

PART FOUR

RETROGRADE MOVEMENTS

Chapter 9

DELAYING AND BLOCKING ACTIONS

One of the frequently tried and always effective methods of defense against break-throughs consists of delaying and blocking a main enemy thrust with the help of strong reserves. Like most others, these defense tactics presuppose the existence or early availability of adequate reserves. Compared to the enemy attack forces these reserves may be much weaker without necessarily being at a disadvantage. During the Russian Christmas offensive in 1943, for instance, the enemy wedge had a five-to-one superiority over the German blocking forces. In such a case the block must be sufficiently resilient to withstand the terrific impact of hostile tank forces and must be absolutely shockproof. The block should be placed in favorable terrain if it is to prevent the enemy advance or divert its axis.

Whenever a blocking force fails in its mission, it must be withdrawn to another line farther to the rear. Its essential task is to disable as many hostile tanks as possible in order to weaken the enemy's striking power and re-establish the balance of forces. An attack by infantry without the assistance of armor will rarely constitute a threat to tank-supported units.

Eventually, the block will form the nucleus of the new defense line that is to be built up. The line must be extended on both wings as soon as possible and be strengthened by forces moved up from other sectors which are not under attack. Tactical expedients, dictated by momentary needs, often lead to confusion in the disposition of units. The command must attempt to eliminate these deficiencies at the earliest possible moment. The methods used and sequence observed in closing any remaining gaps will depend upon the situation and local conditions. Overextended frontages and shortage of manpower will often prevent a further extension of sectors. Along the German front in Russia in 1944, quite a few gaps remained open for weeks or even months—for instance the so-called Wehrmacht Gap in the Pripyat marshes. Ground and air reconnaissance had to be constantly on the alert since the Russians rarely failed to take advantage of such gaps by some surprise move.

It is extremely important to recognize the exact time at which the enemy finally abandons his attacks against a blocking force, only to renew them with fresh troops on the flank, at some other gap, or in a different sector. Often the destruction of his last remaining tanks and the fading of his infantry assaults will indicate the change in the enemy's intentions. Whenever the Germans observed any such indications, they immediately withdrew all their tanks from the blocking force in order to build up strong reserves. This was all the more necessary since they could not count on the arrival of reinforcements, except in rare instances.

Whenever towns or major natural obstacles such as rivers are situated within the break-through area, it will prove advantageous to integrate them into the defense system. Towns should be organized for all-around defense and, in accordance with their characteristics, obstacles should be used to strengthen the block. If extensive marshes or other impassable areas are close behind the front line, the routes for bypassing them in case of a withdrawal must be determined in advance. Efficient guides, road repairs, bridges, corduroy roads, secure defiles, and timely orders for withdrawal are some of the numerous elements for the success of such difficult retrograde movements.

The duration of each delaying action by a blocking force, the number of successive withdrawals, and the depth of a retrograde movement depend upon the over-all situation, the terrain conditions, and the distribution of forces, and therefore vary in each instance. Three co-ordinated withdrawals to a total depth of sixty miles were necessary during the Russian Christmas offensive in 1943. Additional intermediate movements of minor significance were performed by individual units whenever they were under particularly heavy pressure. Strong resistance in every position was essential to accomplish the delaying mission. Partial withdrawals were permitted only with the approval of the army commander. The retrograde movement of the entire blocking force was contingent upon his personal orders.

The Russian offensive followed the operations described in Chapter 1. Even during the fighting in the Teterev-Irsha triangle, German aerial reconnaissance reported increasing rail traffic from the northwest in the direction of Kiev. (Map 9) Day and night, enemy troop transports including hundreds of tanks moved across the Dnepr bridges toward the west. Doubtless the Russians transferred strong armored and infantry units into the Kiev area. They either intended to commit them in an effort to regain the terrain they had lost northeast of Zhitomir, or they planned a new operation. Since no new units were identified along the Teterev front, everything seemed to indicate that preparations for a new major offensive were under way. It was not until the last days before Christmas that the Russians started local probing attacks along and to the south of the Kiev-

Zhitomir highway in order to find some weak points in the German dispositions and to acquire advantageous jump-off positions. Air photographs, taken daily, indicated a steady increase in the number of enemy artillery emplacements which at first remained unoccupied. New batteries moved into the emplacements and adjusted their fire. These were clear indications of an impending enemy offensive. Russian tank movements, conducted simultaneously on the right army wing near Kanev along the Dnepr, did not fit into the general picture and were carried out so clumsily that they were immediately recognized as feints. Even though radio intercepts indicated no change, the heavy truck traffic which started to roll toward the front every night after 20 December left no doubt that the Russian attack was imminent. German reconnaissance planes sighted between two and three thousand loaded trucks rolling from Kiev to the front during several successive nights with just as many returning empty. This was the best indication that the enemy would soon launch his attack in this sector. The sudden calm descending upon the front on 23 December deceived nobody. On the contrary, it indicated that the Russian offensive could start at any moment, especially since the Russians liked to launch large-scale operations on Christmas Eve, believing that the German soldiers could be caught off guard on this important religious festival.

The Germans took a number of precautionary steps to absorb the initial shock of the first enemy assaults and to add to the depth of their defense. The fully motorized artillery division, which had arrived only two weeks earlier and had been committed on a quiet sector in accordance with specific orders issued by Hitler, was now moved to Zhitomir. This division was equipped with 60 light and 40 medium pieces and 24 assault guns, and was therefore particularly capable of shattering mass attacks. In addition, the XLVIII Panzer Corps was pulled out and assembled in the vicinity of Korosten. A motorized infantry division, undergoing rehabilitation in rest areas west of Berdichev, was to form a regimental combat team with all those elements which were ready for commitment. This combat team actually consisted of two motorized infantry battalions, one light artillery battalion, and one signal company. The weak local reserves near the Kiev-Zhitomir highway were reinforced with forty tanks. Although the formation of reserves was of vital importance, army was unable to relieve any other units because its front was so greatly overextended. Army group could not help at this time, and the Fourth Panzer Army therefore had to face the Russian onslaught with very meager reserves.

An antitank ditch was dug approximately ten miles behind the main line of resistance. Its eastern section lay behind an unfordable stream. The important railroad junctions at Zhitomir, Berdichev,

and Kazatin were protected by fortifications for the defense of which, however, only alert units formed by service troops were available. All nonessential rolling stock and supplies were evacuated to the west.

As expected, the Russian offensive began on 24 December south of the Kiev-Zhitomir highway. After a heavy one-hour preparation, the enemy succeeded in breaching the positions held by two understrength panzer divisions. But the two divisions continued to defend their main line of resistance although they were completely encircled. By noon this Russian force reached the antitank ditch and crossed it at some points. A second powerful armored thrust penetrated the overextended front in the central sector during the morning. Only slightly delayed by local resistance, several hundred enemy tanks rolled in an endless stream toward Berdichev. Here too, the antitank ditch caused little delay because the Germans lacked sufficient manpower for its effective defense. By the end of the first day the enemy force forming the main effort reached the Kiev-Zhitomir railroad line.

Another enemy thrust, carried out farther north in the direction of Zhitomir proper, initially made slow progress in the swampy forests south of the highway because of the strong German antitank fronts. During the night the two encircled panzer divisions, ordered to break out to the west, attacked the enemy from the rear and disorganized him so completely that he was incapable of continuing the attack on the next day.

In an effort to stem the Russian advance, the XLVIII Panzer Corps was withdrawn from the Korosten area and committed in a counterattack south of the Teterev. The corps commander had orders to block the hostile advance behind the undulating terrain between Kazatin and Berdichev and to delay the Russians as long as possible. Up to this time some 800 enemy tanks had appeared in this area. When the panzer corps arrived south of the Teterev at dawn, enemy tank columns, many miles long, suddenly came into view. The corps commander could not resist the temptation and, instead of following his instructions, he decided to make an immediate surprise attack against the open enemy flank. But this flank attack had no chance of succeeding because 150 German tanks could not combat or even deflect the axis of the mass of Russian armor which had meanwhile grown to 1,000 tanks. As expected, the enemy quickly recovered from his initial surprise and held off the panzer corps with one-fourth of his armor and some antitank weapons. Although the panzer corps disabled seventy-eight tanks, it was unable to overcome this obstacle. The bulk of two Russian tank armies rolled on to the area north of Kazatin which was defended by a regimental combat team of the 20th Panzer Division, the twenty-four assault guns of the artillery division, and the alert units stationed within the city limits. If this

unforeseen threat was to be met and a break-through in depth to be prevented, the other elements of the artillery division which had just moved into the Zhitomir area had to be pulled out immediately and transferred to Kazatin. Traffic bottlenecks, created by the simultaneous use of the Zhitomir-Kazatin road by units of the panzer corps traveling in the same direction, were unavoidable. The excellent condition of the asphalt road made it possible to pour enough reinforcements into Kazatin at the last moment, enabling the Germans to withstand the impact of the Russian onslaught.

The other enemy thrusts in the Berdichev area and east of Zhitomir were also brought to a halt. Thus, the XLVIII Panzer Corps was afforded sufficient time to comply with its original orders and take up positions between Kazatin and Berdichev. The corps arrived on 26 December, just in time to see the Russians streaming into Kazatin. Their next objective was to cut the Zhitomir-Vinnitsa highway. The German tanks repelled the enemy spearheads and retook the ridge east of the highway. The Russians then split their attack forces and attempted to find a weak point for a break-through to the west, but the panzer units took advantage of the good road net and always reached the critical point in time to block the advance of the hostile armor. Well concealed by terrain and brush, they let the Russian tanks approach and scored direct hits before they were discovered. On one day alone, 26 December, more than 200 enemy tanks succumbed to these tactics. By the third day of the thrust the break-through area of the attacking Russian tank armies was blocked by the panzer corps which constantly received infantry reinforcements. For five days the Russians tried to break through this blocking force. The only visible result they achieved was their mounting losses of armor. When the enemy realized the futility of his efforts, he changed the direction of his thrust and attempted to unhinge both flanks of the blocking force by outflanking Zhitomir in the north and bypassing Kazatin on the south. To counteract this move, the LIX Corps was withdrawn from Korosten to Novograd-Volynskiy and the XIII Corps evacuated Zhitomir in order to take up new positions south of the swampy forests along the Teterev. In addition, all available elements of two divisions were moved closer to Kazatin to extend the front of the blocking force. A local withdrawal of the XLVIII Panzer Corps completed these measures and helped to build up a new, integrated defense system. On the other hand, Hitler refused to permit the withdrawal of the two right wing corps in position along the Dnepr bend although these forces were in imminent danger of being cut off. A light screening force maintained contact between these two corps and the rest of the heavily engaged Fourth Panzer Army. For the time being the Russians probed this screening force without realizing their opportunity. Before long, however, the pres-

sure on the VII Infantry Corps front increased, the salient was over-extended, and the front line was breached. The enemy poured more and more troops into the gap north of Uman without meeting any opposition. There was still a possibility of extricating the two corps from the tightening noose, although they were seriously threatened from the rear. Had they been allowed to use detours or to break through, they could have re-established contact with the Fourth Panzer Army and would have been integrated into the second blocking line put up by the army. But the two corps were ordered to stay in place despite increasingly emphatic requests addressed to Hitler. By the time the German command fully realized the danger, the enemy had assembled one army north of Uman with a second one following close behind. The staff of First Panzer Army—and two battle-weary panzer divisions—was quickly relieved in another sector, shifted to Uman, and put in charge of the two corps cut off in the north.

