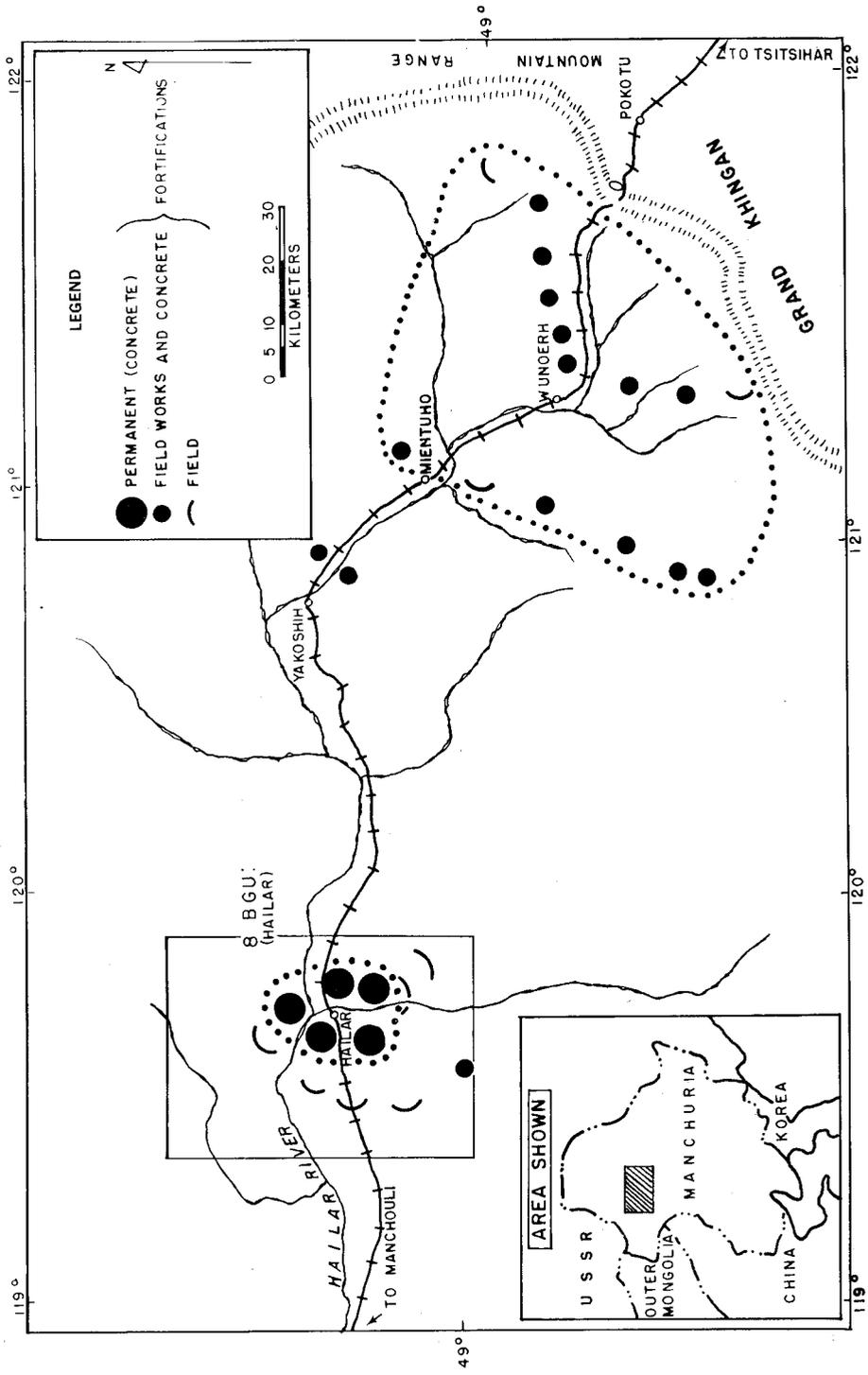
- 1918—joined Red Army, corporal.
 1921—commander, rifle subunits; chief of staff, rifle regiment; instructor of tactics.
 1923—Poltava Infantry School.
 1928—Frunze Academy.
 1939—(May) rifle division chief of staff; motorized rifle division chief of staff; tank division chief of staff (Finnish War).
 1941—(Mar) chief of staff, 18th Mechanized Corps.
 1941—(Sep) commander, separate tank brigade (Moscow operations).
 1942—(Mar) chief of staff, 1st Tank Corps.
 1942—(Jun) commander, 2d Tank Corps.
 1942—(Oct) commander, 4th Tank Corps (5th Guards Tank Corps) (Stalingrad, Kursk, Dnepr, Right Bank of Ukraine operations).
 1944—(Jan) commander, 6th Guards Tank Army (Korsun-Shevchenkovskii, Iassy-Kishinev, Hungary operations).
 1946—army commander; commander of armored and mechanized forces in various military districts.
 1954—(Jan) assistant commander of Far East Military District's tank forces.
 1955—(Oct) in the reserves.

