

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

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**LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND ON THE EASTERN  
FRONT (1941-1945):  
THE MILITARY STYLE OF MARSHAL KONSTANTIN  
ROKOSSOVSKIY**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY THESIS





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Supervisor: Professor Christopher Bellamy

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## **ABSTRACT**

Marshal Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, Hero of the Soviet Union, Order of Victory, Knight of the Bath, OBE, victor of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, the destruction of German Army Group Centre and East Prussia, participated in some of the most significant operations in the history of war, let alone the twentieth century. Yet, in the English speaking world Rokossovskiy is unknown, a name, vaguely associated with famous events. There is no sustained historical analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command in the English language.

Rokossovskiy rejected the authoritarian leadership culture of Stalin's Soviet Union and Zhukov's Red Army. Rokossovskiy was highly demanding and occasionally harsh but his leadership encouraged initiative, consultation, trust, delegation and tolerated mistakes in a way that made him unusual, indeed exceptional, in the Red Army. It was primarily an authoritative style of leadership but Rokossovskiy practised different forms and styles of leadership guided by his own instinctive judgement according to the demands of the situation and the nature of his subordinates. This was a considered philosophy of leadership and command that set him apart from his contemporaries.

Rokossovskiy's style of leadership was intimately connected to his conduct of operations. As one of the Red Army's finest commanders, respected by the Wehrmacht and the Red Army, Rokossovskiy's operational art was dominated by the idea of depth. Rokossovskiy, the Pole, was the heir to a long Russian tradition, centuries old, of deep operations, whereas Zhukov, the Russian, was committed to operational encirclement and annihilation, a Germanic concept.

Marshal Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy had a distinct military style of his own: his style of leadership challenged the Red Army's authoritarian culture whilst his style of operations endorsed the historical traditions of the Russian army. It makes him one of the most significant military commanders of the twentieth century.



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## GLOSSARY

<i>Army Group</i>	Major German military formation of strategic proportions.
<i>Auftragstaktik</i>	German system of command in the field that encouraged flexibility, initiative and judgement in order to facilitate rapid, agile operations. It originated in the period of Scharnhorst reform 1807-1813 and was developed throughout the nineteenth century. It was central to German military thinking in the period 1921-1945.
<i>Bewegungskrieg</i>	German military term for an aggressive mobile war.
<i>Bitva</i>	Term used to denote historic battle that has taken place rather than in progress.
<i>Boy</i>	Combat or process of battle
<i>Boyevoye</i>	A term meaning battle or combat.
<i>Boyevoye Doneseniye</i>	Battle or operations report usually covering a single day covering all armies within a <i>front</i> . It included information on the results of fighting, troop location and enemy activity.
<i>Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye</i>	Battle Instructions
<i>Boyevoy Sostav</i>	Fighting Strength
<i>Boyevaye Zadacha</i>	Combat mission.
<i>Chast'</i>	Russian term for a unit.
<i>Cheka</i>	The Extraordinary Committee to Combat Counter-revolution and Sabotage. It was set up by Feliks Dzerzhinskiy on 20 <sup>th</sup> December 1917. Its members became known as 'Chekists.'
<i>Front</i>	The basic Soviet operational grouping of forces in the Great Patriotic War. It is similar to an Army Group.
<i>Frontovaya Nastupatel'naya Operatsiya</i>	Front Offensive Operation
<i>Frontovaya Oboronitel'naya Operatsiya</i>	Front Defensive Operation

<i>General'nyi Shtab</i>	The General Staff
<i>GKO (Gosudarstvenniy Komitet Oborony)</i>	State Defence Committee set up on 30 <sup>th</sup> June 1941 and chaired by Stalin. It oversaw the Soviet war effort integrating political, military, social and economic factors.
<i>Glubokiy Boy</i>	Deep Battle
<i>Glubokaya Operatsiya</i>	Deep Operation
<i>Kampaniya Voyennaya</i>	Military Campaign: a period of time during which interim goals are achieved through the conduct of operations as part of an overall strategy
<i>Kesselschlacht</i>	Battle of encirclement and annihilation
<i>Konno-Mekhanizirovannaya Gruppya</i>	Cavalry Mechanised Group (CMG)
<i>Kontrastupleniye</i>	Counteroffensive of at least operational scale, possibly strategic involving several fronts e.g. Stalingrad.
<i>Kontrudar</i>	Counterblow: conducted by troops as part of an operational formation, often an army or corps to defeat an attacking enemy and regain ground. In a defensive operation numerous counterblows may occur either simultaneously or consecutively.
<i>Maskirovka</i>	A mandatory method of combat support prior to an operation. The purpose was to confuse, deceive and disinform the enemy while concealing Soviet forces, intentions, time and location of attack. At the tactical level it was primarily physical in character. It was more psychological at the operational level.
<i>Mobile Group (Podvizhnaya Gruppya)</i>	Generic Soviet term for a formation designed to conduct deep operations.
<i>Napravleniye Nastupleniya</i>	A Russian term denoting the main axis of attack.
<i>Nastupatel'naya Operatsiya</i>	Offensive on an operational scale usually conducted by a front with a unified operational concept and plan designed to achieve operational goals as part of a campaign or strategy.
<i>Nastupleniye</i>	A Russian term denoting an offensive designed to defeat the enemy and secure operational victory.



<i>NKVD</i>	Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennykh Del (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
<i>Obkhod (Turning Move)</i>	A form of operational manoeuvre in depth designed to turn the enemy physically and mentally in terms of forcing him to abandon his mission in favour of survival. It is not a flank attack or a double envelopment.
<i>Oborona</i>	The Russian word for defence.
<i>Oboronitel'naya Operatsiya</i>	A defensive operation made up of a combination of tactical battles.
<i>Obstanovka</i>	Russian word for situation
<i>Okruzheniye</i>	Russian word for encirclement.
<i>Okhvat</i>	An attack on the enemy flank
<i>Operational Art</i> ( <i>Operativnoye Iskusstvo</i> )	The creative art of command of forces at the operational level of war. It is concerned with the theory and practice of preparing and conduction operations by major military forces.
<i>Operational Level</i>	The level of war that involves direct command of large military formations in the field. It occupied an intermediate position between strategy and tactics in the Great Patriotic War. An operational force was usually a <i>front</i> but occasionally an army could be involved in fighting of such scale, numbers, duration and significance that it had operational implications.
<i>Operativnaya Direktiva</i>	Operational Directive: a formal document issued by an operational commander to subordinates. It indicated the objectives of an operation, the missions of individual armies and the time by which mission were to be achieved.
<i>Operativnaya Gruppya</i>	Operational group
<i>Operativnaya Obstanovka</i>	Operational Situation
<i>Operativnaya Svodka</i>	Operational Report or Summary.
<i>Operatsiya</i>	Russian word for operation
<i>Operatsionnoye Napraveleniye</i>	Operational Sector

<i>Otkhod</i>	Withdrawal
<i>Plan Operatsii</i>	Operational Plan: formal document drawn up by the staff to reflect the operational commander's concept. It indicated the initial and subsequent missions of front units such as armies as well as the most likely enemy course of action. It also indicated the depth and duration of an operation. It is closely related to an operational directive.
<i>Platsdarm</i>	Bridgehead
<i>Polevoy Ustav</i>	Field Regulations
<i>Posledovatel'niye Operatsii</i>	Successive Operations
<i>Prikaz</i>	Order
<i>Schwerpunkt</i>	German military term denoting the main point of effort.
<i>Shtab</i>	Staff or headquarters
<i>SMERSH(Smert'Shpionam) Death to Spies</i>	A state organisation set up in spring 1943 to monitor all aspects of the armed forces.
<i>Sostav</i>	Strength or Establishment
<i>Srazheniye</i>	Engagement
<i>Stavka (Verkhovnaya Glavnokommandovanya)</i>	Chaired by Stalin. The Supreme Soviet Military Headquarters referred to as STAVKA VGK in wartime documents. It incorporated the General Staff and advised Stalin on military strategy.
<i>Stavka Representatives</i>	Senior officer appointed by Stavka to liaise with senior operational commanders in the field. Often responsible for ensuring co-ordination between <i>fronts</i> .
<i>Stellungskrieg</i>	German term for positional war.
<i>Strategiya Izmora</i>	Strategy of Attrition
<i>Strategiya Sokrushniya</i>	Strategy of Annihilation

<i>Strategy</i>	The use of armed forces to achieve military objectives in order to bring about enemy military defeat through the execution of a war plan. It relates to broad fundamental factors affecting the manipulation of armed forces and the conduct of war. Strategy breaks up the conduct of war into campaigns and sets operational objectives. It does not involve their direct command in the field.
<i>Tactical Level</i>	The command of forces in battle to bring about the achievement of operational objectives. In Soviet military thinking the tactical level was subservient to the operational and strategic level.
<i>Tankovaya Armiya</i>	Tank Army
<i>TSAMO: Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oberony</i>	Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defence
<i>Tsel' Operatsii</i>	Operational Aim or Goal
<i>Tvorchestvo</i>	Creative military thinking at the operational level designed to transform abstract operational concepts into practical operations. It was central to operational art.
<i>Ucheniye</i>	Training
<i>Udar</i>	Shock, Strike or Blow
<i>Udarnaya Armiya</i>	Shock Army
<i>Upravleniye</i>	Headquarters
<i>Upravleniye Voyskami</i>	Command and Control of Troops
<i>Voysk</i>	Forces or troops
<i>Vozdushnaya Armiya</i>	Air Army
<i>Wehrmacht</i>	The armed forces of Nazi Germany including army, airforce and navy.



## TRANSLITERATION

In order to present Cyrillic Russian names, places and terms in English I have adopted the system of transliteration recommended by the US Board on Geographical Names. It is also used by NATO. However, where the Russian ending - ИЙ is ungainly in English such as -yy, I have amended it to -y. In the case of names, ИЙ is transliterated as -iy, thus Rokossovskiy, Sokolovskiy and Malinovskiy. In terms of place names this means Novgorod Severskiy. However, where a term is in common usage such as Moscow, I have used the Anglicised version. Similarly, I have used Konev rather than Koniev or Konyev and Beria not Beriya. The historic names of locations in central, eastern Europe and Russia are a complex business, many having changed names (and owners) on a regular basis in the last two centuries. If in doubt I have adopted the term by which a place is more easily recognisable in the context of World War Two. Therefore, the text refers to Danzig not Gdansk, Konigsberg not Kaliningrad, Stalingrad not Volgograd. The Germans referred to Thorn fortress but in Rokossovskiy's English language memoirs it is Torn. I have opted for Thorn on maps and Marienburg rather than Marienbad. I have used Belorussia rather than Byelorussia, Belarussia or White Russia because that was the term used by the Red Army. Equally I have opted for the Vistula and the Narev as they are more easily recognisable.

Soviet *Fronts* are identified by word with numbers added if several *fronts* shared the location name. For example, the Belorussian Front and 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. Russian armies are referred to in a numerical fashion, hence 16<sup>th</sup> Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army, 13<sup>th</sup> Army. German army groups are labelled in words, such as Army Group Centre, as are German armies, such as Sixth German Army, Ninth German Army. The exception is on maps drawn by the author to save space. I have not used Roman numerals to identify corps' for three reasons: one there are not many in the text, two to save space on maps and three because I have never found it helpful. Therefore, Rokossovskiy's 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps is not IX Mechanised Corps and XXXXVII Panzer Corps is 47<sup>th</sup> Panzer Corps. On all maps drawn by the author German formations are rendered in black ink and Red Army formations in red ink. The first time a specific person or organisation is referred to I have tried to name them or it in full including the patronymic. Therefore, Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy

and *Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennykh Del* (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs- the NKVD) before subsequently abbreviating and using initials or common acronyms. All dates are referred to in the western calendar style.