In the meantime, heavy fighting continued for weeks along the Fourth Panzer Army front. In the center, the XIII Corps was weakened by the heavy losses of equipment it had suffered during its withdrawal across the swampy woods south of Zhitomir. Realizing this weakness, the Russians concentrated their armor opposite the sector held by this corps. They anticipated that the break-through they had hitherto been denied could be achieved by attacking the sector. During this phase of the fighting they attained several small penetrations. These were quickly eliminated with the assistance of XLVIII Panzer Corps units, but the divisions of XIII Corps were gradually reduced and crushed. Their remnants held out among the panzer units and, to unify the command, they were subordinated to the panzer corps and the staff of XIII Corps was withdrawn. In a last desperate attempt to break through, the Russians massed all available tanks and penetrated the German lines. But in the subsequent melee all seventy tanks that had gone through were put out of action. Thus ended the attacks along this sector during the last days of January.

The Russian armored thrust on Vinnitsa failed at about the same time after enemy spearheads had come within reach of Zhmerinka, the important railroad junction from which the double-track lines branch off to Odessa. The XXVIII Infantry Corps, recently transferred from the northern front, launched a powerful counterattack with one panzer and three strong infantry divisions, repelled the hostile tank army, and cut off those elements which had advanced as far as Zhmerinka.

The last major enemy thrust against the extreme west wing of Fourth Panzer Army was directed against the Shepetovka railroad station. One weak infantry division held Shepetovka against vastly

superior enemy forces, but this Russian attack also failed. A subsequent attempt to cut off the LIX from the XLVIII Panzer Corps by an enveloping thrust via Polonnoye was equally unsuccessful. An additional infantry division transferred from the northern front was detrained in Shepetovka in time to launch a counterattack. The division recaptured Polonnoye, sealed the gap, and re-established contact with the adjacent panzer corps.

This brought the Russian Christmas offensive to its end. After five weeks of hard struggle, Fourth Panzer Army with its four corps and some 200 tanks had scored a major defensive success against six enemy armies with 1,200 tanks. Although the Russians forced the Germans to withdraw their front lines by about sixty miles, they did not achieve a strategic break-through with far-reaching objectives. Their plan had been to crush Fourth Panzer Army, unhinge the two army groups in the Ukraine, and nail them against the Black Sea or push them into Romania. This plan failed and, in view of its proportions, the territorial gains obtained by the Russians were really insignificant. The Fourth Panzer Army remained intact and held a continuous front line. This defensive success was achieved because, after the third day of the Russian offensive, a strong panzer corps was employed as blocking force. At that time the center of the army sector had been broken through and gaps up to ninety miles in width extended on its flanks. But the blocking force formed the steel clamp that held together the isolated infantry corps and preserved the army from disintegration. The Russians were unable to split this solid army front of twelve divisions. By fighting three successive delaying actions, the blocking force had prevented a break-through and stabilized the situation sufficiently to permit the formation of a continuous front.

Chapter 10

DELAY ON SUCCESSIVE POSITIONS

In a situation where enemy infantry attempts to break through without much armored support, a delaying action in successive positions may be the most promising defensive tactic. The underlying principle of this maneuver is to inflict casualties upon the enemy without becoming too closely engaged. By offering limited resistance on successive positions, the defender attempts to weaken the enemy until his forces are too disorganized to mount a sustained offensive. After the hostile attacks have lost their momentum, strong resistance may be offered on a permanent position or a counteroffensive may be launched. Delaying actions are therefore temporary expedients to prevent a break-through by trading a minimum of space for a maximum amount of time to allow the defender to move up new forces.

Complications arise when the flanks of a weak delaying force are open to attacks by strong hostile armor supported by ample reserves. In August 1943, during the delaying action south of Belgorod, the Germans reached Kharkov after co-ordinated withdrawals from eight successive positions which they held during daylight and evacuated under cover of darkness. (Map 10) The distance covered by each withdrawal varied between five and six miles. Kharkov was held for a week and then the delaying operation was continued by a withdrawal via Poltava toward the Dnepr. During this phase, however, the unfavorable situation in the Kiev area compelled the German commander to accelerate the withdrawal, forcing him to abandon 120 miles of terrain within twelve days. During the retrograde movement from Belgorod to Kremenchug on the Dneper, the enemy was never able to break through or push by the flanks. The entire delaying force, consisting of twelve divisions, crossed the Dnepr and established a permanent defense line on the west bank of the river.

The auspices for this delaying action were not favorable. After the failure of Operation ZITADELLE, the German pincers attack on Kursk in July 1943, the Russians held the initiative. They launched the pursuit with powerful reserves, while the Germans withdrew to the positions they had held before the ill-fated offensive. The XI Infantry Corps moved into the heavily fortified defensive system anchored on Belgorod and repelled all enemy attacks across the Donets River. The Fourth Panzer Army, adjacent to the northwest, tried to offer resistance in open terrain and was overrun by strong Russian armored forces. Remnants of one of its infantry divisions sought

refuge behind the left wing of the XI Corps. An attempt by Fourth Panzer Army to close the gap by an armored counterattack was unsuccessful. The Russian tanks advanced without much interference and reached Bogodukhov on 6 August. This enemy thrust endangered the XI Corps north of Belgorod. Russian armored spearheads advanced toward Poltava and Akhtyrka fifty miles to the rear, while other enemy forces attacked the front and flank of the corps to encircle and annihilate it. The corps front formed a deep salient into enemy territory which might have disintegrated with complete encirclement its final destiny. This would have meant a widening of the gap from 15 to 50 miles and the immediate loss of 5 divisions. To prevent such a disaster the corps had to withdraw from Belgorod, but the retrograde movement was to be gradual in order to gain time for the preparation of countermeasures. In view of the limited strength of the corps, it would have been a mistake to attempt to close the gap by widening the corps sector nor was any such plan feasible since the enemy kept up his pressure on the entire front. On the contrary, the corps had to keep its forces together and form a solid block against the superior enemy forces.

These considerations determined the conduct of operations. The corps commander decided to fight a delaying action in successive positions until the corps reached Kharkov and then to hold the city. The corps had to build up a front facing north and protect its left flank against an enemy envelopment, while the right flank was anchored on the Donets River. Elements of two infantry divisions were reinforced by an assault gun battalion, an antitank battalion, and twelve Tiger tanks to provide cover for the left flank.

During the night from 5 to 6 August, Belgorod was evacuated after heavy street fighting and the next position, prepared on the high ground immediately south of the city, was occupied. Luftwaffe and service troops defended the road crossings in the swampy lowlands along the Lopan River against enemy spearheads threatening the deep flank. The greatest danger, however, loomed along the Belgorod-Kharkov *Rollbahn*, where the enemy massed his forces in an attempt to break through to Kharkov. A full-strength assault gun battalion, with forty-two self-propelled guns, moving up from Kharkov, was to protect the highway. Its mobility and fire power were to enable the battalion to stop any possible armored break-through.

The position south of Belgorod was held for one day and abandoned after the enemy had deployed his forces. Continued resistance in one position would have led to heavy casualties and the annihilation of the isolated corps. Constant enemy attempts to outflank the left wing submitted the command to a severe nervous strain and made extreme demands on the physical endurance of the troops. However great the sacrifices, they had to be made if worse disaster was to be

averted. On 9 August the limits of endurance seemed to have been exceeded when, after an all-night evacuation, the Germans failed to reach the new phase line by dawn. Enemy spearheads broke through along the *Rollbahn* and the whereabouts of an entire division, the 168th Infantry Division, was uncertain. News from the Donets and Lopan sectors was no less alarming. Enemy armor had broken out of the Donets bridgehead, other Russian forces had crossed the Lopan, and the assault gun battalion from Kharkov had failed to arrive. Low-flying hostile planes in great numbers dropped fragmentation bombs and machine gunned troops on the march. Suffering heavy casualties, the German forces grew restless. A few division commanders came over to the corps command post, which by then was situated close to the front line, and requested authorization for an immediate speedy withdrawal to Kharkov in view of the critical situation and the low morale of their forces. Suddenly several trucks loaded with stragglers came tearing down the highway, ignoring all stop signals. When the trucks were finally brought to a halt, the stragglers explained that they had become separated from their 168th Division unit and had been seized by panic when they were subjected to an armored assault farther up the road. Their intention was to drive straight through to Kharkov, at that time forty miles behind the German front. They reported that their division had been wiped out and added that the 88-mm. antiaircraft batteries, detailed to block the highway, were no longer in place.

Every experienced combat commander is familiar with this sort of panic which, in a critical situation, may seize an entire body of troops. Mass hysteria of this type can be overcome only by energetic actions and a display of perfect composure. The example set by a true leader can have miraculous effects. He must stay with his troops, remain cool, issue precise orders, and inspire confidence by his behavior. Good soldiers never desert such a leader. News of the presence of high ranking commanders up front travels like wildfire along the entire front line, bolstering everyone's morale. It means a sudden change from gloom to hope, from imminent defeat to victory.

This is exactly what happened. The corps commander stood at a crucial point along the *Rollbahn*, orienting unit commanders and assigning them a mission in the new defense system which he attempted to build up. Self-propelled antitank guns arriving at this instant were immediately committed to block the highway against an armored break-through which seemed imminent as the fire from approaching tanks came ever closer. The corps commander quickly drove past the newly established line toward the din of battle to find out for himself whether the antiaircraft guns were holding out. Driving around a corner, he suddenly witnessed the destruction of a Russian tank by the improvised antitank front. He counted eleven more disabled

tanks and saw the remaining enemy armor withdraw straight into an extensive mine field where one tank after another was blown up.

Shortly afterward, German fighter planes appeared, and shot down more than a dozen enemy aircraft, clearing the air over the corps front. German heavy weapons and artillery pinned the enemy infantry to the ground when they advanced on a broad front. The threat of a break-through along the *Rollbahn* was eliminated and the German lines held.

The 6th Panzer Division on the left flank faced a difficult situation when, in addition to its own sector, it had to take over the one previously held by the missing 168th Division. The enemy exerted heavy pressure and the panzer division requested immediate antitank support. The corps commander dispatched twelve antitank guns and arranged for an air strike on the Russian tank column advancing east of the Lopan River. These combined efforts prevented the immediate collapse of the German flank cover.

Delayed by traffic jams, the long-awaited assault gun battalion did not arrive until noon. After refueling in some gullies covered with underbrush, it was committed in a counterattack against the enemy tanks threatening the left flank. The massed attack of the forty-two guns surprised the enemy and hit him hard. The assault guns destroyed all enemy tanks and antitank guns on the east bank of the Lopan, shattered the Russian bridgehead, and drove the remaining enemy forces across the river. By early afternoon the situation was under control. Reports from the Donets sector indicated that the enemy was unable to enlarge his bridgehead in the face of stubborn resistance from German infantry units supported by assault guns.

Even though an entire division was missing, the corps had scored an initial defensive success. The enemy's intention to annihilate the German forces by a concentric attack from three sides had failed. Heavy Russian losses in personnel and matériel, including sixty disabled tanks, resulted from the day's operations.

During the night to 10 August, the corps made an unobserved withdrawal to a hastily prepared position about six miles to the south, the salient points of which were occupied by advance detachments. Weak rear guards, left behind in the former position, led the enemy to believe that the line was fully occupied. The next morning, when Russian infantry attacked the position after a heavy concentration, they found only the rear party maintaining contact. The German troops, exhausted by the previous day's fighting and the night march, were able to recuperate during the morning hours. By noon the first enemy patrols cautiously approached the new position. Its gun emplacements and strong points were well camouflaged, and enemy ground and air reconnaissance therefore failed to locate them. Three

divisions held the line; one of them had left its positions along the Donets to join the corps.