On the left of 17th Army, the 6th Guards Tank Army of Col. Gen. A. G. Kravchenko, the spearhead of the Trans-Baikal Front, advanced into Inner Mongolia in two columns of corps. The 9th Mechanized Corps advanced on the right, followed by the 5th Guards Tank Corps in second echelon. Seventy to eighty kilometers to the northeast marched the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps, also in column formation. Each corps column marched in four to six columns, thus forming a belt of armor fifteen to twenty kilometers wide. Forward detachments consisting of a rifle regiment, a tank brigade or regiment, and an artillery battalion preceded each corps column.⁴ The 6th Guards Tank Army encountered limited opposition and therefore progressed rapidly. By nightfall the forward detachments had raced forward 150 kilometers and halted in the foothills of the Grand Khingan Mountains west and north of Khorokhon Pass (see map 22).

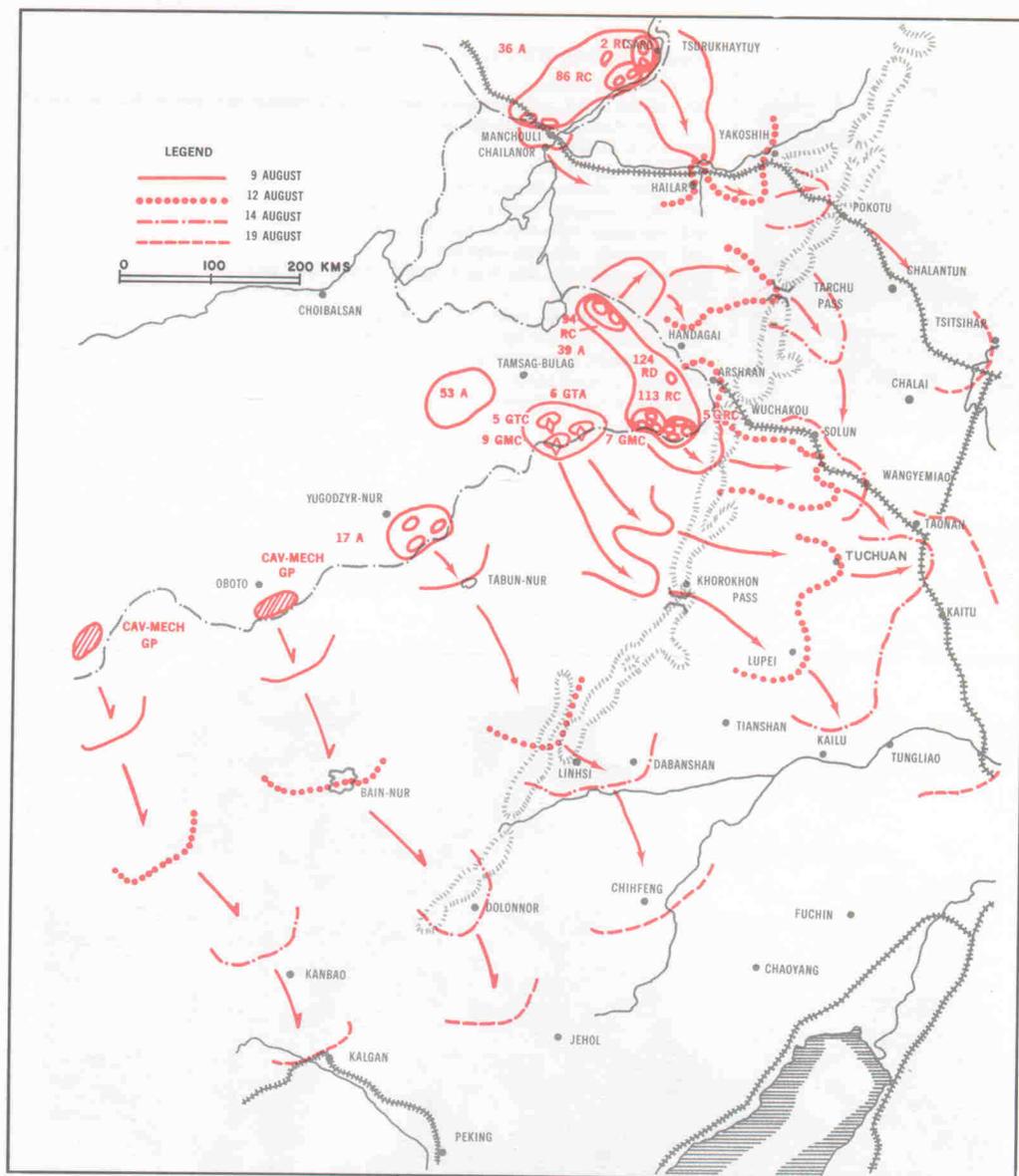
On the left of 6th Guards Tank Army, Col. Gen. I. N. Lyudnikov's 39th Army advanced along two divergent axes in a single echelon of rifle corps (see map 23).⁵ On the main axes south of the Halung-Arshaan and Wu-chakou Fortified Regions, defended by two regiments of the Japanese 107th Infantry Division, the 5th Guards Rifle Corps and the 113th Rifle Corps advanced behind their forward detachments, the 206th and 44th Tank Brigades. The army forward detachment, the 61st Tank Division, preceded the two corps and bypassed the fortified regions to the south. In addition, a forward detachment led each of the six rifle divisions of the two corps. Farther to the north, near the 1939 battlefield of Khalkhin-Gol, the 94th Rifle Corps struck northeastward with two rifle divisions abreast, driving toward the rear of the Hailar Fortified Region in support of elements of 36th Army, advancing toward Hailar from the north. Platoon-size Japanese opposition and local Manchurian cavalry units were swept away quickly. The 124th Rifle Division of 94th Rifle Corps occupied the gap along the border between the 94th Rifle Corps and the 5th Rifle Corps and prepared