## KEY TO MAP ABBREVIATIONS

### Red Army Map Abbreviations:

AA	Air Army
CC	Cavalry Corps
CMG	Cavalry Mechanised Group
GCC	Guards Cavalry Corps
GRC	Guards Rifle Corps
GTA	Guards Tank Army
RC	Rifle Corps
RD	Rifle Division

### German Map Abbreviations:

AC	Army Corps
PzC	Panzer Corps
PzD	Panzer Division
ID	Infantry Division





# INTRODUCTION

On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1937,<sup>1</sup> Corps Commander Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps, in the Leningrad Military District, was arrested and beaten senseless. He was ‘tried’, imprisoned and left to rot.<sup>2</sup> Eight years later, on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1945, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, hero of the Soviet Union for his commanding roles at Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, the Red Army’s destruction of German Army Group Centre and victory in East Prussia, took command of the Red Army victory parade in Red Square.<sup>3</sup> To a man and an Army that had been mauled, indeed savaged, initially by Stalin’s NKVD, then by the Wehrmacht, Red Square, in June 1945, was an extraordinary personal, and, to a lesser extent, institutional vindication. It confirmed Rokossovskiy’s status as one of the Red Army’s leading field commanders, a man who had played a key role in the Wehrmacht’s defeat. Few commanders made a more sustained, direct and significant contribution to the German defeat on the Eastern Front. Yet, in the Western world, Rokossovskiy is virtually unknown, a footnote in history.



**Figure 1: K.K. Rokossovskiy**  
(Kardashov, 1980)



**Figure 2: Rokossovskiy on the cover of Time magazine, 23 Aug 1943**

The ashes of Rokossovskiy are buried in the Kremlin Wall.<sup>4</sup> In Russia, Rokossovskiy’s life and career are well-known, but in the western world he remains an obscure historical figure. Yet, ironically, during World War Two, he was among the best known Red Army generals. In January 1943, the photograph of Rokossovskiy with Field Marshal Paulus at Stalingrad, following Paulus’ surrender, was seen around the globe. Similarly, in August 1943, Rokossovskiy made the front cover of *Time* magazine.<sup>5</sup> Twelve months

later, in August 1944, Rokossovskiy was involved in the Warsaw Uprising.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Rokossovskiy's meeting with Montgomery at Wismar on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1945 and again in Berlin, in July 1945, were famous in their day. However, Rokossovskiy's early years and his formative experiences in World War One, the Russian Civil War and the inter-war years, apart from the Purge of 1937, are a mystery to western readers.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that Rokossovskiy's career on the Eastern Front during World War Two was of considerable historical significance. Yet, with the exception of one short, biographical chapter there is no dedicated, peer reviewed writing on Rokossovskiy in the English language. Therefore, there is a compelling need for a sustained, thematic historical analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command.

### **The Aim**

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to examine the military style of Marshal of the Soviet Union Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, one of the most significant but relatively unknown military commanders of the twentieth century. It will examine both his style of leadership and operational command on the Eastern Front during the Great Patriotic War, June 1941-May 1945.

### **Research Objectives**

This thesis will examine the military style of Marshal Konstantin Rokossovskiy as a case study of Soviet leadership and operational command on the Eastern Front. It is not a biography of Rokossovskiy's life. Its primary focus will be a sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and conduct of operational art during the Great Patriotic War. The style of Rokossovskiy's leadership will be described and examined, both in terms of its intrinsic nature, and, by using the medium of modern leadership theories and literature, through a retrospective historical analysis, incorporating various themes or traits, common to the idea of leadership. The thesis does not aim to propose a theory of leadership, nor does it claim to be an exhaustive analysis of the nature of leadership. It will argue that Rokossovskiy had a distinctive style of leadership, one that enabled him to plan and conduct operations in a manner that was different from other Red Army commanders. This thesis will discuss the historical literature on

Rokossovskiy's career, both English language and Russian. It will reveal that official Soviet literature in the Cold War era was seriously duplicitous in its coverage of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command, while western literature is generally shallow, invariably brief and remarkably ignorant of the true historical significance of Rokossovskiy's career, his style of leadership and operational command. The thesis will demonstrate that Rokossovskiy's style of leadership set him apart from the wider leadership culture of Stalin's Red Army and from contemporaries such as Konev, Zhukov and Vatutin.

The thesis will not provide a narrative of events on the Eastern Front, nor will it simply be a detailed account of the various historically significant operations that Rokossovskiy was involved in. Nevertheless, a sustained, thematic analysis of Rokossovskiy's experiences as a Front commander in the period July 1942-May 1945, presents the student of military history with an excellent opportunity to analyse the role of the *Front*, the Front commander and the military style of one of the Red Army's finest operational commanders. It will discuss the origins of Soviet operational theory and manoeuvre warfare, before examining the influence of Tsarist and Soviet inter-war thinking upon Rokossovskiy's operational art. The thesis will identify the hallmarks of Rokossovskiy's operational command whilst comparing his methods with those of leading contemporaries, such as Zhukov, Vatutin, Sokolovskiy and Konev. Equally, by analysing Rokossovskiy's operational art, this thesis will demonstrate that there were different forms of Soviet operation, not just one massive juggernaut, rolling west.

This thesis will discuss the main influences on Rokossovskiy's operational style and assess his value as a representative model, or otherwise, of distinctly Soviet/Russian operational theory. It will argue that Rokossovskiy's operational command indicates leading Red Army commanders had distinct methods of conducting operations. These virtually amounted to personal, as well as institutional signatures. Indeed, the operational methods of Rokossovskiy and Zhukov varied as much as, if not more than, some of their more celebrated Wehrmacht contemporaries, whose conduct of operations was dominated by one theme, the encirclement and annihilation of the enemy. This thesis will argue that not only did Rokossovskiy possess a particular style of leadership

that set him apart from his contemporaries, but that his distinctive style of operational art made him the natural heir of the Russian/Soviet tradition of operational thinking.

In summary, the main objectives of this work are firstly to engage in a sustained critical analysis of Rokossovskiy's truly distinct style of leadership. Secondly, to analyse the origins, style and historical significance of Rokossovskiy's operational art and command during the Great Patriotic War. Finally, this thesis will rescue Rokossovskiy's reputation from relative obscurity and reveal the genuine historical significance of his style of leadership and operational command.

### **Originality and Value of Study**

The pressures of time and space, plus the sheer scale of the war, mean that while frequently informative and of great analytical value, most books on the Eastern Front during World War Two do not really offer any sustained analysis of the leadership style and command of operations by individual commanders, particularly on the Russian side.<sup>8</sup> Numerous volumes contain a great deal of information about operations that commanders such as Rokossovskiy were involved in, but little about their style of leadership, operational art, whether their style changed or if individual Red Army commanders differed in their approach to command. If general surveys of the Eastern Front understandably lack any sustained analysis of particular operations or individual commanders, then arguably the opposite is true of other literature on the war in the east, which is often characterised by a detailed focus on a particular event, operation or campaign.

In many ways special studies of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk and Berlin are of great value, the best being excellent additions to the body of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> However, even the best, in Russian, are inevitably constrained by their narrow focus,<sup>10</sup> while others are often marred by idiosyncratic and/or an obsessive interest in the detailed minutiae of the subject matter.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, much of the material on the Eastern Front is either too general, given the size of the war, or too detailed, because of the narrow terms of reference. An original, thematic study of Rokossovskiy, offers an opportunity to bridge this gap. No sustained study of Rokossovskiy's career, his style of leadership or the

nature of his operational art exists in the English language.<sup>12</sup> In Russian, four biographies of Rokossovskiy do exist.

Although informative about Rokossovskiy's life and times, they are generally descriptive and narrative in character. They do not contain any sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy's leadership style, nor do they rigorously scrutinise the nature of his operational art. The memoirs of those who served with Rokossovskiy during the Great Patriotic War give important insights into one of the Red Army's most talented commanders, but they do not explore his leadership methods or the essence of his operational command.<sup>13</sup> Equally, the journal literature of the Soviet era, if not the new Russian era, from 1992, invariably produced rather orthodox and hagiographical reflection upon Rokossovskiy's achievements. In summary, rather like much, but not all, western historical literature on the Eastern Front, Soviet writing on Rokossovskiy was generally about what happened, when it happened, who did it, what they were trying to do and how awful or resolutely glorious it was. In short, western, Soviet and new Russian literature does not provide a sustained, thematic analysis of Rokossovskiy. Therefore, there is considerable scope for, and indeed a compelling need for a critical assessment of the leadership and command of Rokossovskiy.

### **Historical Value of Rokossovskiy as a Case Study**

Rokossovskiy's experience of operational command on the Eastern Front during the Great Patriotic War was unique, both in terms of its duration and its operational significance. Naturally, many senior commanders, apart from Rokossovskiy, played a key role in the survival and subsequent victory of the Red Army. However, Zhukov and Vasilevskiy were often away from the front, engaged in strategic or operational planning, or, present for short, fleeting periods of time, on different sectors. They were not, despite their extensive and invaluable contribution, a consistent and enduring presence, charged with leading tactical or operational formations. As Chief of the General Staff, and as a *Stavka* representative, Vasilevskiy spent a lot of time in the field, but his experiences as a field commander do not compare with those of Rokossovskiy. Vasilevskiy never commanded a corps or an army in the field. Therefore, he had no experience of tactical command during the Great Patriotic War. Equally, despite taking

command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front, in February 1945<sup>14</sup>, and in Manchuria, during August 1945, Vasilevskiy's operational command was not comparable with Rokossovskiy's, for by 1945, the Red Army was already marching to victory.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, although Zhukov commanded a corps against the Japanese at Khalkin-Gol, in August 1939, he never commanded a corps or army during the Great Patriotic War. Zhukov did spend significant periods as a Front commander, particularly in 1941 and 1945, but he was rarely in one place, with one command, for any prolonged period of time.<sup>16</sup> This is not to suggest that episodic service at the front was less important in the defeat of the Wehrmacht. Indeed, to make such an argument in the case of Marshal Zhukov, Marshal Vasilevskiy, Aleksey Innokentyevich Antonov (1896-1962)<sup>17</sup> and Air Chief Marshal Aleksandr Alexandrovich Novikov (1900-1976)<sup>18</sup> would be absurd. Nevertheless, Zhukov and Vasilevskiy are unsuitable case studies from which to examine the evolution of the Red Army in the field during the Great Patriotic War. In contrast, as a corps and army commander, Rokossovskiy endured the catastrophic collapse of the Red Army during June-October 1941 and also survived redemption through mortification at Moscow, during November-December 1941. Rokossovskiy's sustained length of active, direct service, as Front commander, is without equal in the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War. In short, the breadth and depth of Rokossovskiy's service as a tactical and operational field commander has a special significance of its own.



**Figure 3: A.A. Novikov**  
(en.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 4: Rokossovskiy, 1941**  
(Kardashov, 1980)

No other senior Red Army officer saw as much continuous, active service in the field as Rokossovskiy. He started at “about 4 a.m. on June 22.”<sup>19</sup> According to Rokossovskiy, “the duty officer brought me a telephone message from 5<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters telling me to open the top secret operational envelope.”<sup>20</sup> The South-Western Front was less chaotic than the Western Front but “we were unable to get in touch with the District command, to whom we were directly subordinated, and throughout the day of 22<sup>nd</sup> June did not receive a single order or instruction from them.”<sup>21</sup> At dawn on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1941, Rokossovskiy skilfully handled 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised

Corps in its first encounter with 13<sup>th</sup> Panzer at Klevan,<sup>22</sup> displaying unusual tactical acumen, as well as moral courage, in adapting to circumstances as he encountered them, rather than engaging in blind, but suicidal, counter-attacks.<sup>23</sup>

After four years, of more or less continuous service as a corps, army and Front commander, Rokossovskiy's war finished on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1945, with a mopping up operation on the Danish island of Bornholm, in the Baltic.<sup>24</sup> No other Soviet commander, apart from Konev,<sup>25</sup> held the formal position of Front commander longer than Rokossovskiy. However, Konev, unlike Rokossovskiy was sacked twice as a front commander. Once, as Western Front commander, on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1941 and secondly on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1943, again while in command of Western Front.<sup>26</sup> Konev's career was relatively dormant until the Steppe Front's activation and the successful Belgorod Operation of 3<sup>rd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August 1943, began a rise that culminated in the Berlin Operation of 16<sup>th</sup> April-2<sup>nd</sup> May 1945.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Rokossovskiy played a key role at Moscow, Stalingrad and Kursk before shattering Army Group Centre in July 1944 followed by victory in East Prussia during January-February 1945. Equally, Rokossovskiy, unlike Konev, Andrey Ivanovich Yeremenko,(1892-1970)<sup>28</sup> Vasily Danilovich Sokolovskiy and Kyrill Meretskov, was never sacked during the Great Patriotic War.