The Russian attacks resumed during the afternoon with increasing violence. The most dangerous Russian arm was not the badly mauled armor or the tactical air support, but the powerful artillery. In this instance, the effect of the heavy artillery fire was not so devastating since the excellent camouflage of potential German targets forced the Russians to deliver flat trajectory fire. But whenever German machine guns or heavy weapons fired from open terrain, they were spotted by hostile observers and quickly neutralized. If they were to escape destruction, they had to use well-concealed and readily accessible alternate and dummy positions.

By the evening of 10 August, the enemy attacks had lost some of their sting. In view of the experience of the last few days, the Russians made probing thrusts after dusk to maintain contact with the corps in case of another German night withdrawal. The enemy infantry was given a hot reception and, after all attacks had been repulsed, the corps withdrew to the next prepared position. By the time the infantry occupied the new line, the bulk of the artillery and antitank guns were ready to fire. Forming a solid block, the corps was unshaken by renewed enemy onslaughts.

The same delaying tactics were employed during the following days. The withdrawal to successive positions was exhausting, but the casualty rate remained low. The enemy suffered disproportionately high losses, which forced him to gradually relax the pressure on the German lines. The corps front was shortened and strengthened by units no longer needed for flank protection, and reserves were formed. The 168th Division, missing for several days, was found in a well-concealed area when the corps commander made a reconnaissance trip north of Kharkov. The division commander explained that he had understood his unit was to act as corps reserve and that he had therefore withdrawn to the forests twenty-five miles behind the front. After his conduct had been castigated in no uncertain terms, he was told to commit his division as covering force in the next position to be occupied. This made it possible to pull out the 6th Panzer Division, designate it corps reserve, and move it to the forest area for a well-deserved rest.

The XLII Infantry Corps, adjacent to the right, was forced to join the XI Corps withdrawal during the night of 11-12 August because its defense line along the Donets formed a deep salient in Russian-held territory. The infantry division on the left wing of this corps had not previously been engaged in a tank battle; it offered little resistance to strong Russian armored forces, which broke through without difficulty and suddenly appeared in the rear of the XI Corps front outside Kharkov. The situation became even more critical

when the recruits of a newly arrived regiment, overcome by fear of the approaching Russian tanks, ran for their lives until they were stopped at the bridges in the suburbs of Kharkov. Strong enemy infantry poured through the wide gap to exploit the initial break-through achieved by the tanks. The 6th Panzer Division was immediately alerted and its spearheads intercepted the enemy in the southeastern outskirts of Kharkov where he had occupied the big tractor plant. The division counterattacked, dislodged the enemy from the factory after fierce fighting, destroyed many tanks, dispersed the Russian infantry, and closed the gap. The danger was eliminated for the time being.

Tank fright is frequent among newly activated infantry divisions when training in antimechanized defense has been neglected. Combined arms training with armored or assault gun units is essential in order to give each soldier the experience of being overrun by a tank while in his foxhole and to acquaint him with the use of antitank weapons.

A recently arrived panzer division strengthened the corps flank and blocked the approach routes to Kharkov. The battles for Kharkov proper have been analyzed in Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-230, pages 53-56. The evacuation of Kharkov by the Germans became necessary because of unfavorable developments on the southern front. It was carried out without difficulty on 18 August, and a previously prepared position a few miles to the west was occupied by the corps. The new position was situated on high ground protected by a swampy valley cutting across the approach roads. It was considerably shorter than the position skirting Kharkov and could therefore be held very effectively.

During the withdrawal of the German rear guard, the only bridge across the marshes which had been left intact collapsed under the weight of some Hornets (88-mm. tank destroyers). One infantry battalion reinforced by eight Hornets was thereby cut off on the east bank. The enemy attempts to annihilate this small rear guard were frustrated by German units supporting the bridgehead from the west bank. The rear guard held out for twenty-four hours until the bridge was repaired and it could cross under cover of darkness.

In its new position, the corps had to ward off some fierce attacks by enemy forces trying to envelop both flanks. Several local penetrations were sealed off by armored counterattacks. But even this strong position had to be evacuated after a short while since it formed a dangerous salient to the east after the adjacent units were forced to pull out. The next withdrawal led the corps into exposed, flat terrain where it had to extend its wings until the sector covered the forty-mile stretch between the Kolomak and the Berestova Rivers.

In the meantime the over-all situation forced general withdrawal behind the Dnepr River. The XI Corps was given the mission of organizing and covering the withdrawal of twelve divisions across the highway and railroad bridges at Kremenchug. (See Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-201, pp. 82 ff.) During this retrograde movement, the same delaying tactics were employed which had been so successful during the withdrawal from Belgorod to Kharkov. Again and again, delay on successive positions forced the enemy to make time-consuming preparations for battle and to suffer heavy casualties, leading to the gradual exhaustion of his forces. The Russians recognized these intentions and tried every day to force the issue by achieving an armored break-through. Above all, the enemy wanted to capture major cities commanding the road net needed for speedy maneuver. In view of the rainy weather, the possession of hard-surface highways became a decisive factor to both sides since the mud prevented any movement off the roads. The Germans took this factor into account and concentrated their antitank defenses in and around important towns. During this phase, cities were therefore far more important than during the fighting in the area north of Kharkov. The enemy achieved only one armored break-through when he blocked the German withdrawal across the Orchik River near Karlovka. A critical situation developed because of additional delays in the river crossing caused by floods, mud, and the steepness of the west bank. There was a grave danger that enemy tanks might reach the weakly held west bank before the arrival of the German units which were forced to take devious routes. The densely populated suburban area of Karlovka near the river was set ablaze by enemy artillery fire, which meant a further delay in the crossing. Demolitions of factories, railroad installations, depots, and supplies, ordered by higher headquarters in line with a German scorched earth policy, caused still more delays. A major enemy break-through at this point seemed certain, when suddenly the Russian tanks were forced to slow down because of mud, and the danger subsided.

With a change in the weather the ground dried; the infantry divisions were able to move faster and the daily rate of withdrawal was stepped up to twenty to thirty miles. The Russian tanks did not renew their pressure until the corps halted for several days at the Kremenchug bridgehead. Russian striking power was impaired by several weeks of German delaying actions on successive positions. The enemy counteroffensive had spent itself.

PART FIVE

DEFENSE AGAINST BREAK-THROUGH— A COMBINATION OF DEFENSE TACTICS

Every protracted defensive engagement requires the application of a combination of tactics which correspond to the changes in the situation. During the Russian campaign several defensive methods were employed simultaneously or successively with no single one exercising a predominant or, even less, a decisive influence on the outcome of the operation. Even within one action, subordinate units sometimes applied tactics differing from those used by the main body. At the beginning of August 1944, for instance, during the fighting along the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, six infantry battalions blocked the enemy advance while the two divisions to which they belonged carried out a simultaneous flank attack. As a rule, defensive actions are designated by the tactical measure which predominates. During the battle for East Prussia, for instance, the Germans at first used improvised zone defense tactics. Subsequent Russian break-through attempts were frustrated by defensive pincers, flank attacks, delaying and blocking maneuvers, and attacks with reversed fronts, but the outcome of the battle was determined by the employment of zone defense tactics.

On the other hand, a combination of defense tactics stopped the major offensive in which the Russians drove from the Volga to the Dnepr in the winter of 1942-43. Delaying and blocking maneuvers by panzer and infantry units, combined with pincers, flank thrusts, and the encirclement of an armored corps prevented a Russian break-through to Rostov in December 1942. This would have endangered the German troops in the Caucasus and south of Stalingrad. In another instance, rigid defense by infantry combined with mobile maneuvers of armored units stopped a Russian break-through attempt toward the Sea of Azov during January and February 1943. Delay on successive positions during the withdrawal toward the Dnepr in the summer of 1943 slowed down the enemy's thrust to the west and made it possible to move up German reinforcements. The pincers attack following that retrograde movement crushed the Russian armored wedge in the Dnepr bend and broke the backbone of the offensive.

During the fighting near Kirovograd in January 1944, the Germans employed delaying and blocking tactics, defensive pincers, flank attacks, envelopments, and break-through maneuvers which were of equal importance and followed each other in quick succession. For this reason the Kirovograd operation is a typical example of the application of combined defense tactics.

Toward the end of 1943, the Russian operations in the south seemed to indicate that the Soviet command planned to break through the German front in several places, split the forces of Army Groups A and South, and drive them into the Black Sea and toward the Romanian border. In line with these plans the Second Ukrainian Front launched a major offensive in December 1943 in order to break through in the Kirovograd area. The Russians opened a breach in the Eighth Army front, but this initial attempt was frustrated by swift counter-attacks of German motorized units. During the first days of January 1944, German ground and air reconnaissance as well as radio intercepts indicated Russian concentrations and attack preparations. Strong artillery forces were assembling in the rear of the Russian lines. While only about sixty Russian tanks were discovered in the concentration areas close to the German front, intelligence estimates assumed that strong armored forces were located in rest areas farther to the rear.

The Eighth Army front was overextended and few reserves were available to conduct an active defense. It seemed unlikely that any sizable units could be shifted from sectors not under attack because all the divisions were understrength and the enemy exercised pressure along the entire front. The armored elements of two panzer divisions committed along the front line were held back as corps reserves. Eight GHQ artillery battalions were available to strengthen the two potential centers of gravity. Artillery ammunition on hand was abundant, a fact which partly compensated for the German inferiority in number of guns.

The Russians launched their attack at 0600 on 5 January, jumping off from their two principal concentration areas. Preceded by half an hour's artillery preparation and several air strikes, massed infantry poured through the gaps in the German front in an attempt to break through to the Kirovograd area. Following closely, additional infantry and some antitank units widened the areas of penetration and secured the interior flanks for the advancing Russian armor. In conjunction with the two main thrusts the Russians conducted holding attacks in varying strength along the entire army front. By the time the infantry assault got under way, the heavy preparation, in which two-thirds of the enemy's batteries participated, had neutralized most of the German artillery and inflicted extremely heavy casualties. The combat strength of some divisions dropped even lower—even before

the start of the offensive the 2d Parachute Division held a twelve-mile sector with 3,200 men and the 10th Panzer Grenadier Division covered eleven miles of frontage with 3,700 men. The Russian infantry forces, six to seven divisions strong and supported by armored groups of varying strength, achieved deep penetrations during the morning hours. At the southern point of main effort they advanced 6 miles on a 4-mile front, and in the XLVII Panzer Corps sector 13 miles on a 10-mile front. (Map 11A)

When the Russian armored forces attempted to exploit the initial break-through, the German corps reserves launched small-scale flank attacks. Supported by antitank units, they destroyed altogether ninety-three enemy tanks, mainly in the southern sector. Nevertheless, it became evident that the Eighth Army forces alone would be unable to seal the gaps in the front. As requested by army, the 3d Panzer Division was transferred during the late morning and committed in the XLVII Panzer Corps sector. In the southern break-through area, approximately 200 Russian tanks were held up by diversionary flank attacks before they could reach the Ingul River. In the northern area of penetration, however, the counterthrusts carried out by elements of 11th Panzer Division failed to stop the armored forces driving toward the southwest. There, the enemy threatened to envelop Kirovograd from the north and west and cause its fall by cutting the German lifelines.

On this first day of the Russian offensive the Germans destroyed 153 enemy tanks and caused heavy casualties, but their own losses were proportionately high. The 10th Panzer Grenadier Division, for instance, lost 620 men in one day. By the end of the day the situation was confused since, despite a German withdrawal to Adzhamka and a corresponding shortening of the line, the Russian penetrations were not adequately sealed off.

During the night the enemy moved strong infantry forces into the newly captured terrain. Approximately twenty-two infantry divisions were equally divided between the two areas of penetration. These divisions had been hastily reorganized and their replacements consisted of inadequately trained troops; nevertheless, the over-all ratio of infantry strength was eight to one in favor of the Russians.

