

**Svitlana Pavlovska, PhD in History, ScD candidate**

**Valerii Hrytsiuk, PhD in History**

*National University of Defense of Ukraine named after Ivan Cherniakhovskiy*

## **TARNOPOL OPERATION OF THE 60TH ARMY**

The history of the Second World War is full of mythologems that are propagandistic in nature. Official history serves as a powerful propaganda tool for the victorious state. For decades after the war, the basic postulates of the correlation of forces and resources in different periods of the war were formulated. For a long time, the official conclusions of authoritative historical institutions were considered unshakable. But with the collapse of the USSR, the self-identification of participation in the Second World War has become one of the defining elements for many countries. The archives became available. The research has the opportunity to study previously closed information. Today, it became possible to study the testimonies of participants and witnesses of those terrible events. Everyone with his inner world and ideas about justice evaluated his attitude to the war in different ways. But it is their opinion that makes it possible to present a full range of human experiences. On the one hand, the Hitlerite army, motivated by a lightning victory. On the other hand, the Red Army, obsessed with the victory over the captive. In addition to questions of strategy and tactics, it is necessary to consider the issues of ideological training of personnel. Their moral stamina and high morale were the results of different ideological concepts. On the example of the strategic operation for the liberation of the Tarnopol Army by the Red Army, we can see the struggle of two military vehicles, the opposition of two strategies and tactical decisions. On the other hand, a special role was played by the struggle of ideologies. The ideologies of the two totalitarian states had similar mechanisms. But the goals were determined by the socio-economic characteristics and political platforms of the states participating in the Second World War. Why did the German military units so steadfastly defend such a small town? Most of them were punitive. Only the orders of the German military command played their part in determining their actions. What kind of Soviet propaganda was acting on the enemy surrounded by Tarnopol? How did army ideologists analyze the testimony of prisoners of war? The answers to these questions are the result of the research activity of scientists. The information presented in the article differs from the officially known provisions regarding this operation. Soviet troops made efforts to quickly release Tarnopol. But, several assaults and a protracted siege of the city forced the Soviet military command to make new efforts. A massive propaganda company did not have the success the army ideologists were counting on. Million copies of leaflets, an ultimatum, letters to the commanders of Hitler's military units had only a slight effect on the enemy who had settled in the city.

In historiography, much attention was paid to the Proskuriv-Chernivtsi operation, but for an important part of it to the Tarnopol (in 1944 the city was called Tarnopol) operation of the 60 Army (colonel general I.D. Chernyakhovsky) was clearly not enough space. The conquest of Ternopil in Soviet historiography has always been a "dark zone". Reference books provided intricate propaganda information.

**Keywords:** military operation, encirclement, penalty battalions, propaganda campaign, information of prisoners.

### **INTRODUCTION**

By this time there is no complete picture of the fight. The German side has long recognized the battle for Ternopil as one of the most prominent pages of the Second World War.

For example, the book "The Citadel of Ternopil" by Hert Fricke was published twice in Germany in 1969 and 1986. Many other publications related to the fights in the eastern front in 1944, certainly devote attention to the battles for Ternopil. This article provides new facts about this operation. Another view of the arrangement of forces and means makes it possible to determine the real place of the operation in the history of the Second World War of War.

## ARGUMENTATION

Undisclosed pages of the national military history remain the questions of the long-term stable defense of Tarnopol by the German troops, its analysis as one of the conditions and reasons for the exit from the fundamental forces 1 tank armies of the Wehrmacht, an assessment of the "effectiveness" of the victories of Soviet troops. The order of the Supreme Headquarters of the Soviet troops, the directive No. 220029 of February 18, required 1 Ukrainian Front to prepare an offensive operation from the front of Dubno, Shepetovka, Lyubar in the southern direction. The immediate task of the front was to form the Tarnopol-Proskuriv border.<sup>1</sup> In particular, in the Ternopil direction, the 60th Joint and 3rd Guards Tank Army were attacked.

A number of military leaders of the Wehrmacht, including Reichard Helen, Erich Manstein, predicted the threat of Soviet troops carrying out a major offensive operation to surround the main forces of the Army Group "South". On the basis of intelligence, they correctly identified the probable directions of focusing the main strikes. It was expected that the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front would strike a major blow to Tarnopol and Proskurov. It was here where the commander of the group of armies "South" started regrouping of a number of combat-friendly connections from the band of the Army 8. In particular, the 48 tank corps was concentrated on the direction of Tarnopol. Manstein was counting on maneuvering defense. Hitler insisted on his strategy of "fortified centers" and insisted on fanatical defense items he personally chose<sup>2</sup>. One of these reference points was the city of Ternopil.