Map 18. Japanese Fortified Positions in Western Manchuria



Map 20. Japanese 4th Separate Army Defense Area in Northwest Manchuria



Map 21. Soviet Trans-Baikal Front Operations, 9–19 August 1945

to engage Japanese forces in the Halung-Arshaan Fortified Region. Initially on 9 August, 124th Rifle Division reconnaissance units probed the fortified region while main division elements prepared to advance on the tenth. The 39th Army forward units on the main advance axis bypassed Halung-Arshaan and gained sixty kilometers the first day of action. Because of the difficult terrain, however, division forward detachments lagged behind the advancing corps tank brigades and the army tank division. Consequently,



Lyudnikov, Ivan Il'ich (1902—76), 39th Army

1917—joined Red Guards.
 1925—Infantry School: platoon, company commander, 13th Dagestan Rifle Division; battalion chief of staff, Vladivostok Infantry School.
 1938—Frunze Academy.
 1938—General Staff service.
 1939—chief of Zhitomir Infantry School.
 1941—(Mar) commander, 200th Rifle Division (Odessa).
 1942—commander, 138th Rifle Division (Stalingrad).
 1943—commander, 15th Rifle Corps (Kursk).
 1944—(Mar) commander, 39th Army (Vitebsk, E. Prussia operations).
 1946—army commander.
 1949—deputy commander, Group of Soviet Forces, Germany.
 1952—assistant, then first deputy commander, Odessa Military District.
 1954—commander, Tavrich Military District.
 1959—chief of *Vystrel* course.
 1963—chief of faculty, General Staff Academy.
 1968—retired.



Reconnaissance units of 6th Guards Tank Army



6th Guards Tank Army approaching the Grand Khingans

the corps commanders formed new, more mobile forward detachments using the divisional self-propelled artillery battalions.⁶ While two regiments of the Japanese 107th Infantry Division prepared to defend the Halung-Arshaan and Wuchakou fortified areas, the remaining regiment concentrated along the rail line from Wuchakou to Solun, uncertain as to where the main Soviet blow would strike.⁷ Meanwhile, the main force of the Soviet 39th Army advanced through the rugged central region of the Grand Khingan Mountains eastward and southeastward toward Solun and Wangyemiao in order to cut the rail line and to isolate Japanese forces in the fortified regions.