The Russian infantry protected the interior flanks of the penetration by a quick build-up of antitank gun fronts echeloned in depth. Lacking centralized fire direction and flexibility in forming points of main effort, the Russian artillery did not make its overwhelming superiority properly felt. This was partly due to transportation and supply difficulties which delayed the arrival of many Russian artillery units. Not until the capture of Kirovograd was the enemy able to mass his artillery effectively. The German artillery played an important part in the defense, delivering well-co-ordinated concentrations

with high expenditure of ammunition. During the first day of the offensive the Germans expended six to seven times more ammunition than the enemy, firing approximately 177,000 rounds against 29,000. This enabled them to inflict extremely heavy casualties and break up Russian attack preparations. In view of the high casualty rate suffered by the German infantry, the artillery was in some sectors, especially along the shoulders of the gaps, the sole obstacle confronting the Russians.

Statements by prisoners of war and captured documents permitted the Germans to estimate the Russian armor at 620 tanks. Against these forces the Germans could assemble only 56 tanks and 109 assault guns. The enemy regrouped and reinforced his armor in the northern penetration area during the night of 5 January. His mobile units were deployed in accordance with German doctrine but lacked concentration of effort in one direction and paid too much attention to flank cover. The latter fact was probably due to the relentless local flank attacks which the Germans conducted even when they only had a few tanks on hand. During these small-scale actions the German tank crews proved their superiority over and over again. Moreover, this type of active defense deceived the enemy as to German strength.

When the enemy renewed his attack on the morning of 6 January, the Germans were able to tie down strong forces by active defense and to delay the advance of some Russian armored units by hit-and-run tactics. In the north, however, the 3d Panzer Division counter-attacks failed to close the gap and in the south the enemy tanks thrust toward Kirovograd without much obstruction, reaching the southern suburbs of the city by evening. The other jaw of the Russian pincer crossed the Ingul River at Severinka, cut the Kirovograd-Novomirgorod highway, and threatened Kirovograd from the north.

Since German resistance east of the Ingul had crumbled, the army commander intended to block any further break-through attempts to the west by moving up new forces which were to annihilate the enemy spearheads west of the river. For this reason he urgently requested reinforcements from army group. Even a further withdrawal and shortening of lines would not have led to the formation of counter-attack forces since every man was needed up front. The army group replied that advance units of Panzer Division Grossdeutschland were to arrive in the area southwest of Kirovograd during the evening of 7 January in order to close the gap south of the city. Until then the German forces had to gain time and contain the enemy in a series of quickly changing seesaw actions. East of the Ingul, a reinforced panzer battalion made an enveloping thrust, attempting to cut the enemy's rear communications. After initial success the attack bogged down against strong resistance by antitank guns. When the three divisions holding out in the sector between the two areas of penetra-

tion were pulled back to defend the perimeter of Kirovograd, one of them—the 14th Panzer Division—was given the mission of closing the southern gap. But during the night, while the preparatory movement took place, strong Russian infantry and armored forces penetrated into Kirovograd from the south and hit the assembly of 14th Panzer Division. In stiff house-to-house fighting the enemy advanced to the railroad tracks and breached the perimeter defense. The two other divisions were fighting their way back north of the tracks when they were suddenly attacked by enemy forces from three sides, squeezed into Lelekovka, and isolated. In its withdrawal from Kirovograd, the 14th Panzer Division succeeded in establishing contact with the Lelekovka force after some bitter fighting. After withdrawing to the west bank of the Ingul, the 3d Panzer Division attacked the Russian armored concentrations but met with little resistance when the enemy sidestepped the attack. (Map 11B)

Southwest of Kirovograd, the newly arrived units of the Grossdeutschland Division were thrown piecemeal against strong Russian forces advancing unobstructed toward the southwest and succeeded in delaying the enemy advance.

The attempt to block the Russian advance in front of Kirovograd had failed. The isolated force at Lelekovka, forming the last anchor of the German position in this area, held out and tied down strong enemy forces, thereby preventing a junction between the two areas of penetration. But on each side the enemy's motorized and armored forces poured through the gaps, crossed the Ingul, and assembled on the west bank for a major break-through. During the night of 8-9 January, a strong armored force advanced as far as Malyye Viski, overran the command post of the XLVII Panzer Corps, and threatened rear communications.

In this situation it was imperative that the army stabilize the front wherever possible and then close the gaps. Since the available forces were inadequate for a co-ordinated effort, it was necessary to resort to local expedients. Above all, the blocking forces had to pin down strong enemy units by vigorous resistance. Then, those Russian forces that had broken through had to be weakened by limited objective attacks and armored thrusts so that they would be incapable of breaking through to the west in strength. This was achieved by a series of local actions. By the evening of 9 January, the Grossdeutschland Division pounced on the flanks of the enemy forces advancing southwest of Kirovograd and turned them back. The gap in the sector adjacent to the right was temporarily closed by a frontal counter-attack of newly arrived improvised units.

The closing of the gap to the left of the Grossdeutschland Division was accomplished by a pincers attack which cut off two Russian infantry divisions and some armored units. After their annihilation

the Germans recaptured the high ground near Karlovka and restored the front line southwest of Kirovograd by a frontal counterattack.

In the northern sector, elements of the 3d Panzer Division were given the mission of restoring the situation at Malyye Viski. After heavy fighting the enemy's tank losses were so high that he was forced to withdraw his troops from this area. The isolated German forces holding out at Lelekovka were in a precarious situation. Unrelenting Russian ground attacks, supported by waves of fighter bombers, left no doubt about the outcome of this unequal struggle. The shortage of ammunition was only partly relieved by air drops. A relief thrust by the 11th Panzer Division did not materialize because the division was unable to free itself from a holding attack by superior Russian forces. As a last resort, a motorized infantry battalion was reinforced with a few tanks and assembled in the Bolshay Vyska area. After overcoming stiff resistance, the task force advanced across enemy-held territory via Gruznoye to Oboznovka. During the night of 9 January, the pocket force in Lelekovka broke out, linked up with the relief force, and withdrew to Gruznoye. The defense in place at Lelekovka had delayed and finally prevented an enemy break-through to the west. The XLVII Panzer Corps front was consolidated along the line Karlovka—west of Gruznoye—Vladimirovka and the XI Corps, adjacent to the north, was aligned with the panzer corps. This withdrawal permitted the transfer of the 282d Infantry Division to the panzer corps, which held the division in reserve against any further Russian break-through attempts in its sector. Despite the heavy tank losses they had suffered, the Russians were expected to renew their attacks after regrouping their forces.

By 11 January the enemy launched a new attack in the Gruznoye-Vladimirovka area after an artillery preparation lasting half an hour. (Map 11C) His armor was organized into several strong attack formations which were to pave the way for the infantry. The German blocking forces were unable to hold the line which was breached in several places. During the following day the penetrations were partly sealed off by local counterattacks. After the arrival of several infantry divisions from other sectors, the enemy, on 15 January, resumed his attacks with a heavy artillery preparation. Eleven infantry divisions, supported by tanks, breached the German line between Gruznoye and Vladimirovka, opening a seven-mile gap to a depth of three miles. The three German divisions holding this sector were split up and isolated. Resisting stubbornly, they fought their way to the shoulders of the area of penetration and, by clinging to their positions, made it possible to close the gap on the next day.

On 16 January, while the Russians concentrated all available ground forces and air support for an all-out attack, the newly arrived 3d SS Panzer Division made a spoiling attack into the enemy's offensive

preparations. The three German divisions holding the shoulders joined the panzer forces and closed the gap.

The Russian break-through attempts had failed after twelve days of bitter fighting in the Kirovograd area. The thirty-one Russian infantry divisions used during this operation were weakened to such an extent that many regiments were reduced to 300-400 men. By 17 January only about 120 Russian tanks were available for commitment. Throughout the entire operation the German army commander was handicapped by the low strength of his units which dropped at an alarming rate under the pressure of the Russian offensive. Unable to echelon his forces in depth, he had no means of preventing the enemy from exploiting local penetrations in the German front. Intermediate and lower commands were rarely in a position to form reserves. The weak corps reserves, usually consisting of small armored units, succeeded in delaying the enemy and inflicting slight losses, but were incapable of turning the tide. The complete lack of general reserves forced the army commander to resort to improvised tactics. During the entire struggle in the Kirovograd area, the army commander was under strict orders prohibiting retirement to shorter lines, otherwise he might have regained his freedom of maneuver and would have been able to form reserves in divisional strength. Finally, after having received reinforcements, the German Eighth Army frustrated all further Russian break-through attempts. During this ten-day period the Germans had demonstrated extraordinary flexibility in the use of different defense tactics.

PART SIX

CONCLUSIONS

The dynamic offensives executed by the German Army during the first part of the Russian campaign ground to a halt in front of Moscow and at Stalingrad. During the following months of bitter struggle against a tenacious enemy who cleverly exploited the vast space and climatic conditions of his homeland, German strength declined so much that the subsequent Russian counteroffensives could no longer be repulsed. It was Hitler's worst mistake not to have recognized the impending disaster in time or, if he did realize it, to have dismissed it in his peremptory manner. This obstinate denial of obvious facts forced the German Army to fight a series of defensive actions against breakthroughs along overextended front lines during the second part of the Russian campaign. Every time the Germans succeeded after extreme sacrifices in closing one gap, the line gave way at another point. Resolutely they went to their doom in a long succession of exhausting battles and withdrawals. The disintegration of the German forces was speeded up when corps, and even entire armies, under orders to hold critical cities and areas, were cut off from the main force. The perfection of defense tactics and the superhuman efforts of the field forces were insufficient to turn the tide so long as the Germans were unable to restore a balance of strength essential to an eventual victory over the Russians. Under the prevailing circumstances an equilibrium in the fields of manpower and matériel was beyond expectation. But it was within the realm of possibility that the German military performance in the field first equal and later outdistance the Russian. As a prerequisite, the German potential should have been brought into the proper relationship with the elements of time and space to compensate for the Russian superiority in manpower and matériel so that victory could eventually have been achieved through the application of superior strategy. At no time should the German Army have expended its strength as recklessly as it was required to do in front of Moscow and at Stalingrad. The Russians thereby gained a superiority which enabled them to hold the initiative. Contrary to Hitler's concepts, a timely halt in the offensive or a temporary withdrawal would not have undermined the confidence of the field forces, but would have led to additional successes, the sum total of which might have brought the war with Russia to a favorable conclusion.

After the Stalingrad disaster the Germans fought delaying actions along a 1,000-mile front for a four-month period. Even then they succeeded in sealing off the wide gaps and stabilizing the front and achieved a defensive victory by March 1943. However, the German lines were overextended and the panzer forces, reconstituted during a lull lasting three months, were still too weak to withstand the renewed onslaught of the forces which the Russians had meanwhile moved up. Once again the enemy broke through the German front, but this time the eleven best, fully reorganized panzer divisions which were assembled in the Kharkov-Poltava area were able to frustrate the Russian intentions by a determined counterattack. Even so, the time had not yet come to seize the initiative. The Russians still had to suffer heavier casualties. If necessary, the Germans should have abandoned more terrain and shortened their lines to establish a balance of strength which would have prevented other break-throughs. Only then could a decisive German counteroffensive have assured a German victory in Russia before the Allies landed in France. Defeat of the western powers was contingent upon Russia's being driven out of the war.