The Nazi command took appropriate measures to bring information about the importance of this direction to the personnel. This was known to the Soviet political authorities from the testimonies of prisoners of war. In the information summary addressed to the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, No. 212, March 29-30, 1944, in the paragraph on work with prisoners of war, it was said that all the soldiers of the 339 Infantry Division, 543 and 693 security battalions read Hitler's order that all soldiers have to stay up to the last at the expense of their lives. Because Tarnopol is an important strategic unit. The order states that city retention is an extremely important matter for the protection of Germany. Also, the document contains information that in the near future large groupings will be thrown to reunite with the Tarnopol garrison. All soldiers and officers were rewarded<sup>3</sup>.

Immediately during the interrogation of the soldiers of the demolition battalion headquarters, Leo Hitz, who was taken captive March 12 south of Tarnopol, said the following: "The following day we read the order of the division commander, Lieutenant-General Arndt. We must protect Tarnopol up to the last patron, because it is the gateway to Germany".<sup>4</sup>

The offensive operation of the 1st Ukrainian Front, later named by historians as Proskurivska-Chernivtsi offensive operation, began on March 4. As a result of the offensive battles, the Soviet troops inflicted significant losses on the main forces of the 4th Tank Army and the enemy's reserves, which approached and advanced 80 km in the direction of Tarnopol. Danger to the enemy, created by the offensive of the 1st troops. Ukrainian Front, forced the German command to take such measures as the removal of the four tank divisions from the Uman direction and throwing them to Ternopil Volochysk, Proskuriv, and also the involvement of three infantry divisions from the strategic reserve. In order to fulfill the basic instruction of the Supreme Command "to cut off the way for the Germans to join the southern group of troops westward in a strip north of the Dniester River"<sup>5</sup> the commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front (from 1.03.44 Marshal of the Soviet Union, G.K. Zhukov) chose the shortest way for the main attack by tank armies in the gap between Volochysh – Proskuriv with the simultaneous capture of Tarnopol.<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that the orders given by the commander-in-chief of the front for the period from March 4 to 10, tell about his intention to achieve the fastest takeover of the city of Tarnopol. Already on March 10, one of the advanced detachments of the 23 infantry corps came out on the outskirts of Tarnopol,

<sup>1</sup> Центральный архив Министерства обороны Российской Федерации (ЦАМО РФ). *ф.132-А. он.2642. снр.13.* – Арк.206–207 / Директива Ставки ВГК на подготовку наступательной операции 1 УФ ( №220029 от 18.02.1944).

<sup>2</sup> Карель, П. (2003). Восточный фронт: Выжженная земля.1943–1944. Москва: Изографус, 2, 330-333.

<sup>3</sup> Центральный державний архів громадських організацій України (ЦДАГОУ). *Ф. 1, Он. 23, Сн. 973, С. 81.*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, С.40

<sup>5</sup> ЦАМО РФ. *Ф. 132-А, Он. 2642, Снр. 13,* Арк.206–207 / Директива Ставки ВГК на подготовку наступательной операции 1 УФ ( №220029 от 18.02.1944).

<sup>6</sup> ЦАМО РФ. *60 А Ф. 236, Он. 2673, Снр. 477, Арк. 4–12 / План операции 1 УФ по разгрому гркппировки немцев в районе Кременец, Старо-Константинов, Тарнополь (23.02.1944).*

but the Soviet soldiers did not succeed in gaining a foothold in the city. Military Parts of the 322nd and 336th Infantry Divisions of the 23rd Infantry Corps with the support of The 1st Guard Artillery Division gained a foothold 5 km north of the city and fought back in the fierce counterattacks of the Germans' reserve forces. "On March 7, the most brutal battle, the one that we have not seen since the Kursk arch", thickened here, " – witnessed G.K Zhukov in his memoirs.<sup>1</sup>

Fierce battles unfolded throughout the front. The Germans prepared Tarnopol for a all-around defense; the city's defense was carried out by General Egon von Neidforff. The measures for the accumulation of material and technical reserves and resettlement of the local population were taken. In various circumstances, there were not more than 2000 civilians in the city.<sup>2</sup>

Experts of the Soviet political structures carefully studied political consciousness and morale of Nazi personnel concentrated in the city, on the basis of interrogation. Thus, the soldiers of the 3rd company of the 4th Infantry Regiment Yuzek Dolbnya taken captive March 11, 1944 in Tarnopol, revealed: "People were recruited forcibly to the Division ,prepared for deportation to Germany. The company has 60-70 people (out of 140) Ukrainians who were released by the Germans from Stanislavsky and Lviv prisons, where they were imprisoned as criminals. Soldiers do not want to fight for the Germans. There were 6 cases of desertion in the company. The Germans are instructed not to give up, but to end their lives with suicide. All officers are Germans. Ukrainians do not even trusted to command branches. Ukrainian soldiers are fed worse than the Germans. The German command, exercising ideological pressure and maintaining strict discipline, forcibly made the Nazis in Tarnopol to resist.