### **Structure of Thesis**

This thesis will be divided into two parts. Part One will discuss Rokossovskiy as a relatively unknown but historically significant commander. It will begin with a review of Rokossovskiy's formative years, World War One and the inter-war years. It will discuss his experiences as the most significant military victim and survivor of Stalin's Purge, before conducting an analysis of the key military operations that Rokossovskiy conducted during the Second World War. Chapter 2 will analyse the literature, both Russian and English, concerning Rokossovskiy's historical image and reputation as well as the Great Patriotic War. The historical significance of Rokossovskiy's memoirs, censored and uncensored, will be analysed in detail, as will recent historical literature indicating Rokossovskiy has been seriously misrepresented concerning the Belorussian campaign of 1943-1944. The second chapter will conclude with an analysis of the Russian archival collection *Russkiy Arkhiv*. Chapter 3 will concentrate on

Rokossovskiy's style of leadership. It will review, analyse and critique significant historical and contemporary models and styles of leadership. The general leadership culture and reputation of the Red Army will be discussed, before engaging in a sustained thematic analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership. The key themes of Rokossovskiy's leadership will be identified, defined and analysed in order to deliver a comprehensive assessment of this relatively unknown, yet significant military leader.

Part Two of the thesis will analyse Rokossovskiy's operational command on the Eastern Front during the Great Patriotic War. Chapter 4 will review Soviet military thinking in the period 1905-1936 in order to identify the origins of the intellectual framework and culture of command known as Soviet operational art. This defined the parameters in which operational commanders such as Rokossovskiy, conceived, planned and conducted operations. Chapter 5 will discuss the operational level of command, the level of command at which Rokossovskiy spent the majority of the Great Patriotic War. It will discuss key Soviet operational concepts of successive operations, depth, the theory of the *front* as an operational force, operational art and the role of the *front* during the war. These were core Soviet operational concepts. As Rokossovskiy spent more time fighting the Wehrmacht than any other Soviet operational commander, his career is of particular relevance as a case study through which to analyse these concepts. In turn, these concepts are of considerable importance in any sustained, thematic analysis of Rokossovskiy's operational command.

Chapter 6 will analyse key aspects of Rokossovskiy's operational command in terms of the conception, preparation and initial stages of an operation. Chapter 7 will take a broader and deeper conceptual overview of Rokossovskiy's operational style. It will define the basic forms of operation common to Soviet operational art, before identifying and analysing Rokossovskiy's preferred style of operations. It will analyse Rokossovskiy's operational methods in comparison with Brusilov and Zhukov. In addition, this chapter will assess the character of Rokossovskiy's deep operations and his use of elite Soviet operational manoeuvre forces. Chapter 8 will analyse the manner in which Rokossovskiy manipulated and controlled the substantial forces under his command. It will discuss the complex issue of operational synchronisation, before



examining how Rokossovskiy generated operational momentum through the harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre. Finally, the chapter will analyse Rokossovskiy's judgment as a commander and his ability to make the right decisions in the most challenging and demanding circumstances. However, the thesis will begin with an examination of Rokossovskiy's formative years, his experiences in World War One, the Russian Civil War (1918-1921), the inter-war years and the Purge, of which Rokossovskiy was the most significant survivor.

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<sup>1</sup> Anatoliy Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovkiy*, (Rostov-na-Dony, 1999,) p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror*, (Pimlico, 1990,) p.429. However, A.E. Romenko, *60 Let Stalingradskoy Bitvy Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny*, (Moscow, 2003), p.126 suggests Rokossovskiy was arrested on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1937. Colonel Michal Sadykiewicz, a Polish officer, who served under Rokossovskiy, reports that a Russian book suggests that Rokossovskiy was relieved of command and put under house arrest in June 1937, two months before the usual date, given by historians for Rokossovskiy's arrest. I am indebted to Colonel Sadykiewicz for personally communicating this information to me, both verbally and in his pamphlet, *Enemy of the People*, on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Makmut Gareyev, "Marshal Rokossovskiy, Commander of the Victory Parade", 24<sup>th</sup> June 1945, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, pp. 1-3, this p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Rokossovskiy died on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1968.

<sup>5</sup> The irony being that it was in celebration of Operation Kutuzov's liberation of Orel on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1943, probably Rokossovskiy's least effective offensive operation of the Great Patriotic War.

<sup>6</sup> See Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, (Pan, 2004) for a comprehensive account of the events in Warsaw and Rokossovskiy's role in them.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Woff, *Stalin's General's*, op. cit. p. 178, contains just six lines on Rokossovskiy's career in World War One.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op. cit. and Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingad To Berlin*, op. cit. are prime examples of this in otherwise excellent accounts.

<sup>9</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, *Moscow-The Turning Point*, (Berg, Oxford, 1992) is a superb piece of work by a former Bundeswehr and NATO general. It clearly explains why the German attack on Moscow failed but is also very informative on the Russian side.

<sup>10</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnoy Fronta*, (Transitkniga, Neizvestniye Voyny, Moscow, 2006). is a modern reprint of a work first written during the war itself. Shaposhnikov was the Red Army's Chief of the General Staff in 1941, an ex-Tsarist colonel. This is a fantastically detailed work but contains surprisingly little analysis of the conduct of individual commanders and their operations.

<sup>11</sup> Rolf Hinze, *East Front Drama-1944, The Withdrawal Battle of Army Group Centre*, translated and edited by Joseph G. Welsh, (J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing, 1996) is a good example. It gives a fantastically detailed account of the German withdrawal. It is three hundred and sixty pages in length and covers a period of two weeks. It is clearly sympathetic to the Germans, yet it is very effective in conveying the impact of Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, during the Belorussian Operation in June-July 1944. In a similar way, Soviet era unit histories of the Red Army are very detailed tactical narratives with little objective analysis but contain useful snippets of information once you have waded through the morass of detail.

<sup>12</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the only specific English language text on Rokossovskiy is by Richard Woff in Harold Shukman ed., *Stalin's Generals*, (Phoenix, 1993), pp. 177-196.

<sup>13</sup> P.I. Batov, *V Pokhodakh i Boyakh*, (In Campaigns and Battles), (Moscow, 1966).

- <sup>14</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a, op. 3763, d. 213, l. 40 cited V. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv : Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, Dokumenty i Materialy, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1999), p. 204. 'Prikaz Stavki VGK No: 11301 O Naznachenii A.M. Vasilevskogo Komanduyushchim Voyskami 3-go Belorusskogo Fronta' (Stavka VGK Order No: 11301 Concerning The Appointment Of A.M. Vasilevskiy As Commander Of 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front), (No.306) Henceforth ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999).
- <sup>15</sup> For details on Vasilevskiy's overall career see *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, (Moscow, 1976), Vol. 2, pp. 26-27.
- <sup>16</sup> S.I. Isayev, (translated by Steven J. Main), The Military Activity of Marshal G.K. Zhukov During The Great Patriotic War 1941-45: A Chronological Outline, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 97-119.
- <sup>17</sup> See *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), p. 213.
- <sup>18</sup> See *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), p. 614.
- <sup>19</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. , p. 35.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 36.
- <sup>22</sup> V.A. Anfilov, *Bessmertnyy Podvig* (The Unparalleled Feat), (Nauka, Moscow, 1971), pp. 299-303. See also D.T. Ryabyshev, 'Ob Uchastii 8-vo Mechanizirovannogo Korpus v Kontrudare Yugo-Zapdnogo Fronta', (Concerning the Participation of 8<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps in the South-Western Front's Counterattack), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 6, June 1978, pp. 67-74. Rokossovskiy's 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps was part of this counterattack.
- <sup>23</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 162-164 covers these battles in detail. The 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps continued fighting throughout late June and into July until Rokossovskiy was transferred to the Western Front. Kardashov points out that during this time Rokossovskiy did not know where his wife and daughter were and that by early July 1941 the situation was critical on the South-Western Front.
- <sup>24</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 445.
- <sup>25</sup> See *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 4, (Moscow, 1977), p. 33 for details of Konev's career.
- <sup>26</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a p. 3763 d. 142, l.40 cited in V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv : Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, Dokumenty i Materialy, 1943 God*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1999), pp. 81-82. 'Prikaz Stavki VGK No: 0046 O Smene Komanduyushchikh Armiyami Zapadnogo Fronta' (Stavka Order No: 0046 Concerning The Replacement Of The Commander Of The Armies Of The Western Front) (No. 106) Henceforth ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999).
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a, op. 3763, d. 142, l. 198 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 238. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30247 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Pribaltiyskogo Fronta, Predstatel'yu Stavka Na Razgrom Vitebskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Stavka Directive No:30247 To The Commander Of 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front And Stavka Representative On The Destruction Of The Enemy Vitebsk Grouping) He was dismissed on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1943 for incompetence and lack of composure as commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front. He was replaced by Bagramyan.

# **PART ONE: THE UNKNOWN LEADER**

## **CHAPTER 1: FORMATIVE YEARS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROKOSSOVSKIY'S CAREER**

### **Early Years**

There has been considerable dispute about whether Rokossovskiy was born in Poland or Russia, on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1896<sup>1</sup> just nineteen days after his contemporary and rival, Zhukov.<sup>2</sup> In the Soviet version, Rokossovskiy was born in Velikiye Luki, the son of a Polish railway worker and a Russian mother, a former teacher from Pinsk, who allegedly taught him a love of books, as well as fluent Polish and Russian.<sup>3</sup> As a boy, Rokossovskiy moved to Warsaw following his father's work on the Warsaw-Moscow railway. Rokossovskiy had two sisters, Yelena and Maria<sup>4</sup> and the family settled on the eastern bank of the Vistula, in the district of Praga.<sup>5</sup> In 1905, Rokossovskiy's father was killed in an accident.<sup>6</sup> He died slowly.<sup>7</sup> To make matters worse, Rokossovskiy's younger sister, Maria, died shortly afterwards.<sup>8</sup> By early 1911, following his mother's death, Rokossovskiy, aged 14, was an orphan. He lived with his grandmother and then his aunt<sup>9</sup> where, allegedly, aged just 14, he expressed a growing interest in Bolshevism and was imprisoned for political agitation.<sup>10</sup>

In August 1914, Rokossovskiy volunteered for the Imperial Russian Army. He was accepted into the 6<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 5<sup>th</sup> Kargopolskiy Dragoon Regiment, part of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division.<sup>11</sup> He also, according to one biographer, modified his name from the Polish sounding Konstantin Casimiriwicz, to the more Russian Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy,<sup>12</sup> later Marshal of the Soviet Union and a genuine hero of the Soviet people. Rokossovskiy was never a Polish hero. In 1944, he was irredeemably linked with the catastrophe of the Warsaw Uprising and later reviled for his willingness to serve as Stalin's appointed Polish Minister of Defence between 1949-56. In 1991, a statue of Rokossovskiy, in Gdansk, formerly Danzig, was torn down.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 5: Rokossovskiy**  
(rulers.org)

It now seems likely that Rokossovskiy was actually Polish. In April 1940, in a personal biography written by Rokossovskiy, a month after his release from the Gulag, he stated he was born in Warsaw in 1896. It is highly unlikely, that in an official state document written just weeks after his release that Rokossovskiy was playing fast and loose with the truth.<sup>14</sup> In the 1950's,

Rokossovskiy allegedly told the future General Jaruzelski, "I was born a Pole, I am a Pole and I will always be a Pole."<sup>15</sup>

Norman Davies suggests that Rokossovskiy was born in Velikiye Luki, but that,

"in reality, Rokossovskiy was a typical product of the ethnically mixed borderlands of the old Tsarist Empire. He was not a full-blooded Russian; but he was not really a Pole either. His father was descended from a family of déclassé Polish nobles, who had participated in the Risings of 1831 and 1863 and who had subsequently been stripped of their land and status."<sup>16</sup>

Rokossovskiy was not involved in the Russo-Polish War of 1920<sup>17</sup> but the Polish connection haunted Rokossovskiy's life and career. In 1937, Rokossovskiy was condemned as a Polish spy and sent to the Gulag. On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1944,<sup>18</sup> Rokossovskiy's forces were the first Soviet troops to cross the Polish border. In August 1944, in a terrible irony, Rokossovskiy observed the Warsaw Uprising from Praga, his residence as a child, on the eastern bank of the Vistula.