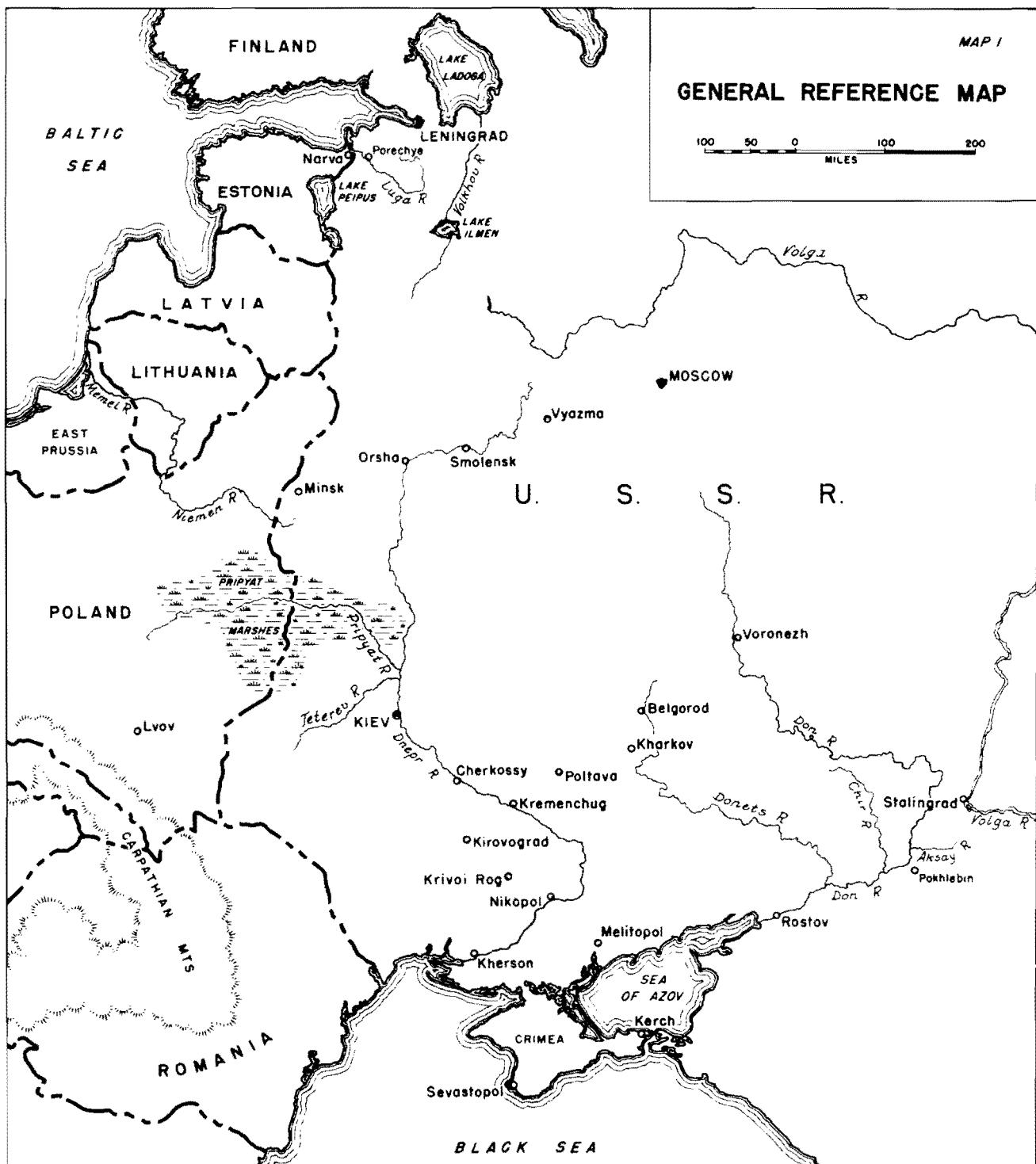
The German defense against Russian break-throughs, as presented in this study, was only a means toward attaining this over-all objective. In 1943 the German Army in Russia almost succeeded in putting an end to enemy break-throughs by adroitly combining various defense tactics. Victory was once again in the offing, but it turned out to be a Russian one. Before the eleven panzer divisions could come to grips with Russian reserves and annihilate them, the German armor was thrown into Operation ZITADELLE in July 1943 and bled white when it ran into a fortified system of hitherto unknown strength and depth. Hitler thereby fulfilled the enemy's keenest hopes and presented him with the palm of victory. The subsequent Russian counteroffensive, conducted with powerful reserves which were fully intact, broke through the German line. The enemy break-throughs started anew not only in this sector but also in others, where no adequate reserves were available.

At best, skillful defense tactics and supreme personal sacrifices were instrumental in producing local, temporary relief. The German strategy of self-sacrifice precluded the possibility of stabilizing the front along a line which by then had been shortened by the course of events. Finally, a suggestion to shift all German forces from the West to the East in order to stop the Red Army's invasion of Germany and prevent the territorial expansion of communism was turned down by Hitler. While he believed his principal enemies to be in the West, the German military leaders, for all their antagonism toward the western powers, considered Russia their irreconcilable enemy.

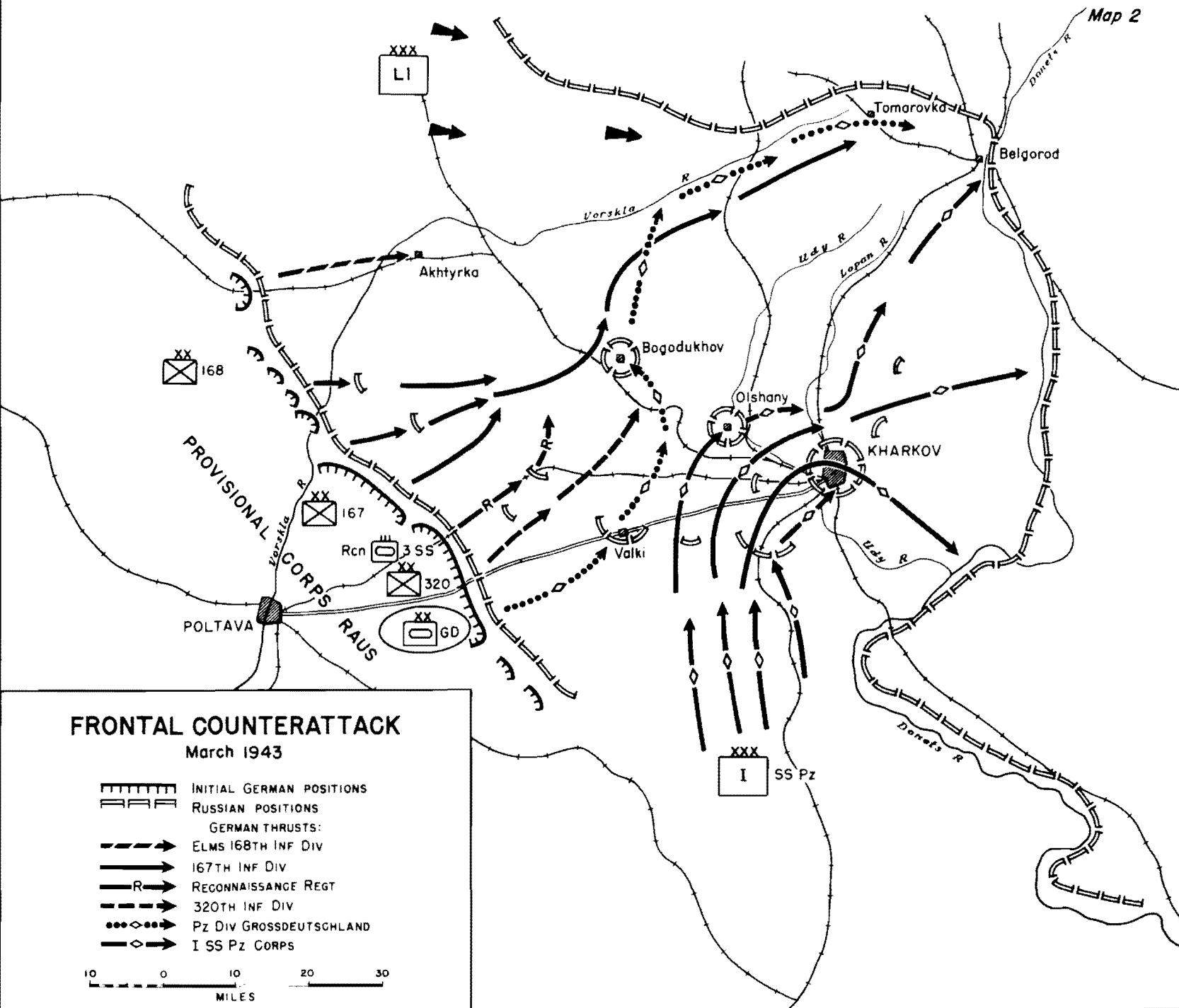
MAP 1

GENERAL REFERENCE MAP

100 50 0 100 200
MILES



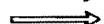
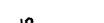
Map 2