Farther to the north, on the left flank of the Trans-Baikal Front, the 36th Army of Lt. Gen. A. A. Luchinsky advanced on two axes (see map 24).⁸ The 86th Rifle Corps and 2d Rifle Corps launched the main attack at 0020 on 9 August in order to secure crossings over the rain-swollen Argun River between Staro-Tsurukhaytuy and Duroy. One rifle battalion of each first echelon rifle division acted as an initial assault force. In order to hasten the crossing, 2d Rifle Corps transported two rifle regiments across the river in thirty amphibious vehicles. By 0600, main forces had begun

crossing the river. These forces scattered the platoon- to company-size Japanese forces and auxiliaries defending the river. An army forward detachment organized around the 205th Tank Brigade raced toward Hailar, sixty kilometers to the south, to preempt Japanese defense of the fortified areas and to cut the main rail line from Manchouli to central Manchuria. The Japanese 80th Independent Mixed Brigade, consisting of five infantry battalions and support units, and the 119th Infantry Division defended Hailar and occupied the Hailar Fortified Region. Manchurian cavalry forces assisted the Japanese defenders.

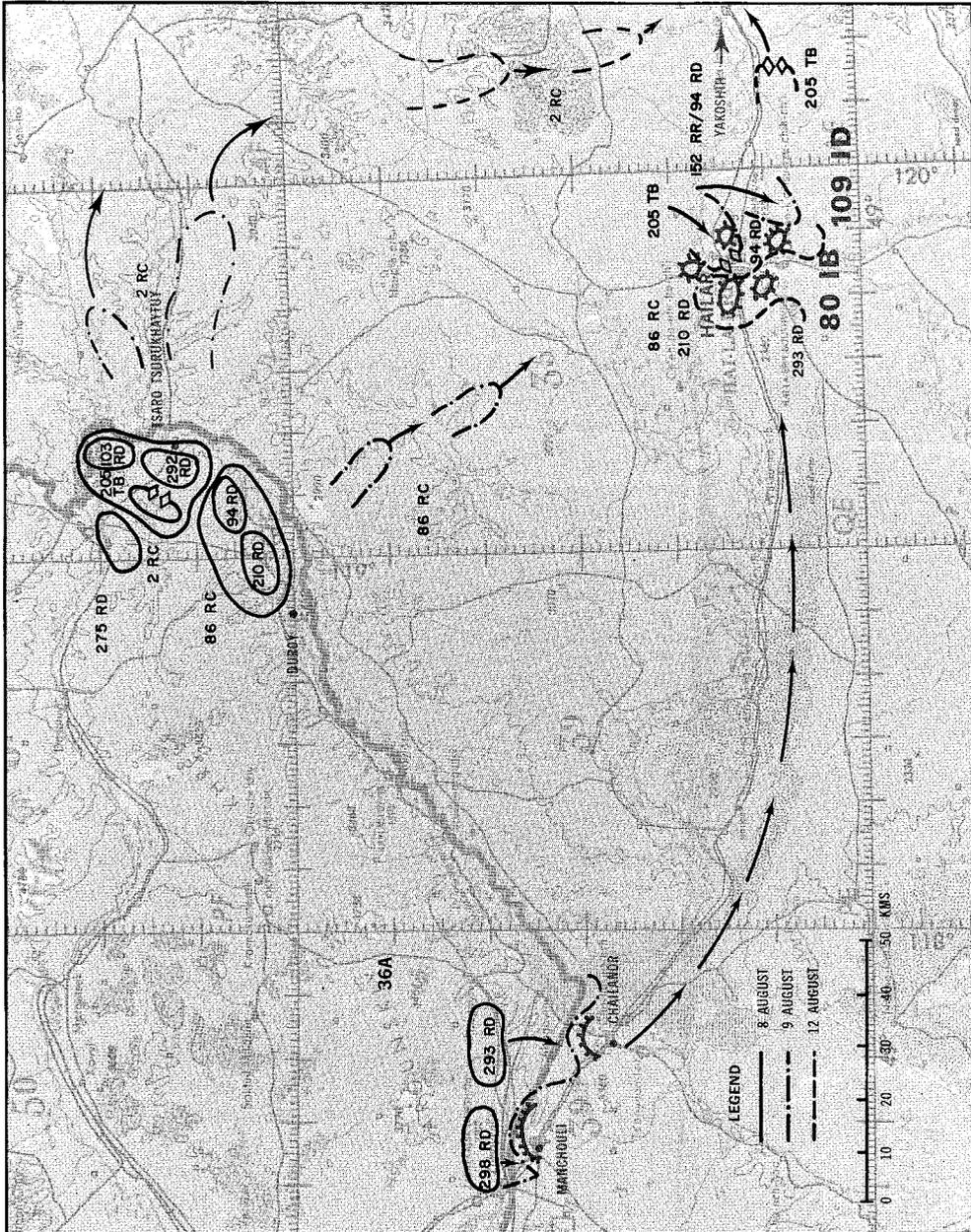


Luchinsky, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (1900—?), 36th Army