Stalin deprived Rokossovskiy of the ability to act. The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's failure to help the Warsaw insurgents has demonised Rokossovskiy in the eyes of many Poles. However, it is now generally accepted that, in August 1944, when the Rising began, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was in no fit state to support it.<sup>19</sup> As a former inmate of the Gulag, partly incarcerated on suspicion of being a Polish spy, of Polish extraction and with his sister Yelena, living in Warsaw, Rokossovskiy was in a very precarious position. He was being investigated by SMERSH,<sup>20</sup> and almost certainly knew it. In these circumstances, Rokossovskiy took a remarkable risk, as early as 8<sup>th</sup> August 1944, by putting forward an operational plan for the liberation of Poland,<sup>21</sup> a plan that would inevitably have seen Soviet troops fighting for Warsaw. It is difficult to know quite

what Rokossovskiy really thought about the Rising. These matters will be covered in greater detail later but it is clear that Rokossovskiy had no real control over the course of events.<sup>22</sup>

### **World War One and the Russian Civil War (1914-1921)**

The formative military experience of Rokossovskiy's life was World War One. Having volunteered, in August 1914, aged 17, Rokossovskiy won the George Cross, 4<sup>th</sup> Class, for an action during 8<sup>th</sup> August 1914, on the River Pilica.<sup>23</sup> In spring 1915, fighting with 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, on the River Bzura, as part of the Western Front, Rokossovskiy was nominated for the George Cross, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, but it was not awarded.<sup>24</sup> In August 1915, Rokossovskiy was joined in the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment by his first cousin, Konstantin Franz Rokossovskiy, on the western Dvina.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, in early May 1916, Rokossovskiy participated in a cavalry raid, led by Under-Officer Adolf Yushkevich.<sup>26</sup> It was a defining moment in Rokossovskiy's life. Yushkevich, a career soldier, from 1910, became Rokossovskiy's mentor. It was Yushkevich, more than anyone or anything else that eventually persuaded Rokossovskiy to side with the Reds in 1917-18.<sup>27</sup> It was not the last time that Rokossovskiy's life was shaped by Adolf Yushkevich. This friendship would cast a long shadow.

On 21<sup>st</sup> November 1916, Rokossovskiy was made an under officer, the equivalent of a non-commissioned officer<sup>28</sup> and was unsuccessfully



**Figure 6: Under Officer Rokossovskiy, 1916**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

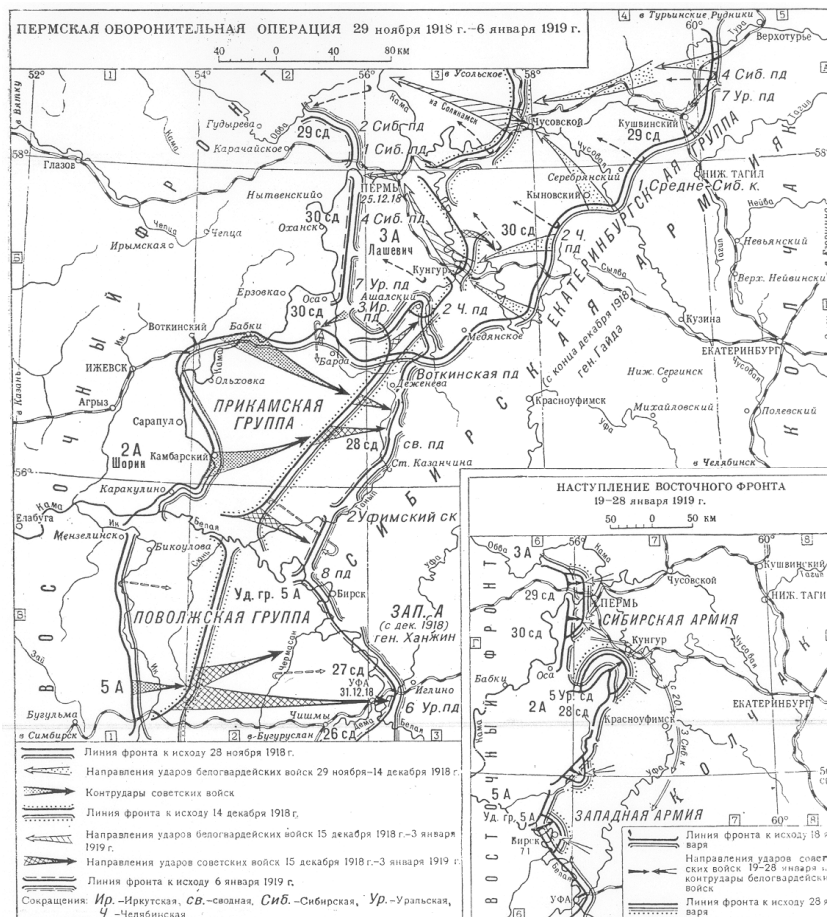
and was unsuccessfully nominated for another George Medal. Rokossovskiy remained on the western Dvina, taking part in numerous small actions, but no huge attack like the Brusilov Offensive of June 1916. There is no evidence that Rokossovskiy, or his unit, were particularly mutinous following the March 1917 Revolution. Indeed, as late as 24<sup>th</sup> August 1917, Rokossovskiy was still part of a coherent fighting unit, engaged in sustained fighting with German infantry and cavalry. In fact, Under-Officer Rokossovskiy was awarded the George Cross, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, for his actions in August 1917.<sup>29</sup>

It was confirmed in December 1917, but never formally awarded as Rokossovskiy had

joined the Red Guards.<sup>30</sup> As 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Kargopolskiy Regiment disintegrated in December 1917, Rokossovskiy's cousin, Franz, begged him to go west, together with a group of Polish dragoons.<sup>31</sup> Rokossovskiy refused and went east with Yushkevich, to join the Red Guards. Rokossovskiy had made a fundamental decision between Poland and the Red Army. It would dominate the rest of his life.

In January-February 1918, Rokossovskiy was elected as a squadron commander in Yushkevich's cavalry detachment.<sup>32</sup> In March 1918, Detachment Yushkevich evolved into the Kargopolsky Red Guards Detachment. It was deployed first, to Bryansk, then northern Ukraine, in April-May 1918, where it was involved in heavy fighting.<sup>33</sup> However, in May 1918, Rokossovskiy's unit was sent east to Siberia, to confront Admiral Kolchak's forces.<sup>34</sup> Rokossovskiy's civil war was not particularly dramatic in its historical significance. He did an awful lot of fighting, but was not at Tsaritsyn later Stalingrad where Iosef Stalin played a leading role in the defence of the city, nor was he ever part of the famous 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Army. Nor did Rokossovskiy take part in the ill-fated Polish War of 1920.<sup>35</sup>

However, he was involved in one of the Red Army's most serious defeats. By July 1918, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Urals Cavalry Regiment was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Urals Division, part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army.<sup>36</sup> In October 1918, 3<sup>rd</sup> Urals Division changed its name to 30<sup>th</sup> Division.<sup>37</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> November 1918, 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army began a counter-offensive with Yushkevich's regiment, including Rokossovskiy, attacking the River Silva, as part of 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade.<sup>38</sup> At first, 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army's offensive went well, taking Omsk in November 1918. However, as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Red Armies advanced east and south-east, on the northern, left flank, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army became isolated between Perm and Yekaterinburg.<sup>39</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army began to falter against heavy opposition. Soon, its advance became a nightmarish withdrawal, a withdrawal carried out in the fearful conditions of a Siberian winter, during November-December 1918.

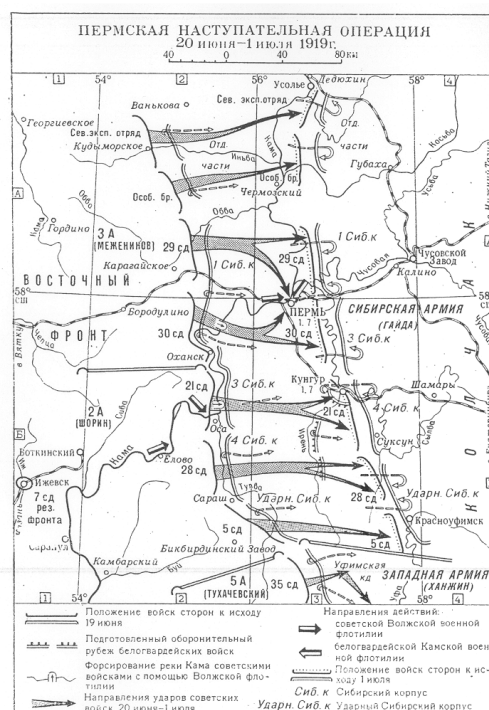


**Figure 7: Collapse of 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army in December 1918 with 30<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division**  
(*Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, (Soviet Military Encyclopaedia), Vol. 6, p.297)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army “stumbled and then collapsed as its soldiers retreated two hundred miles in twenty days.”<sup>40</sup> In temperatures of -35° Centigrade, “the commanders of the Third Army’s engineer and transport groups and many other senior officers defected to the Whites.”<sup>41</sup> The 30<sup>th</sup> Division, and in particular, Rokossovskiy’s unit found itself on the left flank of 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, separated from neighbouring formations,<sup>42</sup> acting as a rearguard while under constant attack from Kolchak’s forces. “On the day before Christmas, the battle-weary soldiers of the Third Red Army, some of whom begged their comrades to shoot them to spare them from going on, finally gave up Perm, centre of the Ural mining industry.”<sup>43</sup> The Whites captured “43,000 tons of coal, 1.2 million tons of ore, nearly 350,000 tons of smelted and manufactured metals, 297 locomotives, 3,000 freight cars, 250 machine guns, 20,000 rifles, 10,000 shells, 10 million rifle cartridges and nearly 20,000 men.”<sup>44</sup>

In January 1919, “Kolchak positioned nearly half of his 112,000 troops to face the Second and Third Armies in the northern Perm-Viatka sector.”<sup>45</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army hovered on the edge of utter annihilation. In the fraught political, social, economic and psychological conditions of revolutionary Russia, in January 1919, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army’s defeat and collapse represented a serious crisis for the Reds. A commission of investigation, led by Stalin and Felix Dzerzhinskiy, the head of the *Cheka* was dispatched. Its findings, at the end of January 1919, made sombre reading. It lambasted 3<sup>rd</sup> Army’s leadership and told of sabotage, desertion and betrayal as “entire regiments and battalions had deserted under fire.”<sup>46</sup> The “morale and efficiency of the army were deplorable owing to the weariness of the units, the result of six months of continuous fighting without relief.”<sup>47</sup> Troops had been in battle unaware of how to use weapons, Red units had inadvertently attacked other Red units and bridges were not demolished to cover an unplanned and chaotic retreat.<sup>48</sup>

In February 1919, after a period of hospitalisation, Rokossovskiy returned to the line. but in May 1919, Yushkevich, Rokossovskiy’s mentor, was seriously wounded.<sup>49</sup> As the Red Army moved east against Kolchak, after three years, Rokossovskiy and Yushkevich went their separate ways. Yushkevich was killed at Perekop, the isthmus leading to the Crimean Peninsula commanding a cavalry regiment in Blyuker’s 51<sup>st</sup> Division.<sup>50</sup> The ghost of Yushkevich would return to haunt Rokossovskiy. In May 1919, Rokossovskiy’s unit became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Urals Cavalry Detachment. It had about five hundred men and remained part of 30<sup>th</sup> Division and 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army. During summer 1919, Rokossovskiy moved steadily east with Eastern Front and, on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1919, he was involved in the re-capture of Yekaterinburg.<sup>51</sup> In the wake of Yekaterinburg, Rokossovskiy was promoted to