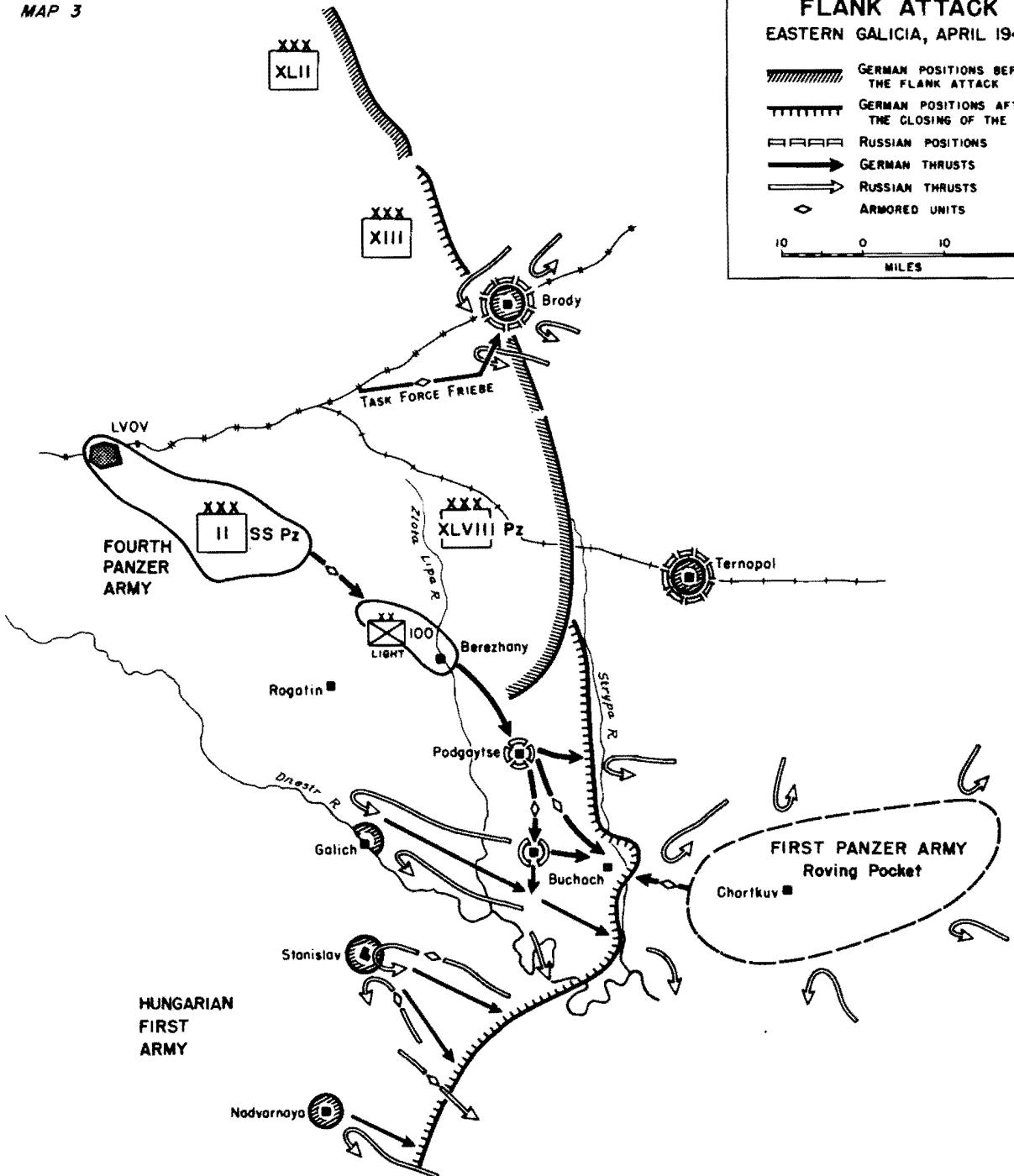


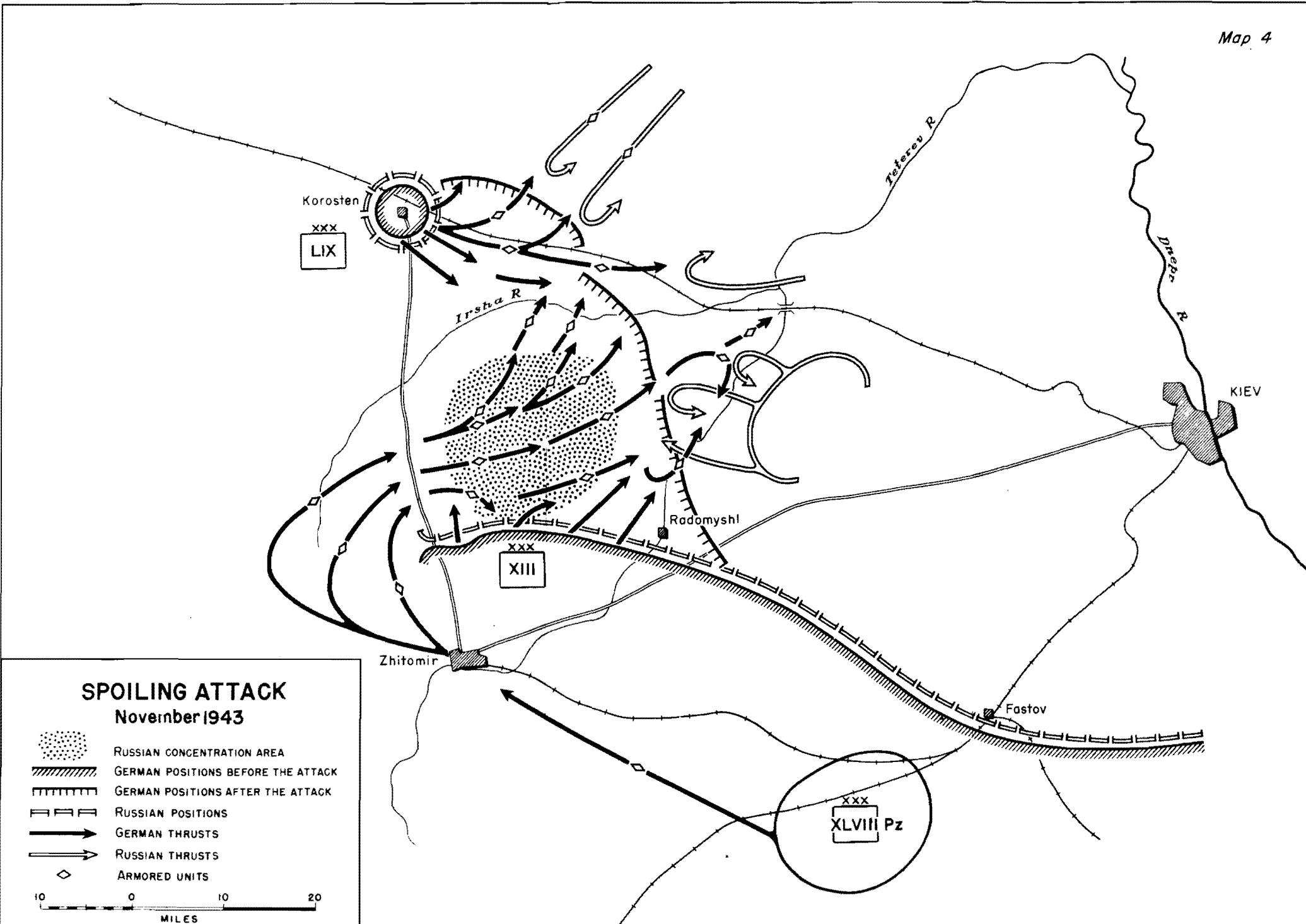
MAP 3

FLANK ATTACK

EASTERN GALICIA, APRIL 1944

 GERMAN POSITIONS BEFORE THE FLANK ATTACK
 GERMAN POSITIONS AFTER THE CLOSING OF THE GAP
 RUSSIAN POSITIONS
 GERMAN THRUSTS
 RUSSIAN THRUSTS
 ARMORED UNITS
 10 0 10 20 MILES





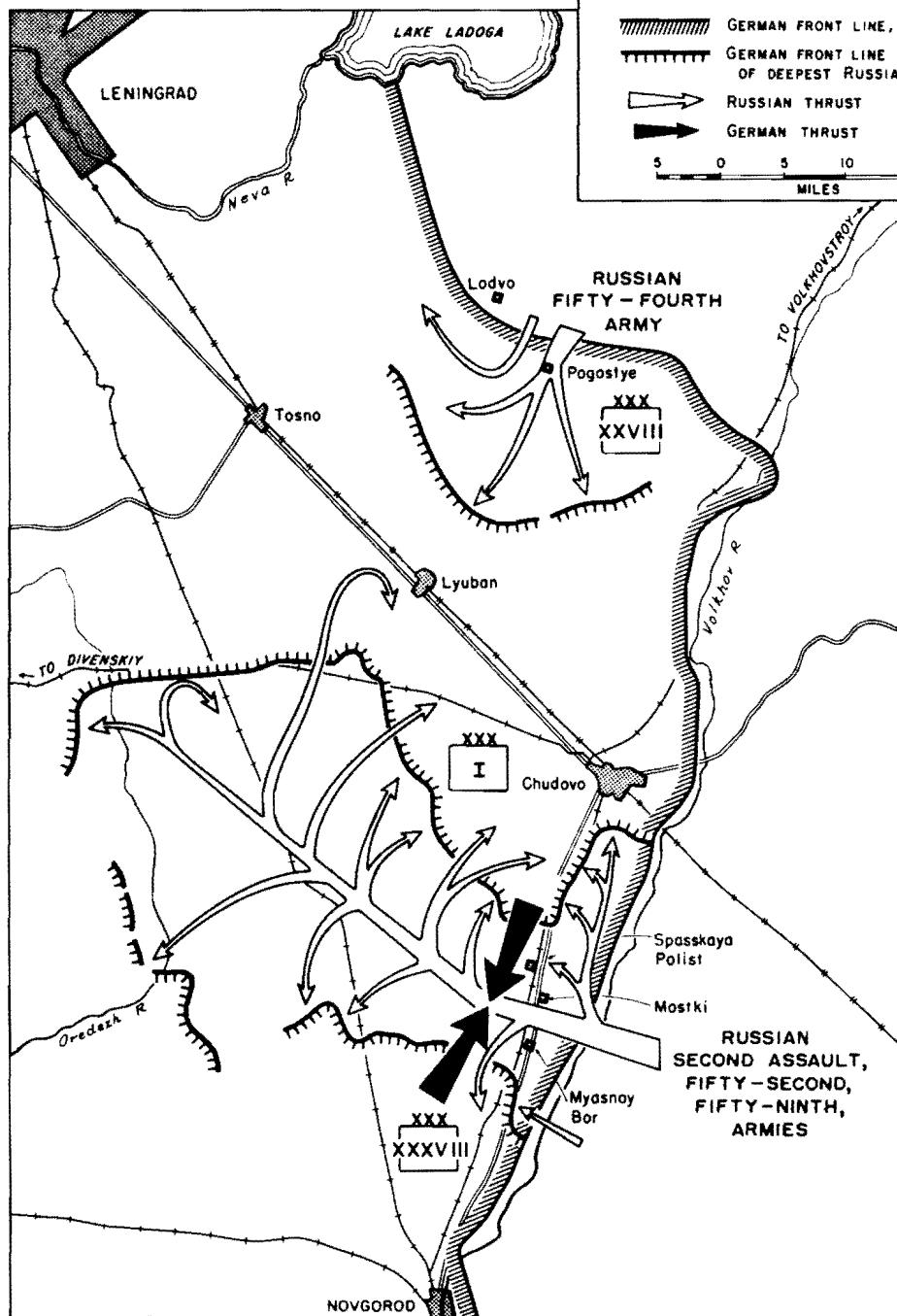
MAP 5

DEFENSIVE PINCERS
BATTLE OF THE VOLKHOV

10 January-28 June 1942

GERMAN FRONT LINE, 10 JANUARY
 GERMAN FRONT LINE AT THE TIME OF DEEPEST RUSSIAN PENETRATION
 RUSSIAN THRUST
 GERMAN THRUST