The Corps of the 5th Company of the 500th Penalty Battalion, Vladislav Kit, a Pole by nationality who was captured on March 10, 1944 in the Tarnopol region, testified: "There is a Hitler order that says that the Germans in Tarnopol defend the German border. And if they defend Tarnopol, then all the fault will receive an amnesty, other German soldiers-crosses<sup>3</sup>.

The main office of the Supreme Headquarters on March 11 allowed the troops of 1 Ukrainian Front to go to defense to repel the enemy's counterattack, at the same time demanded to capture Tarnopol and Proskurov no later than March 14-15 and to resume the charge on March 20-21.<sup>4</sup> However, it was not possible to fulfill these requirements for the command of the Soviet troops completely. Particularly heavy battles unfolded in Tarnopol region on March 15. The enemy attacked Soviet positions all day long with tanks and infantry. In some artillery batteries, only one gun left<sup>5</sup> In the battles for Ternopil, the Germans used armor trains, which, with the fire of their guns, supported counterattacks of troops. There is an evidence in archival documents of Captain Rudolf Henging, commander of the "R" armored train, captured on March 10, 1944 in the north of Tarnopol. According to him: "The command issued an order to keep Tarnopol for any expense. If Russians take it, they will be able to use a widely branched network of highways. And this means that they will be able to break into the area of Lviv. The political and moral condition of the officers is not bad. The Germans, undoubtedly, in the spring, will restrain the onslaught of Russians. In April, Germany is waiting for the opening of the second front in France. With this Germans associate as soon as possible the end of the war. Because the troops of the British and Americans will be defeated by the German army, which numbers several million people who are in France. After the defeat of the Allies, this army will be transferred to the Eastern Front "<sup>6</sup>. Prisoners testify to one more instrument of ideological treatment of the Nazis' personnel – the prospect of defeating Allied troops and the involvement of several millions of soldiers in the powerful defense of Tarnopol. And this, of course, solves all the problems. Unlike servicemen who are not of German descent and who do not belong to the officer's line, the Germans are more pragmatic about the situation, hoping for the reality of the promised prospects. Moreover, they assessed the actions of the Red Army. The same prisoners said: "In the offensive, you manage to use tanks and equestrian traction. This in the conditions of impassability was of great benefit .. In general, Russians have recently learned to use different forms of fighy. They do not lose sight in front of the difficulties<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Жуков, Г.К. (1985). Спогади і роздуми. Київ: Політвидав України, 633.

<sup>2</sup> Каталог виставки: Тернопіль (2006). *І час не лікує пам'ять*, 94.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Грылев, А. Н.: ред. (1968). *Сборник документов Верховного Главнокомандования за период Великой Отечественной войны*. Москва: Воениздат, 4, 47.

<sup>5</sup> *Советская артиллерия в Великой Отечественной войне 1941 – 1945 гг.* (1960). Москва: Воениздат.

<sup>6</sup> ЦДАГОУ. Ф1. Оп.23. Сп.973. С. 30.

<sup>7</sup> ЦДАГОУ. Ф1. Оп.23. Сп.973. С. 30.

The German command of the Army Group "South" continued its main task of constraining actions to ensure the systematic withdrawal of the 1st Panzer Army on the Dnister River, as well as the maintenance of the Brody and Ternopil districts. These cities became the main centers of defense and the German command's hope of keeping the respective line and preventing the advance of Soviet troops towards Lviv. The Germans, being concerned about the situation in the Lviv direction, quickly tossed a rather strong group into the Tarnopol region: the 349th Infantry, 9th and 10th Tank Divisions of the SS from France, the 100th Light and the 367th Infantry Division from Yugoslavia. All this grouping had to settle between Tarnopol and Lviv on March 28-31.

This is what the personnel of the enemy was constantly informed about, surrounded by Tarnopol. But the attitude to his position was ambiguous. A soldier of the first company of the 948 Infantry Regiment, 359 Infantry Division, Werner Potner, captured on March 14, 1944 in the south of Tarnopol during an interrogation, testified: "The mood of the soldiers is different. Young people are kept alert, and the old people are extremely dissatisfied. They often talk about the difficulties of the war in Russia and do not believe in the victory of Germany. Recently, soldier Kreckler said: "It is clear that we lost the war. Take at least our company. We have almost all the soldiers of the infantry. They are 17-18 years old. What does such an army have against the Russian soldiers and their tanks hardened in battles? Most of our soldiers are on the eastern front for the first time. They are unaware of the real situation on the fronts. For example, officers say that all German soldiers were killed just outside Stalingrad. And the old-timers know that the Russians took 90 000 prisoners. In the division, there have been bad things with food recently. 500 grams of bread and hot food is given once a day. This is not enough for a young soldier»<sup>1</sup>

The commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front on the night of March 21 received an order from the main office Supreme Command on the restoration of the offensive in the Tarnopol region – by the forces of the 60th Army with the task of capturing the city of Tarnopol, and began to execute the offensive plan, which was developed on March 11-12, respectively to which the 60th Army had to capture the city of Tarnopol, and, in addition, to ensure the entry of the 1st and 4th Panzer Army into the breakthrough in Chernivtsi and Kamyanets-Podilsky directions. The 60th Army began an offensive in the following grouping:

The 28th Infantry Corps (246, 140, 107th infantry divisions, 156th fortified area, 24th artillery brigade, one Howitzer and one Mortar regiment, and 41st engineering battalion) came from the boundary of Markopol, Ivatchev; the offensive front was 32 km; The corps had 393 guns and mortars and 10 tanks;

15th Infantry Corps (322, 336, 148th Infantry Divisions, 59th Panzer Regiment, 1st Guards Artillery Division of Breakthrough, 7th Fighting Antitank Artillery Brigade, 32nd Guards Mortar Brigade, One Guard Military Regiment, two engineering battalions, 252nd penal company, etc.) came from the border Ivatchev, the eastern outskirts of Tarnopol, Big Borky; the offensive front – 20 km; The corps had 612 guns and mortars, 27 tanks and self-propelled artillery units;

the 4th Guards Tank Corps stepped into the fighting orders of the 15th Infantry Corps with the task of supporting the advance of the connections of this corps;

the 23rd Infantry Corps (359th, 8th, 351st Infantry Divisions, one cannon, three fighter-antitank guns, one Guard Military Regiment, one engineering battalion) came from the boundary of Khodyakov Malyyi, Ivanivka; the offensive front – 30 km; There were 273 guns and mortars in the Corps; in its line there was an offensive of of the 1st and 4th tanks Armies;

18th Guards Infantry Corps (226th and 280th Infantry Divisions, two anti-tank artillery regiments, one engineering battalion) came from the boundary of Kanivka, Surnyky; the offensive front is 25 km; There were 315 guns and mortars in the Corps;

the 106th Infantry Corps (135, 302, and then the 340th Rifle Division) was in the second echelon of the Army and ended up concentrating at the junction of the 15th and 23rd Infantry Corps;

The 94th Infantry Corps (99th and 117th Infantry Divisions) became an Army and moved from the area to the north of Bolshaya Bubnovka.<sup>2</sup> The main task of the 60th Army was to capture the city of Tarnopol and the defeat of the Tarnopol garrison. The onset of the offensive was scheduled for the morning of March 21 following a short artillery attack preparation. The 60th Army in those days carried out the roundabout and bypassing the Tarnopol's garrison of the enemy. Initially, the 60th Army tried to solve three problems immediately and quickly: to surround Ternopil, to create a strong outer front and to destroy

<sup>1</sup> ЦДАГОУ. Ф1.Он.23. Сп.973. С. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Каталог виставки: Тернопіль (2006). *І час не лікує пам'ять*, 7, 43-45, 136-137.

the Tarnopol garrison. However, the situation required a gradual offensive with a consecutive solution of these problems.

On March 24, Ternopil was surrounded and blocked by 336th and 322th infantry divisions of the 15th Infantry Corps. Soviet troops broke through to the outskirts of the city many times, but as a result of persistent counterattacks, the enemy was forced to retreat. The Soviet troops could not have been locked up in the city.<sup>1</sup>

On March 24, the enemy carried out multiple counterattacks in the direction of Ozernaya Lake. On March 29, the 60th Army stopped the assault of Ternopil and was preparing to resume it on March 31st. In 10 days of the second offensive on Ternopil on March 31, units of the 60th Army advanced for 10-20 km, successively surrounded the Tarnopol garrison of the enemy, created the outer front of the encirclement with the forces of the 28th and 106th Infantry Corps, and then – of the 23rd Infantry Corps, which gradually moved to the west, and went out to the border: (ex.) Parents, Trostyanets, Ostashivtsi, Popropovna, Gorodische, Kupchintsy, having opposing parts of 349, 357, 359th infantry divisions and blocked garrison in Tarnopil.