**Figure 8: Advance of 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army in 1919**  
(Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya, (Soviet Military Encyclopaedia), Vol. 6, p.296)



command 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Urals Cavalry Detachment<sup>52</sup> and in September 1919, Rokossovskiy's forces took part in the Tobola Dance, a sustained series of skirmishes along the River Tobola with White cavalry. Raiding, skirmishing and minor actions dominated 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army's advance, contributing extensively to Rokossovskiy's tactical education.<sup>53</sup> On 4<sup>th</sup> November 1919, Rokossovskiy received his first Order of the Red Banner. However, just three days later, on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1919, Rokossovskiy took a bullet through the shoulder while attacking Kolchak's headquarters in Omsk.<sup>54</sup> After a period of convalescence, Rokossovskiy returned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Detachment.<sup>55</sup>

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1920, Rokossovskiy was given command of 30<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment.<sup>56</sup> The remainder of Rokossovskiy's civil war was spent east of Lake Baikal, in eastern Siberia, chasing down White forces. These forces were led by Semenov, a Cossack chieftain and former Tsarist officer who had exploited the chaos of 1917-18 to establish control over huge areas of the Trans-Baikal region.<sup>57</sup> Semenov, a man described by an American observer, General Graves as "a murderer, a robber and a most dissolute scoundrel,"<sup>58</sup> imposed a reign of terror on the region. Semenov was in the pay of the Japanese and sadistically assisted by Baron Roman Ungern-Sternberg, another former Cossack, and "a man grown used to killing and, perhaps unhinged by having held too long the power of life and death over others."<sup>59</sup>

On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1920, Rokossovskiy's 30<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, attached to 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division found itself on the borders of Russia and Mongolia. In comparison with the dramatic events in European Russia, this was unglamorous, relentless tactical war that slowly wore down the Whites. The Americans and Japanese continued to support anti-Bolshevik forces in eastern Siberia but with Kolchak's defeat and the general decline in White fortunes during 1920, American support drifted away. Nevertheless, "as late as 1921, the Japanese supplied Siberia's last White forces with twelve thousand rifles, fifty machine guns, and over three hundred thousand cartridges."<sup>60</sup> Rokossovskiy led hundreds of cavalry raids over vast areas and gained huge experience in the intellectually demanding task of finding, fixing and then defeating his opponents. In June 1921, he was wounded for a second time,<sup>61</sup> when launching a cavalry charge on the Mongolian border. Finally, Ungern was captured and executed on 15<sup>th</sup> September

1921.<sup>62</sup> The remaining months of the war amounted to a mopping up operation, but Vladivostok was not captured until October 1922.

### **The Inter-War Years (1922-1937)**



**Figure 9: Rokossovskiy (centre), 1923**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

By the end of the Russian Civil War, Rokossovskiy's unit was part of 5<sup>th</sup> Kuban Cavalry Brigade. It was disbanded and, by July 1922, Rokossovskiy was in command of 27<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, receiving, in 1923, an excellent report that described him as energetic, decisive but calm.<sup>63</sup> In December 1923, Rokossovskiy's reputation was endorsed by 5<sup>th</sup> Army's commander, General, later Marshal Ieronim P. Uborevich (1896-1937).<sup>64</sup> He

commended Rokossovskiy as a young officer of great potential who must not be missed by the Red Army.<sup>65</sup> Rokossovskiy was rewarded with a place on the Higher Command Cavalry Course in Leningrad, during 1924-25. The student register included Zhukov,



**Figure 11: Rokossovskiy and his wife, 1928**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

Bagramyan, Yeremenko and Romanenko.<sup>66</sup> Bagramyan described Rokossovskiy as distinguished in his manner and bearing with a very impressive physique and a sharp analytical mind.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 10: Rokossovskiy, 1924**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1997)

In 1925, Rokossovskiy returned east as an adviser to the Mongolian People's Army, which later named the 1<sup>st</sup> Mongolian Cavalry Division after him.<sup>68</sup> In Mongolia, he was re-united with the wife he had married in 1923 and daughter Adya.<sup>69</sup> In the wake of his Mongolian tour of duty, by September 1926, Rokossovskiy was commanding 75<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment,<sup>70</sup> part of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade.<sup>71</sup> In October 1928, Rokossovskiy was promoted to command of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade<sup>72</sup> before receiving orders in January 1929 to attend the Frunze

Academy.<sup>73</sup> Rokossovskiy studied tactics and operational art as well as familiarising himself with the new ideas that were beginning to influence the Red Army.<sup>74</sup>

It was a short KUVNAS (Course of Improvement for Higher Officers) developed to “remedy the situation whereby the army, due to its revolutionary origins, found itself with a large number of senior officers who had either no formal military education at all or only what they had received as junior officers in the First World War.”<sup>75</sup> In 1928-29, the Frunze Academy was at the centre of a highly creative period in Soviet military thinking. Kardashov argues that “with interest Rokossovskiy familiarised himself with the works of M.N. Tukhachevskiy, S.S. Kamenev, A.I. Kork and other distinguished military thinkers.”<sup>76</sup> It was the only formal officer training course Rokossovskiy ever attended<sup>77</sup> and stimulated an enduring interest in military theory. It also introduced Rokossovskiy to the ideas of the Red Army’s leading thinker, Vladimir K. Triandafillov (1894-1931)<sup>78</sup> and his thoughts on modern armies.<sup>79</sup>

It is difficult to prove whether or not Rokossovskiy was genuinely interested in the intellectual development of Soviet inter-war thinking. The fact that he was a professional, vocational soldier in all that he did, suggests he would have considered it his duty to be aware of current military thinking. Rokossovskiy was not an esoteric military thinker, but an officer of applied intellect, who thought about his profession of arms in a considered and intelligent manner. Yet, he was no fool: Marshal of Aviation, Aleksandr Yevgen’yevich Golovanov (1904-1975), the commander of the Soviet bomber force in World War Two, felt Rokossovskiy was by far the most intelligent general the Red Army possessed.<sup>80</sup> In the course of researching this thesis the author attempted to examine the details of Rokossovskiy’s experiences at the Frunze Academy, who he met, who tutored him and his confidential report. However, this proved impossible to achieve.

Rokossovskiy’s return to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade coincided with Chiang-Kai-Shek’s intrusion upon the Trans-Siberian railway, a critical strategic asset for the Soviet Union. In August 1929, the Special Far Eastern Army was set up under Blyukher and on 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> November 1929,<sup>81</sup> Rokossovskiy’s 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade led the decisive, deep

turning move that induced the Chinese forces to withdraw.<sup>82</sup> On 13<sup>th</sup> February 1930, Rokossovskiy received the Order of the Red Banner and was awarded command of 7<sup>th</sup> Samara Anglo-Proletarian Cavalry Division.<sup>83</sup> It was a significant promotion as well as a change of environment. The 7<sup>th</sup> Samara Division, part of Timoshenko's 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Corps, was stationed in Belorussia, whereas Rokossovskiy had been almost exclusively in the east since he crossed the Urals in 1919. The 7<sup>th</sup> Samara had four regiments, 37<sup>th</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup>, each of six squadrons, in total 7,000 men, based in Minsk. By quirk of historical fate, the officer commanding 39<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment and Rokossovskiy's direct subordinate was a certain G.K. Zhukov, later Marshal of the Soviet Union.<sup>84</sup>

However, after two years in European Russia, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1932, Rokossovskiy returned to the Trans-Baikal, where he assumed command of 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division.<sup>85</sup> This represented an important statement of confidence by the Red Army in Rokossovskiy's abilities. In the early 1930's, the Soviet Union's greatest strategic threats appeared to lie in the east, not the west. Chiang-Kai-Shek had already indicated the vulnerability of the Trans-Siberian railway in 1929. Similarly, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 was a distinctly menacing turn of events for the Soviet Union. The Japanese Kwantung Army was a formidable force. It was countered by the Soviet Far Eastern Army, of which 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was a key part, as it possessed the mobility, endurance and firepower required to conduct operations in this rough, barren region. Rokossovskiy was a highly experienced commander in the Far East and 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was one of the first Soviet cavalry formations to include a mechanised unit, 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment.<sup>86</sup> Rokossovskiy had been appointed to a key command in a vital strategic location,<sup>87</sup> at a time of increased tension and the distinct possibility of war.

In his 1934 report, Rokossovskiy was described as tactically and operationally well-prepared, possessing good initiative and summarised as an excellent commander of cavalry.<sup>88</sup> In September 1935, following the formal re-introduction of ranks into the Red Army, Rokossovskiy was made a KomDiv or divisional commander.<sup>89</sup> Rokossovskiy's star continued to shine and "at the beginning of 1936 Rokossovskiy

moved from Zabaikal to Pskov, where he received command of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps,”<sup>90</sup> in the Leningrad Military District. He also received his first Order of Lenin.<sup>91</sup>

A corps was the Red Army’s highest peacetime formation and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps was undergoing significant changes in 1936, in order to make it compatible with the Red Army’s tactical doctrine of deep battle. In his last attestation, before his arrest in the Purge of 1937, Rokossovskiy received a glowing endorsement from Commander of the Army First Class, General of the Army Boris M. Shaposhnikov, commander of the Leningrad Military District.<sup>92</sup> Shaposhnikov testified “komdiv Rokossovskiy showed a full understanding of his work in operational situations and executes them very well. A very valuable quality in a commander. Entirely suited to the role of cavalry corps commander. Worthy of being conferred with the rank of KomKor.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, Rokossovskiy was considered fit for promotion to the rank of corps commander. In addition, to Rokossovskiy’s impressive collection of inter-war reports, Shaposhnikov’s thoughts confirm Rokossovskiy’s outstanding qualities as an officer. This makes Rokossovskiy’s experiences in the Purge<sup>94</sup> even more incomprehensible.



**Figure 12: B.M. Shaposhnikov**  
(stel.ru)

### **The Purging of Rokossovskiy (1937-1940)**

Rokossovskiy was arrested on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1937.<sup>95</sup> He was charged with failure to ensure the material supply of his corps<sup>96</sup> and accused of being a Polish and Japanese spy. He was beaten up, tortured and sent for trial. Rokossovskiy was confronted by the confession of his co-conspirator, one Adolf Yushkevich. Rokossovskiy pointed out that Yushkevich had died a hero’s death at Perekop in 1920,<sup>97</sup> a death he claimed had been reported in *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), the Red Army’s own newspaper. He was convicted all the same. In one account, he spent the next three years at Vorkuta, a Gulag camp, 1,000 miles east of Moscow, inside the Arctic Circle, close to the White Sea.<sup>98</sup> Rokossovskiy was put to work as a domestic servant for a “loutish warder named Buchko, his duties consisting of fetching the man’s meals, tidying and heating his cottage and so forth.”<sup>99</sup> To a proud and personally correct man, the humiliation of one’s

fate in the hands of such a petty camp tyrant was probably difficult to endure. However, in Vorkuta, indoor duties were preferable to outdoor labour and probably saved Rokossovskiy's life. Rokossovskiy was released on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1940,<sup>100</sup> just ten days after the end of the Soviet-Finnish Winter War (November 1939-March 1940) that brutally exposed the Red Army's weaknesses in the wake of the Purge.

This is the conventional, received version of Rokossovskiy's purge. In recent years evidence has come to light that as early as 13<sup>th</sup> July 1937, Rokossovskiy was implicated in a Trotskyite plot relating to his time as 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division's commander.<sup>101</sup> He was arrested in August 1937 and imprisoned in Leningrad's Kresty prison.<sup>102</sup> He was denounced as a counter-revolutionary<sup>103</sup> and in September 1937 named as an enemy of the people.<sup>104</sup> In the wake of Rokossovskiy's arrest his wife and daughter were thrown out of their accommodation.<sup>105</sup> This article also provides information from 27<sup>th</sup> June 1937, that Rokossovskiy's Communist Party Membership Number was 0456018 and his nationality was Polish.