5 0 5 10 15 20
MILES



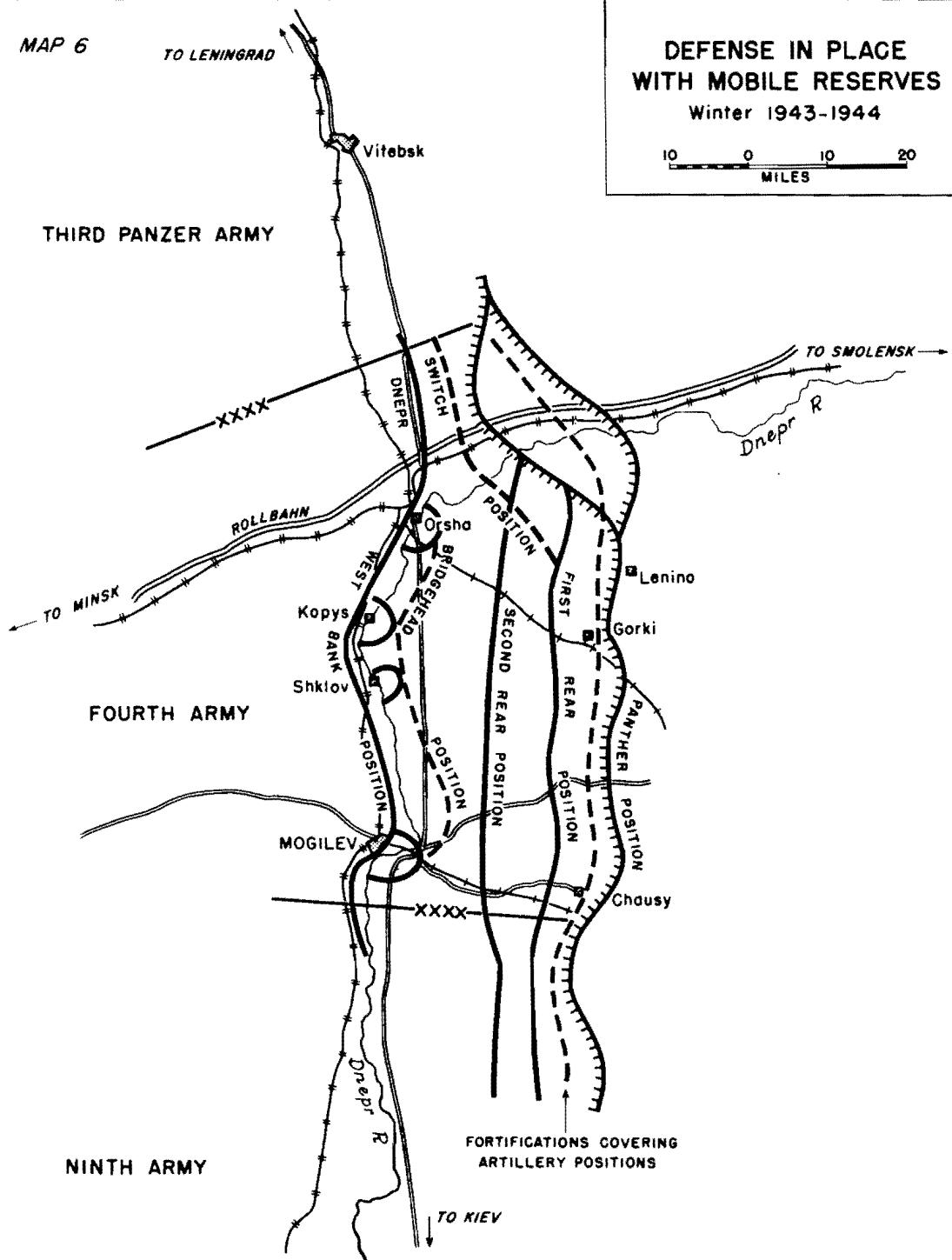
MAP 6

TO LENINGRAD

DEFENSE IN PLACE
WITH MOBILE RESERVES
Winter 1943-1944

10 0 10 20
MILES

THIRD PANZER ARMY



FOURTH ARMY

NINTH ARMY

FORTIFICATIONS COVERING
ARTILLERY POSITIONS

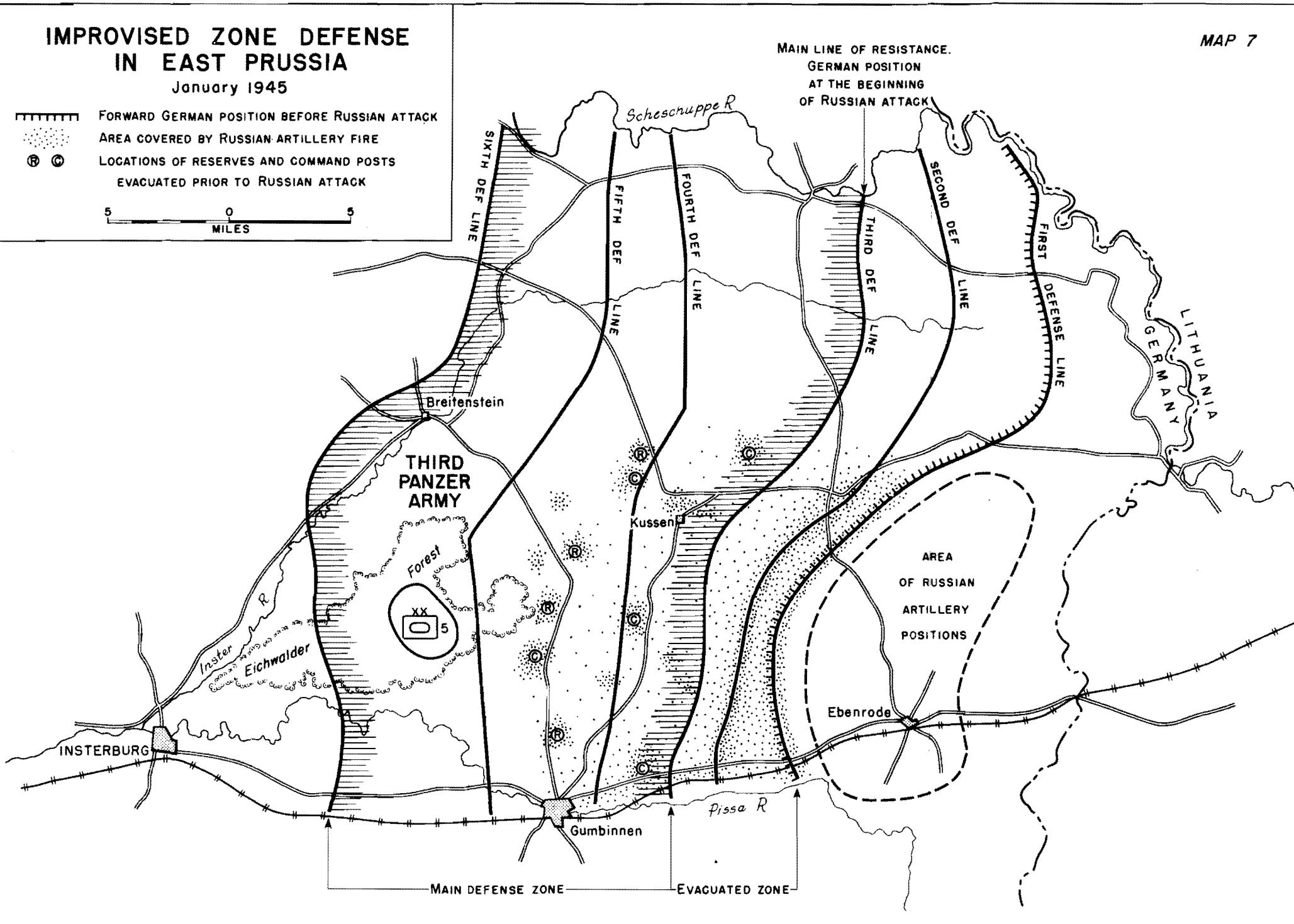
IMPROVISED ZONE DEFENSE IN EAST PRUSSIA

January 1945

MAP 7

- ||||| FORWARD GERMAN POSITION BEFORE RUSSIAN ATTACK
- ◆◆◆ AREA COVERED BY RUSSIAN ARTILLERY FIRE
- ◎◎◎ LOCATIONS OF RESERVES AND COMMAND POSTS
- EVACUATED PRIOR TO RUSSIAN ATTACK