At present, the Soviet political structures carried out large-scale measures of ideological influence on the enemy. For example, in an information summary on the Main Political Department of the Red Army No. 213 for March 31-April 1, 1944, it was stated that 60,000 leaflets were spread among the enemy group surrounded by Tarnopol district. By frontline aviation on March 28, 29, 30, 1 336 000 leaflets were distributed. And 1.04 pilots of the connection of Major General Aviation Comrade Sukhanovsky and parts of Major Chatsanidze in difficult weather conditions (continuous snowfall) over the city of Tarnopol, 24,000 leaflets were scattered. Aircraft crews were awarded.<sup>2</sup>

In the same report, there are objectives of the captivated soldier of the 4th company of 949 infantry regiment of 359 infantry division Field Rossel, who voluntarily surrendered to captivity. He testified: "The soldiers of the Tarnopol Garrison, which consists mainly of parts of our division, know that we are surrounded. But the fear of Russian captivity is so great that soldiers, even in such a situation, do not dare to surrender. In addition, among the soldiers the rumors are spread that the tank division was sent for help and that the tanks are several kilometers from the city. Officers and non-commissioned officers watch after soldiers and do not allow to retreat. The food was good, but there was little bread. Each day they give vodka."<sup>3</sup> The analysis of such data shows the following elements of the ideological work of the Nazi command among the personnel, surrounded in the city of Tarnopol. Intimidation of Russian captivity, as a prospect of inevitable massacre, the promise of military assistance and the maintenance of combat spirit by doping like vodka.

In Tarnopol, in the surroundings, there were the remains of the 4th infantry divisions, according to Soviet data, about 12 thousand people were armed with 35 tanks and self-propelled guns, 85 guns, 125 mortars, up to 400 machine guns, 350 cars, 6 various warehouses, 385 railroad cars with ammunition and property. This number is mentioned in many historical works. However, the source of these indicators is the report of the Soviet inform bureau on April 16, 1944 on the elimination of the surrounding German troops. It is clear that these are propagandistic figures. German sources indicate the size of the garrison in 4723 servicemen. It should be approached critically too. In this case, the number of personnel of the crew units is given and the soldiers from the rear, technical, security parts and units, and so on are not taken into account.

According to the military documents of the 60th Army, found in the Podilsky archives by the author, the German Ternopil garrison was up to 7 thousand people who were included in:

949th infantry regiment, 359th artillery, 359th battalion bomber and non-commissioned officer school of 359 infantry division;

514th and 543rd reserve battalions from the 154 reserve division;

4<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment consisting of 44th SS of the "Galicia" division;

8th and 500th penalty officer battalions;

171st security battalion;

24th reserve artillery division;

separate economic and technical divisions of 68 pp and td "Adolf Hitler"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ЦАМО РФ, 60 А, Ф. 417, Он. 10564, Спр. 843, Арк. 1–54 / Журнал боевых действий 60 Армии за март 1944 г.

<sup>2</sup> ЦДАГОУ, Ф 1, Он. 23, Сн. 973, С. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> ЦАМО РФ, 60 А, Ф. 417, Он. 10584, Спр. 665, Арк. 79 / Мартовское наступление и Тарнопольская операция 15 Стрелкового корпуса (отчетный доклад).

According to the author, the number of the German garrison in 7 thousand people is most likely.

There was no huge need for food in the garrison, except for bread. Ammunition and medicines were delivered by air, although often these goods were dropped inaccurately and did not reach the destination. A significant proportion of the soldiers of the enemy consisted of soldiers of the penal units, it was announced by the Fuhrer order since then, for the successful implementation of the task of the city's defense, all their misdeeds will be forgiven.<sup>1</sup>

Captured on April 2, 1944 in the Marianka village, the pilot-shooter of the U-52 aircraft, Alphonse Buckel, during the interrogation, provided the following information: "On March 29 our detachment of 12 cars arrived from Odessa to Reisgof (200 km north- west of Lviv) Here, almost 100 aircrafts were concentrated at the airfield to assist the German troops surrounded by Tarnopol. On March 30, 20 aircrafts took off for Tarnopol with fuel and ammunition. On the way back, aircraft were carrying seriously injured soldiers. Soldiers, who unloaded my plane in Tarnopol, said that the situation of the surrounded garrison was bad. Sacrifices are useless and should not be defended, since the Russians are exaggerating ours much. They also said that the only hope is for help, which is promised a long time ago, but for some reason it hasn't been provided yet"<sup>2</sup>.

The defense of Tarnopol was organized by the Germans as circular; it was divided into defense sites (sectors). The eastern section along the length of the 3600-meter front was defended by the 949th Infantry Regiment of the 359th Infantry Division; A southern part of 2,100 m length was defended by a subdivision of four infantry companies with 10 machine guns; the western part of the length of 1300 m was defended by the reinforced infantry battalion (three companies); a northern section of 2500 meters in length by a 12-gun-worthless battalion. The reserve of the commandant of the garrison consisted of: an infantry battalion, an artillery division, a tank company, an artisan company.