Similarly, in 2001, Anatoly Karczmit's novel, *Rokossovskiy: A Glorious Crown of Thorns*, was published by Astrel.<sup>106</sup> A dramatic novel based on archival documents and the testimony of those close to Rokossovskiy, the account, if true, between pages 90 and 160, supplies unprecedented details about Rokossovskiy's experience during the Purge. It reveals that as soon as the Purge began, Rokossovskiy, as a Pole, expected the worst. He assumed that he was already on a blacklist<sup>107</sup> and the Polish question was profoundly influential in the Purges. Sadykiewicz believes that Aleksey Innokentyevich Antonov (1896-1962),<sup>108</sup> who later played a critical role as the Deputy and the Chief of the General Staff, during the Great Patriotic War,<sup>109</sup> was also arrested.<sup>110</sup> Antonov's mother was Polish and, like Rokossovskiy, his maternal grandfather had been banished to Siberia for taking part in the Polish rebellion of 1863-64.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, Antonov was also born on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1896, in Grodno, a Polish/Russian border town and grew up speaking fluent Polish from an early age as well as German, French and English.<sup>112</sup> If Antonov was arrested, his incarceration was



**Figure 13: A.I. Antonov**  
(en.wikipedia.org)

brief. It did not stop him being appointed as Chief of Staff of the Moscow Military District, in summer 1937. In December 1938, Antonov was succeeded by Sokolovskiy. Sadykiewicz suggests Vasily Danilovich Sokolovskiy (1897-1968), an impeccably reliable political Soviet general, if ever there was one, was also briefly arrested,<sup>113</sup> but quickly released. It is interesting to note given the Polish strand that Sokolovskiy was also born in Grodno, in September 1897.<sup>114</sup>

In mid June 1937, the political and intelligence officers of Rokossovskiy's 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps informed him that he was being relieved of command<sup>115</sup> and put under house arrest, in the intelligence quarters of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps.<sup>116</sup> No reason was given. In short, Rokossovskiy was arrested two months before the conventionally accepted date of his incarceration. He was denied contact with anyone, including his family. In late June 1937, two NKVD officers arrived. Rokossovskiy was arraigned before a meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps' political members and denounced as an enemy of the state, a spy and a traitor. A more serious charge in 1937 can hardly be imagined. Rokossovskiy was stripped of his party membership and removed from active service. However, intriguingly, he was put on the reserve list.<sup>117</sup>

In the wake of his denunciation, Rokossovskiy was released from house arrest and returned home to his wife and eleven year old daughter. In August 1937, in what is conventionally assumed to be the original date of his purging, three NKVD officials re-arrested Rokossovskiy and 'reviewed' the case.<sup>118</sup> The review took three years during which Rokossovskiy spent long periods in Leningrad's Kresty prison, much of it in solitary confinement. The majority of the evidence against Rokossovskiy was induced from other, hapless, desperate, enemies of the state. Senior officers gave incriminating evidence against Rokossovskiy in relation to his long service in the east, particularly as officer commanding 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 1932-35.

Two officers, Griaznov and Czaikovski, alleged that in 1916, Adolf Yushkevich, a Pole, had recruited Rokossovskiy, a Pole, into the Polish secret services. It was also claimed, that as officer commanding 7<sup>th</sup> Samara Division in Belorussia in 1931, Rokossovskiy had facilitated the escape of Yushkevich into Poland.<sup>119</sup> Rokossovskiy was also

accused of spying for the Japanese, in the period 1932-34, during the highly sensitive period following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Rokossovskiy's orders that his communications officers should study Japanese were cited as evidence of treasonous intent, not professionalism. It was also suggested that he had tried to recruit Soviet soldiers for the Japanese secret service.<sup>120</sup>

In March 1938, after seven months of interrogation, Rokossovskiy was transferred to the Lubyanka, in Moscow. He endured more solitary confinement and questioning by a brutal NKVD officer, Mikhail Urnov. Rokossovskiy was presented with new witness evidence concerning treasonous dealings with the Japanese and Poles. He refused to sign a confession, was pinned to a chair and given a terrible physical beating. He was left unconscious and bleeding for twenty minutes. Urnov returned, blustering that Rokossovskiy would now sign a confession, but apparently Rokossovskiy raised himself from the floor and swung a table leg at Urnov. Urnov returned with more guards, five in total, and inflicted an even more savage beating, in which Rokossovskiy lost eight teeth and suffered three broken ribs. He was returned, unconscious, to his cell and left for dead. After five days, with untreated wounds, Rokossovskiy was finally hospitalised. A rapid physical recovery made him fit for more psychological torment. He was put in a special solitary confinement cell, unable to lie down properly. He was forced to sit or stand in his own excrement.<sup>121</sup>

In the most terrible of ironies, Rokossovskiy received some physical, if not mental respite, on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1938, when Beria replaced Yezhov, as head of the NKVD. In a piece of psychological theatre suffused with macabre intent, Rokossovskiy was interrogated by Viktor Abakumov,<sup>122</sup> the future head of SMERSH.<sup>123</sup> Abakumov, “violent, uncultured and devious.....was tall and handsome”<sup>124</sup> deliberately wore an impeccable uniform, while questioning the ragged, shoeless and filthy Rokossovskiy, the personally correct, well-mannered career officer of the Red Army.<sup>125</sup> In March 1939, Rokossovskiy was formally court-martialled in the Supreme Soviet.<sup>126</sup> He had no defence team.



**Figure 14: L. Beria**  
(historycentral.com)



Rokossovskiy condemned the veracity of the witness statements against him, as the product of lies and torture. Rokossovskiy asked to cross-examine Griaznov and Czaikovski, but was told the former had been executed, while the latter had died in jail. Yet, for Rokossovskiy, the worst was to come. Andrei Belozerov, an old comrade and close friend, testified that Rokossovskiy had told him, in confidence, that he was a Polish spy. In addition, Belozerov confirmed Rokossovskiy's role in Yushkevich's escape, in 1931. Rokossovskiy was appalled that one of his closest friends could recount such damning lies. In response to the judge's inquiry about the truth of his allegations, a distressed and shaking Belozerov looked at Rokossovskiy and declared they were lies, extracted under torture. He removed his shoes and socks: he had no toenails and defiantly endorsed Rokossovskiy's protestations that Yushkevich had been killed, in 1920, at Perekop, in the service of the Red Army.<sup>127</sup>

The court was adjourned, indefinitely. Rokossovskiy returned to solitary confinement, more interrogation and another trial, in September 1939,<sup>128</sup> before the same judges. Again, the court failed to find a verdict and Rokossovskiy was returned to prison. However, he was released on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1940, just days after the end of the Soviet-Finnish War (November 1939-March 1940) that revealed the shocking state of the Red Army. It clearly needed officers of Rokossovskiy's calibre. Sadykiewicz believes that, without the embarrassment of the Red Army in Finland, Rokossovskiy would not have been released.<sup>129</sup>

It is difficult to be categorical about such matters, but there was no inevitability about Rokossovskiy's release, or that he would not be returned to the Gulag. The Purge, although not as virulent, carried on during the Second World War: Kyrill Meretskov (1897-1968) the former Chief of the General Staff was imprisoned between June-September 1941.<sup>130</sup> Several Soviet officers such as D.G. Pavlov were executed in July 1941 and from spring 1943 the Red Army was haunted by Abukamov's SMERSH.<sup>131</sup> It was a fearful, monstrous organ of Stalin's state.



**Figure 15: K. Meretskov**  
(northstarcompass.org)

“It had seven branches: it conducted surveillance over the army staff and all forces, it pursued and killed deserters and self mutilators, it formed “blocking squads” to shoot retreating soldiers, it supervised quartermasters and field hospitals, it filtered suspected collaborators in reoccupied territory, it watched over contact with allies and the enemy. SMERSH terrorized the army and all who lived in combat zones, and squeezed everything it could from German prisoners. SMERSH made death in battle preferable to retreat for Russians and to surrender for Germans, but as an intelligence organization it was a liability. Most of its men were as aggressive and ignorant as Abakumov; they shot or hanged many loyal and able officers and men.”<sup>132</sup>

One can only speculate about Rokossovskiy’s private thoughts and emotions during the Warsaw Rising of August 1944, when he became involved in another ghastly Polish and Russian drama. The Poles thought him a traitor: the Soviet regime and Abukamov had tortured him, as a Polish spy.

### **The Eve of War (1940-1941)**

Rokossovskiy returned to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps, now in the Ukraine and in June 1940, took part in the Red Army’s annexation of Bessarabia.<sup>133</sup> In December 1940, Rokossovskiy received command of 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps.<sup>134</sup> In theory, the mechanised corps’ were operational strike formations designed to drive the enemy off the soil of the Soviet Union. Yet, confusion surrounded their role and in December 1940, Rokossovskiy directly asked for clarification of 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps’ role.<sup>135</sup> As late as May 1941, he condemned Kirponos, the Kiev Special Military District commander’s analysis of their exercises as “extremely superficial, so much so that we could hardly make out what was expected of us.”<sup>136</sup>

There was a chronic shortage of equipment. The 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps was promised new tanks. It went to war in old tanks that Rokossovskiy had mothballed during pre-war exercises to ensure that if, or when, war broke out, 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised had at least some tanks that worked. The whole corps had barely exercised as a complete unit due to shortages of armour, ammunition and fuel, while many officers were inexperienced, if not incompetent and lacking field skills. The 131<sup>st</sup> Motorised Division walked: there

were no lorries. In truth, “the bitter fact was that the corps was mechanised in name only.”<sup>137</sup>

A mixture of luck, foresight and skill enabled Rokossovskiy to survive the bewildering early days of Operation Barbarossa. He was fortunate that 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps was not in the immediate border region and admitted he was unsure how it would have performed if it had been engulfed in the main line of attack.<sup>138</sup> It was not caught up in



**Figure 16: I.I. Fedyuninskiy**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

the early battles and Rokossovskiy had time to impose a degree of organisational coherence upon 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps. In reality, Rokossovskiy's foresight had persuaded him to prepare his formation for war and he warned his officers to stay close by their units, at least forty-eight hours before the German invasion. As early as 18<sup>th</sup> June 1941, Rokossovskiy knew that a German deserter had revealed to Major-General Ivan I.

Fedyuninskiy (1900-1977) of 15<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps<sup>139</sup> the date of the German attack. Major-General Potapov, 5<sup>th</sup> Army's commander, rejected the information, warning of agent provocateurs and suggested angrily to Fedyuninskiy that “you are sounding the alarm without reason.” In contrast,

“on June 20, I was visited by the commander of the mechanized corps, General K.K. Rokossovskii(sic), who was on his way from the training area. We had a frank talk. Rokossovskii(sic) shared my fears. He, too, was worried by the situation and by our excessive fear of provoking (the Germans), a fear which impaired the combat readiness of the troops located along the frontier. I invited the general to remain overnight, but, thanking me, he refused: “at such times, it is better to be closer to one's units.”<sup>140</sup>

It was Rokossovskiy's first act of leadership in the Great Patriotic War.

### **The Rise of Rokossovskiy**

An obvious, but frequently overlooked, indicator of the significance of Rokossovskiy's career is his rise through the higher levels of the Red Army's high command during the Great Patriotic War. “In the spring of 1940, after a holiday with my family in Sochi on

the Black Sea coast,” he wrote in his memoirs “I had an invitation from Marshal Semyon Timoshenko. The People’s Commissar of Defence received me warmly. Marshal Timoshenko suggested that I resume command of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps, which I had commanded in 1936-37.”<sup>141</sup> In these, understated words, Rokossovskiy described how he resumed his active military career, as a colonel, following his release from the Gulag, on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1940.