5 0 5
MILES



MAP 9

DELAYING AND BLOCKING ACTIONS

December 1943

INITIAL GERMAN FRONT LINE

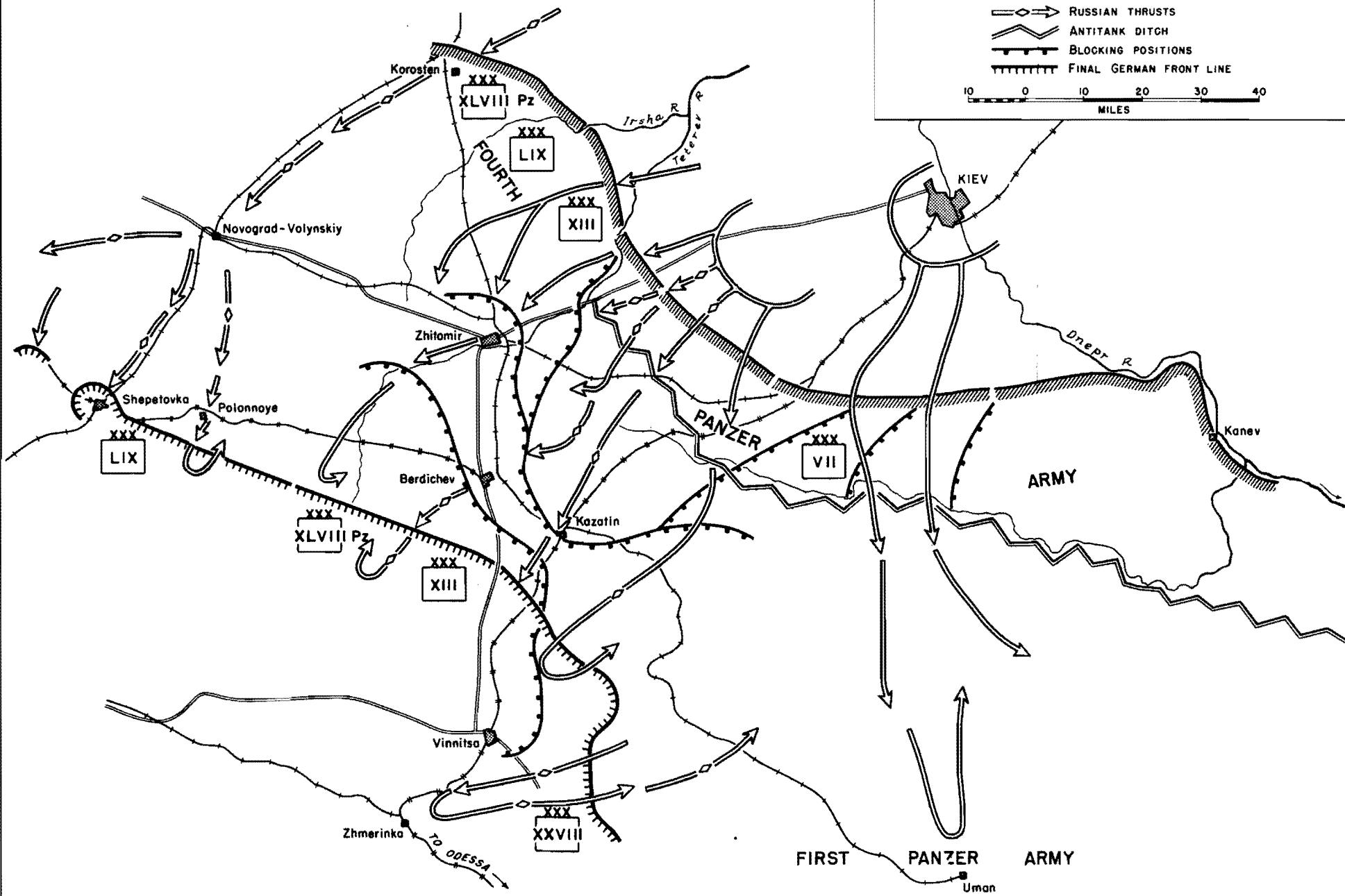
RUSSIAN THRUSTS

ANTITANK DITCH

BLOCKING POSITIONS

FINAL GERMAN FRONT LINE

10 0 10 20 30 40 MILES



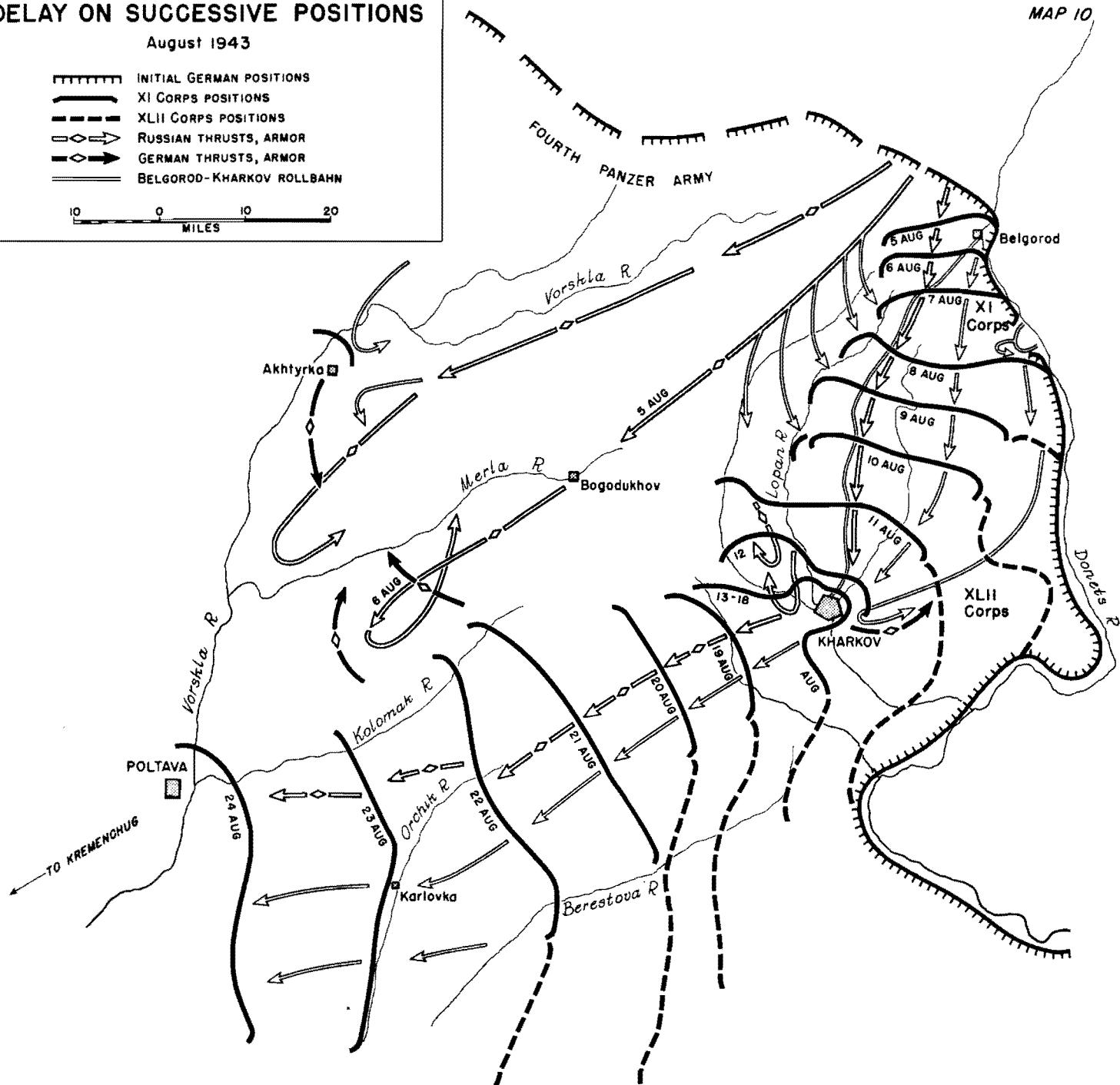
DELAY ON SUCCESSIVE POSITIONS

August 1943

- INITIAL GERMAN POSITIONS
- XI CORPS POSITIONS
- XLII CORPS POSITIONS
- RUSSIAN THRUSTS, ARMOR
- GERMAN THRUSTS, ARMOR
- BELGOROD-KHARKOV ROLLBAHN

10 0 10 20
MILES

MAP 10

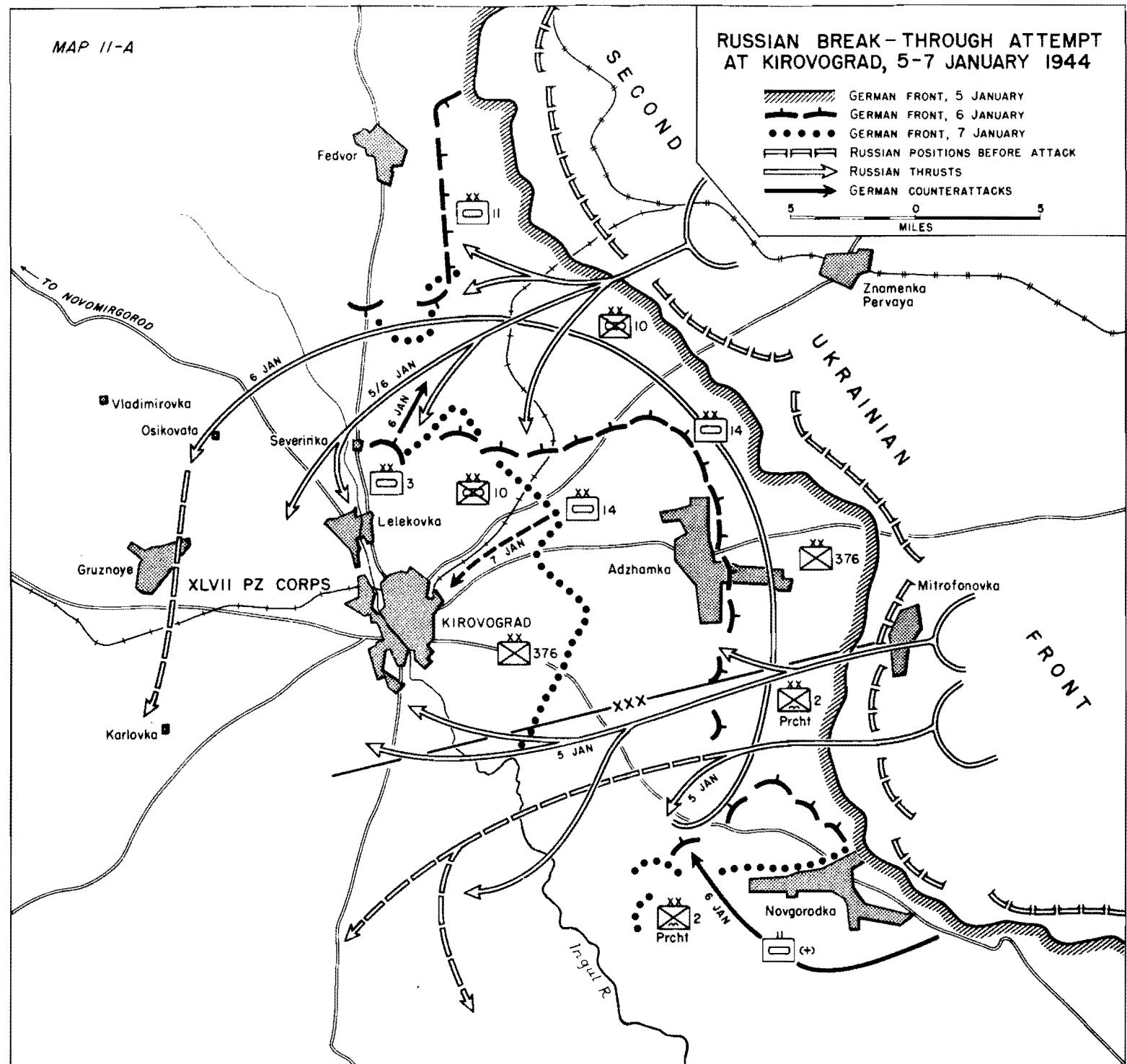


MAP II-A

RUSSIAN BREAK-THROUGH ATTEMPT AT KIROVOGRAD, 5-7 JANUARY 1944

GERMAN FRONT, 5 JANUARY
 GERMAN FRONT, 6 JANUARY
 GERMAN FRONT, 7 JANUARY
 RUSSIAN POSITIONS BEFORE ATTACK
 RUSSIAN THRUSTS
 GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS

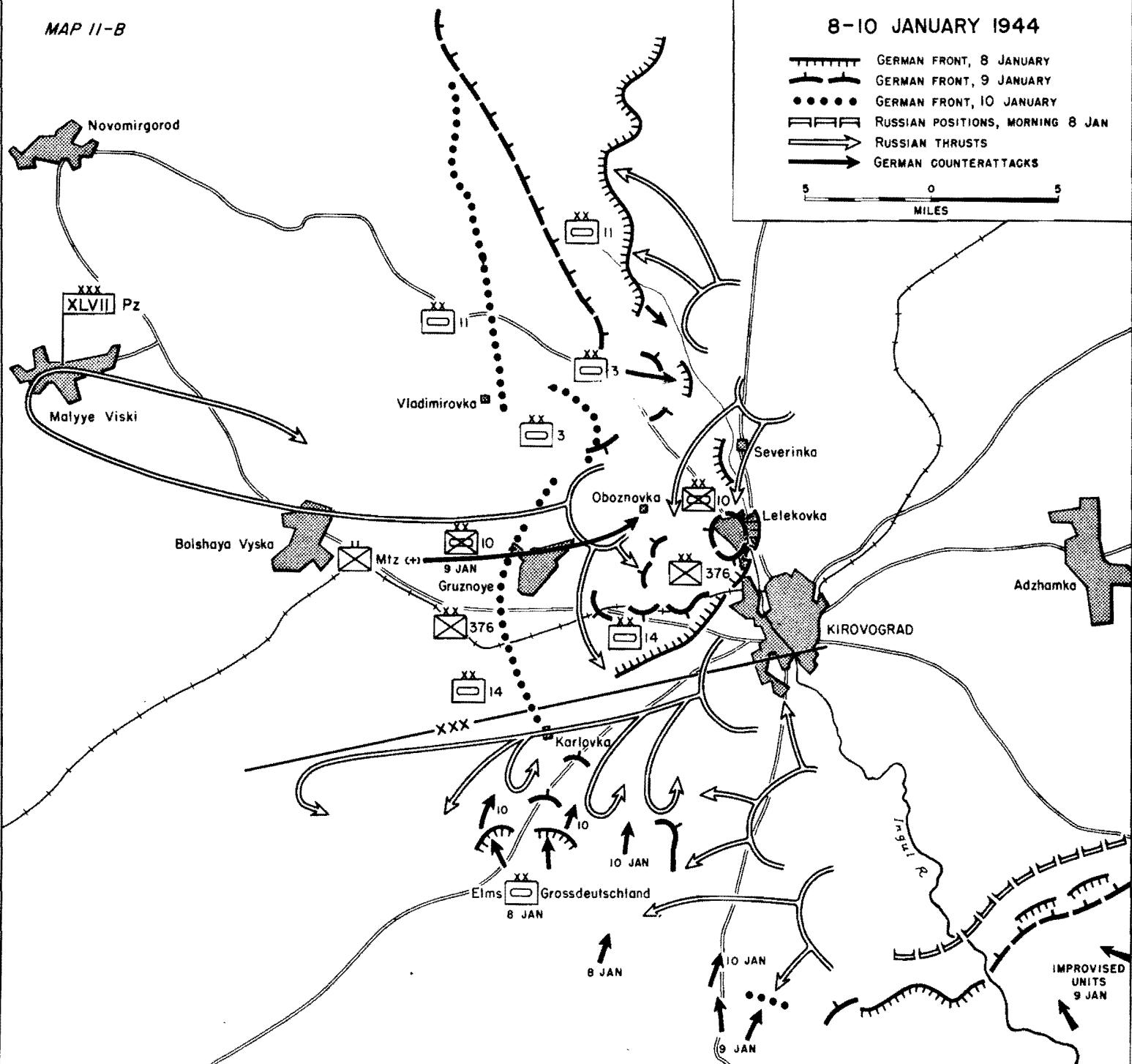
5 0 5
 MILES



MAP II-B

8-10 JANUARY 1944

GERMAN FRONT, 8 JANUARY
 GERMAN FRONT, 9 JANUARY
 GERMAN FRONT, 10 JANUARY
 RUSSIAN POSITIONS, MORNING 8 JAN
 RUSSIAN THRUSTS
 GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS



MAP II-C

10-16 JANUARY 1944

- GERMAN FRONT, 10 JANUARY
- GERMAN FRONT, 11 JANUARY
- GERMAN FRONT, 16 JANUARY
- RUSSIAN POSITIONS, MORNING 10 JAN
- RUSSIAN THRUSTS
- GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS

5 0 5 MILES