Engineering training of the defense of Tarnopol city was the next. Around the city, a solid fire trench was created with remote pits (for machine guns) and a developed network of passages. They were equipped with dampers in one roll. The second fire trench was dug on the different places. The fire positions of anti-tank guns were located on the roadside. Due to the lack of time, the buildings of the city for defense were adapted weakly. In some buildings, there were specially prepared embrasures, often they served as holes from rounds. Mortars were installed in yards or gardens, guns – in the streets. Attack guns and tanks were used maneuverably for counterattacks. Cellars were the shelters. A lot of buildings were mined. The Tarnopol garrison maintained a continuous radio and aircraft connection with the commander of the German 4th Tank Army and commander of the 48th Tank Corps.

The Soviet command presented the Tarnopol Garrison an ultimatum to surrender, but its opponent rejected it. The leaflets, prepared by the departments of special propaganda, did not lead to the result. In one of them, it was stated: "Only those who appear to be captive in time can hope for salvation, only they will see their homeland and their families, all others will be destroyed".<sup>3</sup>

The information summary on the Main Political Departure of the Red Army № 210 for March 25-26, 1944, describes this situation. On March 24, at 20.00, an ultimatum was enclosed with a grouping of German troops in the city of Tarnopol consisting of: the 359th infantry division, 500th, 947th, 948th, 949th penalty battalions and the 171st security battalion. The ultimatum was handed by Lieutenant Afonyushkin, an interpreter Kovalenko, intelligence officers Sergeant Kyrishchev and Sergeant Gladkih. The text of the ultimatum was the following: "Generals, officers and soldiers of the Tarnopol Garrison! The German units located in the town of Tarnopol and its surroundings are surrounded by the parts of the Red Army. A large number of our tanks, artillery, mortars, and thousands of infantrymen are able to completely destroy the city. Any attempt on your part to break through a powerful environment is useless. In order to avoid the unjustified future of bloodshed, I propose to give up. The whole garrison of the city is ensured by the preservation of life in the absence of resistance on your part and ensuring the safety of the material. All soldiers are guaranteed the preservation of life, uniforms and marks of distinction. All wounded will be provided with medical assistance. Everyone who seems captive will be given the first right to return home after the war. We will wait for your reply by 20.00 Moscow time on 24th of March. If by now you do not give a positive answer, all our forces will be put into action and your garrison will be completely destroyed."

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<sup>1</sup> Каталог виставки: Тернопіль (2006). *І час не лікує пам'ять*, 7, 43-45, 136-137.

<sup>2</sup> ЦДАГОУ, Ф 1, Оп. 23, Сп. 973, С. 100.

<sup>3</sup> ЦАМО РФ, 60 А, Ф. 417, Оп. 10957, Спр. 205, Арк. 287.

An ultimatum was adopted by the German parliamentarian captain. When he received it, he asked to postpone the reply by 8:00 on March 25. He needed time to report to the command. An ultimatum was made by Chief of the one of the divisions of Political Affairs, Lieutenant Mendelssohn, Lieutenant-Colonel of Moscow and senior instructor of the division.

The text was approved by the commander of the corps. On March 25, at 8.00, a parliamentary group that arrived after receiving a response from the command of the surrounded Tarnopil group was let to neutral line, and then it was met with a powerful machine gun fire. The opponent of the ultimatum did not accept and continued to oppose, hoping for help from the outside. The leaflets issued for the surrounded garrison reveal the actions of the German command, which condemned the soldier to death<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, on March 27, 1944, in the afternoon in the center of Tarnopol, Soviet pilots threw a pennant with a letter addressed to the commander of the garrison deployed by Major-General Shlegger on behalf of the National Committee of Free Germany and the Union of German Officers signed by Major Engelbrecht and Lieutenant von Kühelgen. The second copy of the letter was sent to the same recipient with the special prisoner of war on behalf of Major Engelbrecht.

On March 27, in the afternoon in the district between Kamyanets-Podilsky, Mogilev-Podolsky and Proskuriv, nine pennants with letters to the commanders of the units on behalf of the "National Committee" "Free Germany" were thrown at the headquarters of all the surrounding enemy divisions.<sup>2</sup>

Confident of the ineffectiveness of propaganda measures, the Front Command and the 60th Army decided to attack the city.

On March 25, in the battle for Ternopil, an 94th Infantry Corps was formed in the 117th and 99th Infantry Divisions, which partly strengthened the ring of the blockade around the city, replacing the 135th infantry division of the 106th Infantry Corps, sent along with 148th Infantry Division on the outer front of the environment towards the Gorodishche.

On March 25, the Germans made a strong counterattack (more infantry regiment and 40 tanks) from the Ozernaya area in order to break into the surrounded Tarnopol garrison. Parts of the 28th and 106th infantry corps, timely reinforced by anti-tank artillery, ceased this and all subsequent counterattacks of the enemy.

From March 26 to March 29, there were persistent battles on the breakthrough of the outer circuit of the city defense, which in those days was completely eliminated, and the Soviet troops approached directly to the city defense circuit. The 94th, 15th and 4th Guards Tank Corps tried to capture the city on March 29, but did not succeed.