In June 1940, Rokossovskiy, along with 479 others, was promoted to the rank of major-general.<sup>142</sup> By August 1941, Lieutenant-General Rokossovskiy had received command of 16<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>143</sup> This was followed, on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1943, by Rokossovskiy’s promotion to Colonel-General, whilst he was



**Figure 18: G. Zhukov**  
(photobucket.com)

engaged in operations at Stalingrad. In

April 1943, Rokossovskiy was

appointed General of the Army,<sup>144</sup> and, on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, received the highest rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union.<sup>145</sup> It was a remarkable record, bettered only by Marshal Aleksandr Mikhaylovich Vasilevskiy, (1895-1977)<sup>146</sup> who in a meteoric rise went from major-general in June 1940, to Marshal by



**Figure 17: A.M. Vasilevskiy**  
(ets.ru)

February 1943.<sup>147</sup> Naturally, ascent to the highest rank does not automatically reflect ability and merit, a fact painfully borne out by Stalin’s cronies Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov (1881-1969),<sup>148</sup> Grigoriy Ivanovich Kulik (1890-1950)<sup>149</sup> and Semen Mikhailovich Budenny (1883-1973)<sup>150</sup> but in Rokossovskiy’s case, there is little doubt as to his worth, or the genuine distinction of his record. If men such as Georgiy



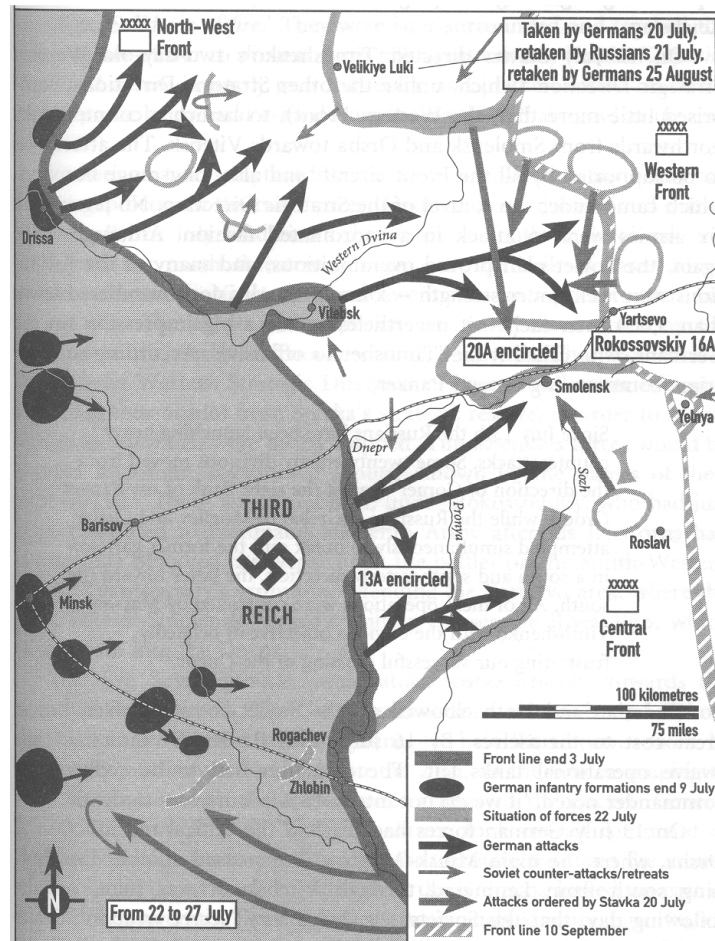
**Figure 19: I. Konev**  
(media-2.web.britannica.com)

Konstantinovich Zhukov (1896-1974) and Ivan Stepanovich Konev (1897-1973), achieved the rank of Marshal before Rokossovskiy, nevertheless, with the exception of Vasilevskiy, Rokossovskiy rose further and faster, to an equal rank, the highest rank in the Red Army, Marshal of the Soviet Union.

## Rokossovskiy's Role In Key Operations

As early as July 1941<sup>151</sup>, as the commander of an *ad hoc* military formation,<sup>152</sup> known as Group Rokossovskiy,<sup>153</sup> Rokossovskiy played an important role in delaying the German encirclement of Smolensk.<sup>154</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> August 1941, he inherited 16<sup>th</sup> Army from the wounded Lieutenant-General Mikhail F. Lukin.<sup>155</sup>

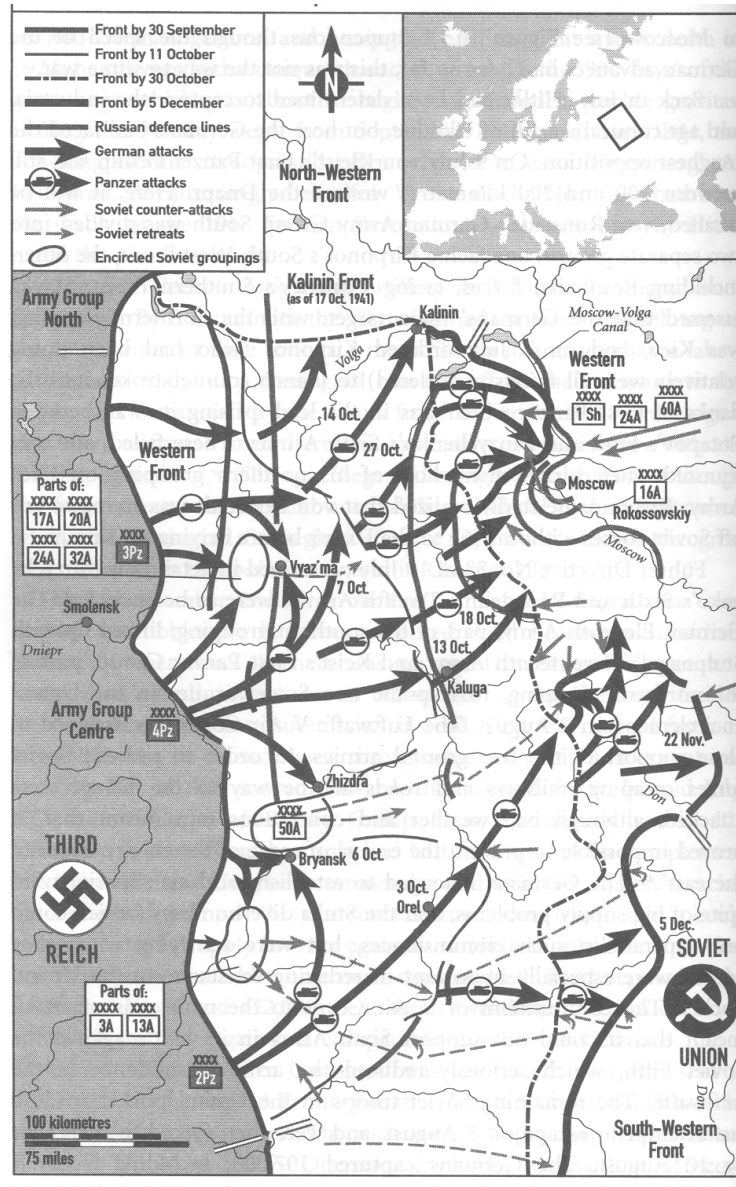
The 16<sup>th</sup> Army had faced encirclement and annihilation within Smolensk<sup>156</sup>, but during November-December 1941, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army, played a critical role in the defensive phase of the battle of Moscow (15<sup>th</sup> October-5<sup>th</sup> December 1941), a key turning point in World War Two.<sup>157</sup> Naturally, the performance of 16<sup>th</sup> Army was not the only, or perhaps the most important factor, in determining the outcome of the battle of Moscow, but it did make a truly significant contribution.<sup>158</sup>



**Figure 20: Smolensk and Yartsevo: 10<sup>th</sup> July-10<sup>th</sup> August 1941.**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.241.)

Indeed, in the last days of November 1941, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army, while fighting a furious tactical battle, assumed an operational, arguably strategic significance, out of all proportion to its size. It is the argument of this thesis that at Moscow, no other Soviet commander or army, with the possible exception of Chuikov's 62<sup>nd</sup> Army at Stalingrad, fought and prevailed in a tactical encounter of such ferocity and significance that it had operational, strategic and even grand strategic implications. It was a critical event: defeat at Moscow frustrated the German aim of winning the Soviet war in one campaign

and condemned Hitler's Germany to a prolonged war of attrition on several fronts. Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army did not drive the Wehrmacht from the field, nor can it claim to have won the battle of Moscow. However, its contribution to the frustration of German hopes was an event of considerable historical significance.



**Figure 21: Vyazma and Bryansk: October 1941**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.258)

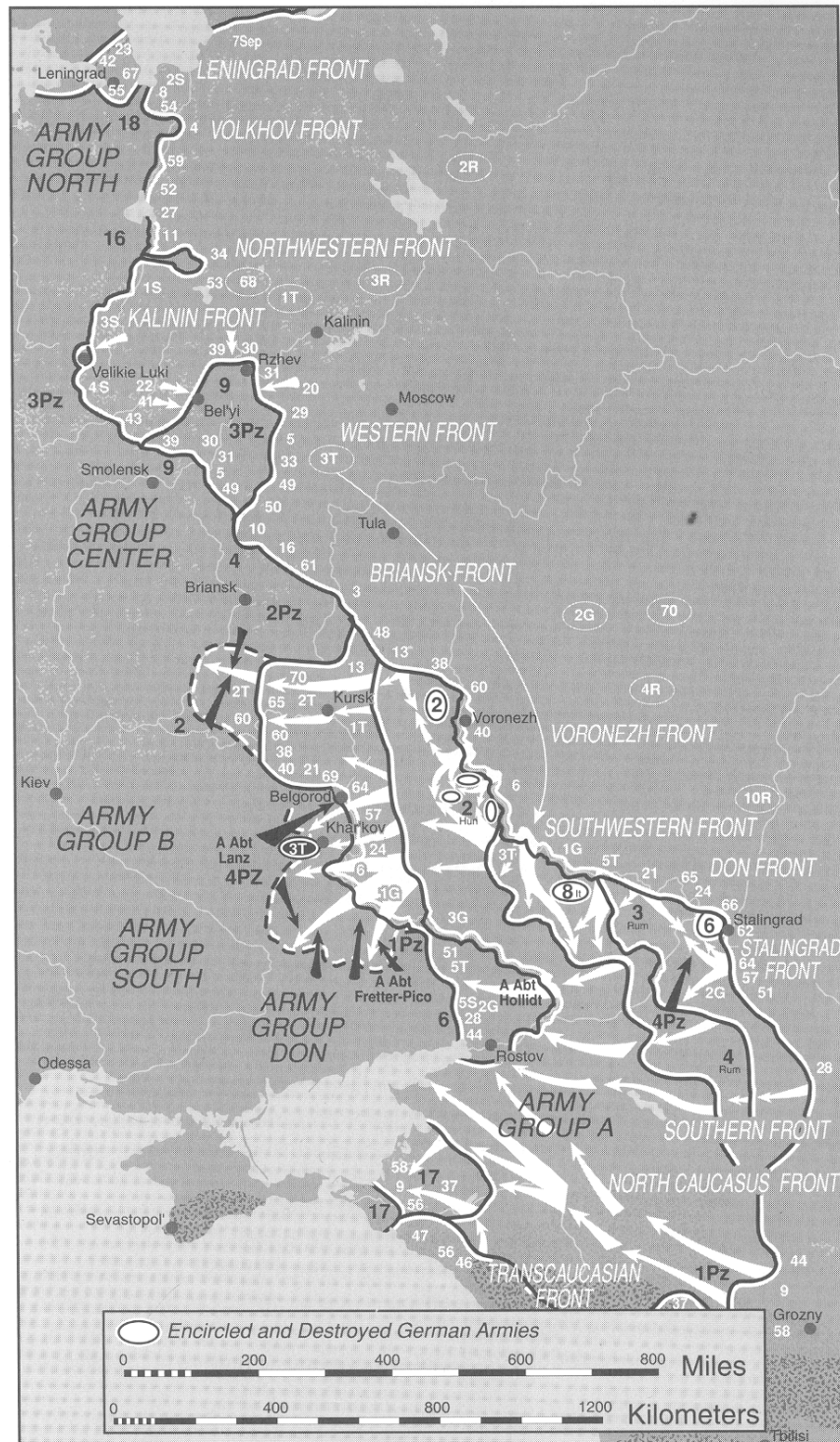
On 13<sup>th</sup> July 1942<sup>159</sup>, Rokossovskiy was appointed to command the Bryansk Front, covering the south-western approaches of Moscow.<sup>160</sup> It was, potentially, a critical sector, as Stalin believed the German summer offensive would attack Moscow, from the

south-west.<sup>161</sup> It would have been Rokossovskiy's responsibility to defend Moscow, although by the time Rokossovskiy took active command of the Bryansk Front, it was reasonably clear, although not certain, that the German *schwerpunkt* was not heading for the Soviet capital.<sup>162</sup> The Germans moved east and south-east towards a date with destiny at Stalingrad. It was the start of Rokossovskiy's quietest period of service on the Eastern Front, particularly when *Stavka* ordered 38<sup>th</sup> Army to the Voronezh Front and reduced the Bryansk Front to a minor role.<sup>163</sup> The front was so dormant that in September 1942, Stalin himself rang Rokossovskiy, to inquire "whether I did not find the situation to dull for my liking."<sup>164</sup>

Rokossovskiy was summoned to Moscow. He was informed that he was to command a major Soviet counter-offensive in the Stalingrad region. "The plan was to concentrate a strong force (no less than three combined armies and several armoured corps) on the flank of the enemy occupying the country between the Don and the Volga with the purpose of counter-attacking south and south-east from the vicinity of Serafimovich."<sup>165</sup> This was the original, the first plan for a Soviet counter-attack at Stalingrad. However, as the situation in the city deteriorated, during late September and early October 1942, the proposed offensive was cancelled. Few, in the western world, are aware that this plan, which throws considerable light upon the Soviet high command's approach to Stalingrad, even existed. Rokossovskiy's selection to command it was symptomatic of his standing and the importance of his location as an indicator of significant, impending Soviet operations.