1919—joined Red Army; company, squadron commander, 50th Taman Division; 14th Maikop Cavalry Division; squadron commander, cavalry division, Turkestan Front.
 1936—regimental commander.
 1937-38—service in China.
 1940—Frunze Academy.
 1940—chief of staff, rifle division.
 1941—(Apr) commander, 83d Mountain Rifle Division (Caucasus).
 1943—(May) commander, 3d Mountain Rifle Corps (Taman-Sevastopol).
 1944—(May) commander, 28th Army (Belorussia, E. Prussia operations).
 1945—(Jun) commander, 36th Army.
 1946—army commander.
 1949—deputy commander, Group of Soviet Forces, Germany.
 1949—commander, Leningrad Military District.
 1953—commander, Turkestan Military District.
 1958—1st deputy chief inspector of Ministry of Defense.
 1964—military inspector-advisor, Group of General Inspectors, Ministry of Defense.

By evening on 9 August, the 205th Tank Brigade had secured key bridges north of Hailar. The 36th Army commander, hoping to preempt the Japanese defenders at Hailar, ordered the 205th Tank Brigade to conduct a night attack southward to envelop and secure the city. The 205th Tank Brigade attacked from the northeast, and the 152d Rifle Regiment of the 94th Rifle Division circled to attack the city from the southeast. The attack was only partially successful. The 205th Tank Brigade seized the railroad station in the northern part of the city, and on the morning of the tenth, after a delay in getting into position, the 152d Rifle Regiment took the southern and eastern portions of the city.⁹ Japanese defenders in the 80th Independent Mixed Brigade delayed the Soviet advance, prevented seizure of the city, and prepared to defend the fortified region northwest and southwest of the city. On 9 August the Japanese 119th Infantry Division moved eastward to set up defenses in the passes of the Grand Khingan Mountains from Yakoshih to Pokotu.¹⁰

On the 36th Army's right wing, an operational group of two rifle divisions and two artillery machine gun brigades attacked across the border and secured a foothold in the small fortified post at Manchouli, held by the Japanese in multicompartment strength. Thus, by the evening of 9 August



Map 24. Soviet 36th Army Advance to Hailar and Yakoshih, 9–12 August 1945

the 36th Army had advanced sixty kilometers into Manchuria and had partially secured its initial objective of Hailar. Heavy fighting would occur before the stubborn defenders in the 80th Independent Mixed Brigade would relinquish their hold on the Hailar Fortified Region.



Tank units on a rest halt

The second echelon of the Trans-Baikal Front, the 53d Army under Col. Gen. I. M. Managarov, remained in assembly areas in Mongolia until 10 August, when it began crossing the border in the tracks of the now distant 6th Guards Tank Army. After 9 August, the Japanese ordered units that were not cut off to withdraw to Changchun and Dalay. General Ushiroku of the Japanese Third Area Army resolved to concentrate his forces and to defend north and south of Mukden in an effort to provide protection for the families of his soldiers. This unilateral decision of the area army commander, by conflicting with the plans of General Yamada to construct a defense farther to the rear, sowed further confusion in Japanese ranks.¹¹



Manchouli

The Trans-Baikal Front continued its rapid advance on 10 August, employing whenever possible mobile forces as forward detachments. By the evening of the eleventh, the Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group, advancing rapidly towards Kalgan and Dolonnor, had reached the foothills of the Grand Khingan Mountains, 200 kilometers from its start point. Still encountering weak opposition, the 17th Army gained forty kilometers on the tenth and by the evening of the eleventh was approaching the western foothills of the Grand Khingan Mountains, about 180 kilometers from where it had begun its advance.

On the evening of 9 August, with his forward detachments in the western foothills of the Grand Khingan Mountains, and in the absence of any noticeable Japanese reaction, the commander of the 6th Guards Tank Army, General Kravchenko, made final plans for securing the mountain passes and conducting the difficult passage of the mountain chain. Because of the