On March 30, the 15th and 94th infantry corps were preparing for a decisive assault on the city's enemy. The 15th Infantry Corps, consisting of the 302nd and 336th Infantry Divisions, had a task to strike from the east in the central part of the city in order to cut the enemy's defense into two parts; The 94th Infantry Corps, consisting of the 99th and 117th Infantry Divisions had a task to strike from the southeast to the southern outskirts; the 4th Guards Tank Corps (38 tanks) and the 322nd Infantry Division – to strike at the north-eastern outskirts of the city. The offensive was supported by the 1st Guards Artillery Division of the breakthrough and assault aircraft of the 2nd Air Army. The western and northwest parts of the city were blocked by parts of the 106th Infantry Corps. the 60-th Army had an absolute advantage in artillery, tanks, and aviation. The German garrison did not have the means of air defense.

The Soviet command had particular hopes for the massive use of artillery. For the third assault of Ternopil, the artillery forces and means of unprecedented scale were engrained to the conduct warfare in a city. The actions of the five rifle divisions involved in the city's assault were supported by two artillery divisions, which included 8 artillery brigades and 3 separate anti-tank brigades.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the 1827th heavy self-propelled artillery regiment was re-armed with the most up-to-date self-propelled artillery unit SU-152. Tarnopol was the first city where this gun was tested for the first time for use in street battles to destroy fortified fire points. The power of SU-152 gun was so huge that after the volley of the house remained only a bunch of stones. The 108<sup>th</sup> Artillery brigade of great power was equipped with guns of a super-large caliber: 152 and 203 mm.

In the rifle companies, assault groups were organized consisting of: 7-40 automatic riflemen, 2-3 mine pickers with explosives, 2-3 chemists with termite and smoke sacks. In each company there were

<sup>1</sup> ЦДАГОУ, Ф 1, Он. 23, Сп. 973, С. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, С. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Державний архів Тернопільської області (ДАТО), Ф.Р. 2004, Он. 1, Сп. 14а.

2-3 such assault groups and one consolidation group. The assault groups were supported by guns from 45 mm to 152 mm, as well as SAU-152. 203 mm cannons were assigned to separate directions.

The third assault of Tarnopol began on March 31. At 12.00, a three-hour artillery attack was launched. The fire of artillery though influenced the morale of the enemy, but was ineffective, because it was not accurate enough. At the end of the artillery training, Soviet planes attacked by surrounding bombing assault strike. Parts of the 94th and 15th infantry corps broke into the city and captured a number of neighborhoods. So since March 31st persistent, bloody fourteen-hour street fights started in the city.

But the enemy's combat spirit remained sufficient to resist. The prisoners of soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> company of the the 948 Infantry Regiment, Bruno Molke, showed the following: "Soldiers believe that the German army is still strong enough. Recently, non-commissioned officer Remke spoke of the fact that our retreat is a matter of time and predetermined by the the tactical intentions of the command. We will still attack, maybe even in the near future. Many soldiers talk about a new weapon that seems to be in the German army. This weapon has not yet been put into action. It depends on Germany's future destiny. I believe that the soldiers who are surrounded by Tarnopol will fight to the last, but in case of officers being along with them, who will manage soldiers. I know that tank divisions are approaching the Tarnopol region, which should provide assistance to the surrounded group"<sup>1</sup> In the testimony of this prisoner of war, it is said about a new weapon-rescue in Germany. After the defeat of the Allies and the approach of the tank parts, this is the third mythologeme used by the German commanders to maintain a high level of morale for their soldiers. Once again, the testimony of soldiers refers to the level of authority of an officer who is able to save the subordinates within the limits of subordination.

Until April 4, the front of the enemy's defense in the city drastically reduced. Most of the city was under the control of the Soviet troops. However, the resistance of the enemy did not stop, it put great hopes on outside assistance. On April 4, on the left flank of the 60th Army in the Pidhaytsi area, the enemy carried out a counterattack by the forces of the 9th and 10th Pan Division divisions of the SS in order to facilitate the exit of the main forces of the 1st Tank Army (the district of the city of Skala) and the Tarnopol Garrison. The Tarnopol garrison was warned about this counter-attack, as its resistance increased.

The counterpoint of the German tank units forced the commander of the 60th Army to withdraw a part of the forces from the troops that assaulted Tarnopol, to cover their left flank: On April 6 – 99 Infantry Division, and then the 4th Guards Tank Corps (without one tank brigade); these connections were directed to the south to the district of Terebovlya.

At the same time, the grouping of the storming troops was reinforced by parts that came from the reserve – self-propelled artillery regiment and battalion of high-explosive flamethrowers.

From April 7 to 11, fighting inside the city continued with a slight advance. On April 12, after a three-hour artillery training of a strong air bombardment and a blow of flamethrowers, part of the 15th and 94th infantry corps reinforced the assault in all directions and captured the city center. The battle was for every house, every basement. German soldiers and officers demonstrated resilience and endurance, the Soviets – persistence and determination in the accomplishment of the tasks. General Egon von Neidforff was awarded a knight cross with oak leaves for the defense of Tarnopol (April 17, 1944 posthumously), with which only 882 men were awarded during the war. General I.D. Chernyakhovsky was recognized as the best by the Command of the Front and later he himself was appointed commander of the front and became the youngest commander of this level for the entire Great Patriotic War.

During fourty days, Soviet artillery, the tanks were continuously firing the city. In the central part of the city, the enemy is securely strengthened in the church, the church, the castle, and the prison. To destroy it it was necessary to destroy the buildings. Military photojournalist K. Simonov in the article "Siege of Ternopil", published in the "Red Star" newspaper on April 16, 1944, wrote that the destruction of every house where the enemy was strengthened requires thousands of heavy rounds. Meanwhile, the streets on which these houses are, are so narrow and winding that direct shooting is not possible. That is why the central part of the city was so much destroyed in the course of continuous attacks by the Soviet Army. On April 14, the main forces of the Tarnopol garrison were defeated. On April 15, the Supreme Commander issued a decree in charge of commemorating the victory of the Soviet troops in Tarnopol.

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<sup>1</sup> ЦДАГОУ, Ф 1, Он. 23, Сн. 973, С. 84.



However, a part of the Tarnopol Garrison (up to 1500 soldiers and officers) continued to hold Zagrebel on the 15th and 16th of April (the western suburb of Tarnopol).

On April 14-17, the powerful Frigate Tank Group broke out to help the surrounded garrison: 24 Panther tanks from the SS Division of Hohenstaufen, 9 Tiger Tanks from the 507th Battalion, 30 T-IV Tanks and 30 StuG Attack Guns of the 8th German Tank Division. Under Great Hodachkov, tense battles unfolded. Only the heroic efforts of the tankers of the 6th Panzer Corps, consisting of: the 51st, 52nd, 53rd Panzer Brigades, the 22nd Motorized Brigade, the 11th Guards Heavy Tank Regiment (1C-2 tanks), no city garrison unlocked.

The 117th Infantry Division got the task of destroying the enemy together with a flaming battalion. The assault on Zagrebella was scheduled for the morning of April 16. At night of April 16, the flame-throwing battalion installed 80 flamethrowers at the boundary of the fire, including the preparation of fire for 30 flamethrowers at the school – the main office of the enemy's resistance. That same night, the Germans, aware of the hopelessness of further defensive actions, decided to make an attempt to break through the entrapment. At 3 o'clock, 50 minutes on April 16, they concentrated in the school district and suddenly switched to a counterattack. The concentrated fire of machine guns and machine guns of the 117th Infantry Division was repulsed. German soldiers returned under the protection of the walls of buildings. But after a while they rallied and again rushed into a counterattack. Bearing a loss from rifle-machine gun gunshot, the enemy came to the verge of fire flamethrowers. Flame throwing became a surprise and caused a shock. This forced the Germans to retreat again. On the battlefield there are a lot of dead and burned soldiers and officers. The Soviet infantry units together with the flamethrowers attacked the enemy and seized the building of the school in a brutal hand-to-hand battle. However, some groups of Germans opposed during the day. Only on April 17, the remnants of the Tarnopolsky garrison in Zagrebelya were completely destroyed. Small groups of the enemy made attempts to get out of the environment by the method of impregnation. There is data about the withdrawal from the environment in Ternopil about 50 German soldiers. The German troops lost 5,000 dead in the Tarnopol battles, and killed 2,790 people.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet side lost: 2,876 soldiers and officers killed, 11,903 troops wounded.

### CONCLUSIONS

An important node of communications, a large settlement – Tarnopol was taken by Soviet troops in a persistent and bloody struggle. Fights for the city lasted from March 10 to April 17. The third, continuous storm of the city was conducted within 17 days. 25 units and parts that were distinguished in the battles for Ternopil by the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief №0108 of April 26, 1944, were awarded the honorary title of "Tarnopol".<sup>2</sup>

The warfares were accompanied by large-scale propaganda companies on both sides. The most receptive for the Soviet ideologists was the target audience of soldiers, representatives of the Allies and colonizers. The degree of influence of Soviet propaganda materials was supported by successful offensive actions.

Among the enemy troops, the main instruments of maintaining the combat spirit of the personnel were the planted myths about assistance and new weapons. Clarification on the importance of keeping this trend and intimidation of the Soviet captivity and the subsequent actions of the Red Army after the breakthrough of defense.

In addition, the authority of the officer corps was expressed in coercion against subordinate personnel.

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