Rokossovskiy did go on to play a key role at Stalingrad. In November 1942, the Don Front, under Rokossovskiy's command, played a supporting role in Operation Uranus, (19<sup>th</sup> –23<sup>rd</sup> November 1942), when the Red Army encircled the Sixth German Army and elements of Fourth Panzer Army in the Stalingrad pocket. However, it was under Rokossovskiy's direction that the encircled Sixth Army was annihilated.<sup>166</sup> The German defeat at Stalingrad was a shattering blow to the reputation of the Wehrmacht.<sup>167</sup> Yet, from the Russian perspective, surprisingly little is known about Operation Kol'tso (10<sup>th</sup> January-2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943), the final Soviet operation at

Stalingrad. However, in terms of Rokossovskiy's style and the wider war in the east, it was a critical event.<sup>168</sup>



**Figure 22: Eastern Front: November 1942-March 1943**  
(Glantz and House, 1995, *When Titans Clashed*, p.131.)



If little is known about Operation Kol'tso, even less is known about the operation Rokossovskiy's forces engaged in during February-March 1943.<sup>169</sup> On 4<sup>th</sup> February 1943, just two days after the German surrender at Stalingrad, Rokossovskiy was ordered to Moscow. He was informed that the Don Front was to be rapidly re-deployed,<sup>170</sup> to the central sector of the Eastern Front.<sup>171</sup> There, under Rokossovskiy's command, a newly formed Central Front would launch a huge, north-easterly deep operation towards Smolensk. It was, to that date, the most ambitious deep operation undertaken by any Soviet formation. The operation of February 1943 is indicative of several things. First, Rokossovskiy's considerable standing within the high command. This was a vital operation, on a key sector of the Eastern Front, at a critical time. Stavka was going for the strategic jackpot and it picked Rokossovskiy for the job. Second, it demonstrated the Soviet General Staff's growing confidence in the aftermath of Stalingrad. Third, it showed Stalin and Zhukov's sustained obsession with Army Group Centre. Fourth, the operational concept and Rokossovskiy's handling of the operation, reveal a great deal about the different forms of Soviet operation and Rokossovskiy's operational style. The operation failed, but this does not alter the fact that Rokossovskiy was involved in one of the most significant, but least known operations of World War Two.

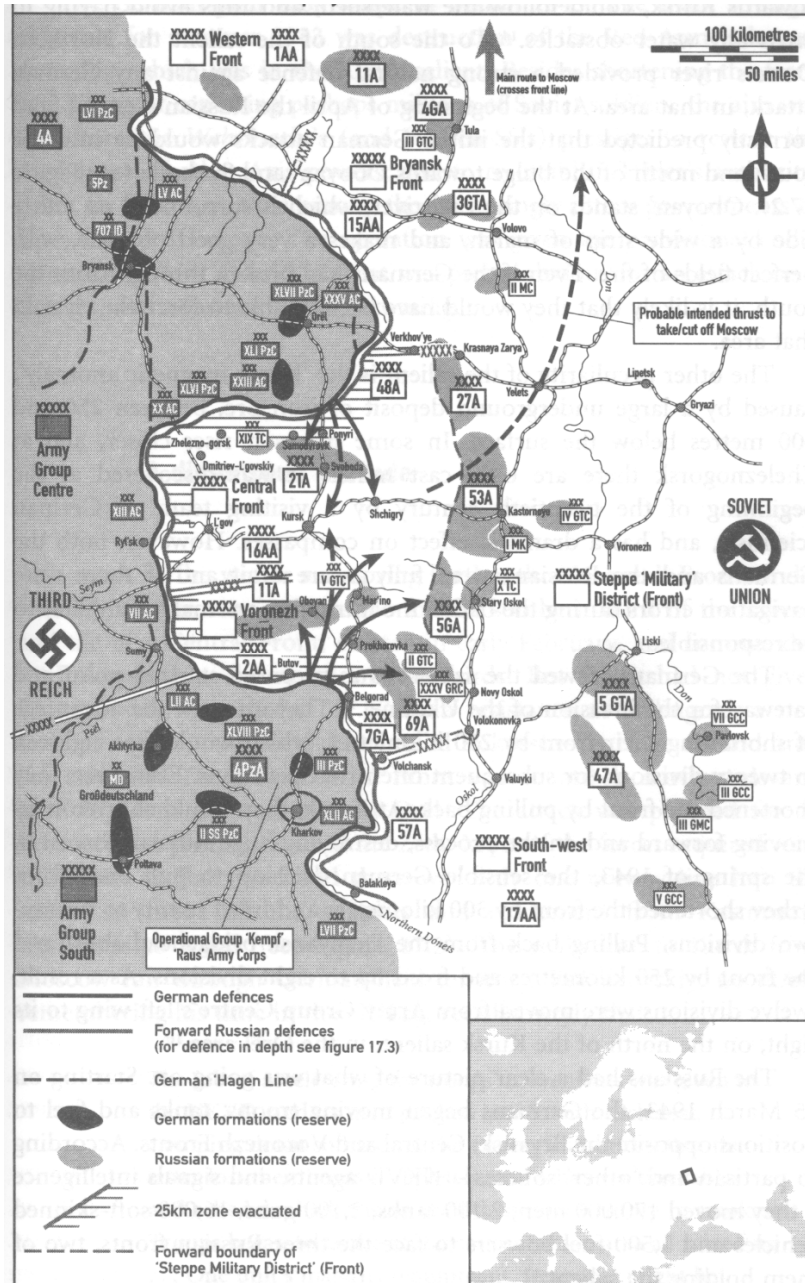
During the Cold War era, the February 1943 operation more or less disappeared<sup>172</sup> from the official pages of Soviet history.<sup>173</sup> In contrast, the pages of history are inundated with the Kursk Operation of July 1943. At Kursk, the last major German offensive on the Eastern Front was defeated by a massive Soviet defensive operation.<sup>174</sup> There is considerable historical debate about certain tactical battles within the Kursk engagement, the numbers involved, casualties incurred and the propaganda subsequently dished out on all sides.<sup>175</sup> However, there is relatively little historical debate about the strategic implications of Kursk. It was a decisive turning point of the war, the point at which most Germans realised that not only was Germany unlikely to be victorious in the East, but that it was facing the prospect of utter defeat. If Stalin secretly contemplated the possibility of a compromise peace, in spring 1943,<sup>176</sup> after Kursk he had little incentive to ponder anything other than the destruction of Nazi Germany.

The contribution of Rokossovskiy's Central Front, to the Soviet victory at Kursk, is often overshadowed by the dramatic events at the southern end of the salient. The fluctuating collision between the German forces in the south and Vatutin's Voronezh Front is undeniably compelling, particularly the ferocity of the clash at Prokhorovka on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1943.<sup>177</sup> In recent times, historical research has called into question the true significance of Prokhorovka, and, by implication, if the Soviets claimed it was the key turning point, the whole significance of the Soviet victory at Kursk.<sup>178</sup> Yet, to endlessly debate the significance of Prokhorovka in determining the outcome at Kursk, is to miss the point, for the true source of the Soviet operational, not tactical victory at Kursk, lay at the northern end of the salient, with Rokossovskiy's Central Front.

The German objective at Kursk was the encirclement and annihilation of all Soviet forces in the Kursk salient, with Model's Ninth Army coming from the north, through Rokossovskiy's Central Front, to meet Manstein's forces, Fourth Panzer Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzer Corps and Army Abteilung Kempf, coming from the south, by defeating the Voronezh Front.<sup>179</sup> This required complete German success in the south, but also in the north, over Rokossovskiy's Central Front, something the Germans clearly did not achieve. Therefore, despite the historical hullabaloo about what did or did not happen at Prokharovka, the origins of the German failure at Kursk lay in Rokossovskiy's defensive victory over Model's Ninth Army, at the northern end of the salient. This fact is frequently overlooked in both Soviet and western historical literature.

As early as 10<sup>th</sup> July 1943, two days before Prokharovka, the Central Front had already beaten off Ninth Army.<sup>180</sup> Rokossovskiy's victory meant any German success at Kursk, not just Prokharovka, could only be of relatively limited tactical importance in relation to the original German objectives. In fact, Rokossovskiy's success meant Prokharovka was actually of little relevance to the overall operational engagement at Kursk. Indeed, it does raise the question of why German commanders in the south actually fought Prokharovka, given that they must have been aware of the operational significance of Rokossovskiy's victory. In theory, but no more, the utter implosion of the Voronezh Front could have raised the possibility of the Central Front's rear being smashed, on the anvil of the German Ninth Army, by the hammer of the German Fourth Panzer Army.

However, given the presence of the massive Soviet strategic reserve, the Steppe Front, under Konev, east of the Kursk salient, any German advance on Rokossovskiy's Central Front would have been exposed to a huge Soviet flank attack, an encounter to dwarf Prokhorovka.



**Figure 23: German Intentions at Kursk in July 1943.**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.561.)

In the aftermath of the Central Front's defensive victory at Kursk, just five days later, on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943, it was engaged in a multi-front operation.<sup>181</sup> Operation Kutuzov was an integral part of the Kursk Strategic Operation, involving the Western, Bryansk and Central Fronts, deployed respectively in an arc from north to south.<sup>182</sup> It was the first substantial, multi-front operation, undertaken by the Red Army since it had been re-equipped during the spring of 1943, in order to develop a greater capacity for deep operational manoeuvre.<sup>183</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> August 1943, the Soviet government celebrated the fall of Belgorod and Orel with an artillery barrage in Moscow, but in fact, Operation Kutuzov was an attritional slogging match.<sup>184</sup> Nevertheless, Operation Kutuzov provides a yardstick by which to assess the Red Army in summer 1943, as well as the opportunity to examine Rokossovskiy's evolution as a commander of offensive operations. In relative, if not absolute terms, Operation Kutuzov was the closest Rokossovskiy came to outright failure as an operational commander. It is clear that Rokossovskiy was unhappy with the planning and execution of Kutuzov.<sup>185</sup>

The operations undertaken by Rokossovskiy's Central and Belorussian Fronts in the period August 1943-April 1944 are frequently, perhaps inevitably, overshadowed by Kursk and the subsequent collapse of Army Group Centre, in June 1944. During this period Soviet strategy concentrated on the Ukraine at the expense of Belorussia, but, nevertheless, this was a formative period in the development of Rokossovskiy's operational style. The Central Front, renamed the Belorussian Front on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943, conducted operations with a creativity, flexibility and speed that regularly enabled Rokossovskiy to out-manoeuver the Wehrmacht. It was Rokossovskiy's forces that bounced the Dnepr, crossed the Sozh and the Desna. Indeed, "at the end of September the Central Front in co-operation with other fronts had achieved outstanding operational success."<sup>186</sup> Rokossovskiy's forces penetrated the Panther position and treated Second and Ninth German Armies to a lesson in operational manoeuvre, despite the difficult nature of the terrain.<sup>187</sup> It was here that deception, surprise, rapier like deep thrusts, harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre, the ability to acquire, retain and exploit the initiative through operational momentum emerged as the hallmarks of Rokossovskiy's operational art. In addition, it was during this period that Rokossovskiy developed the

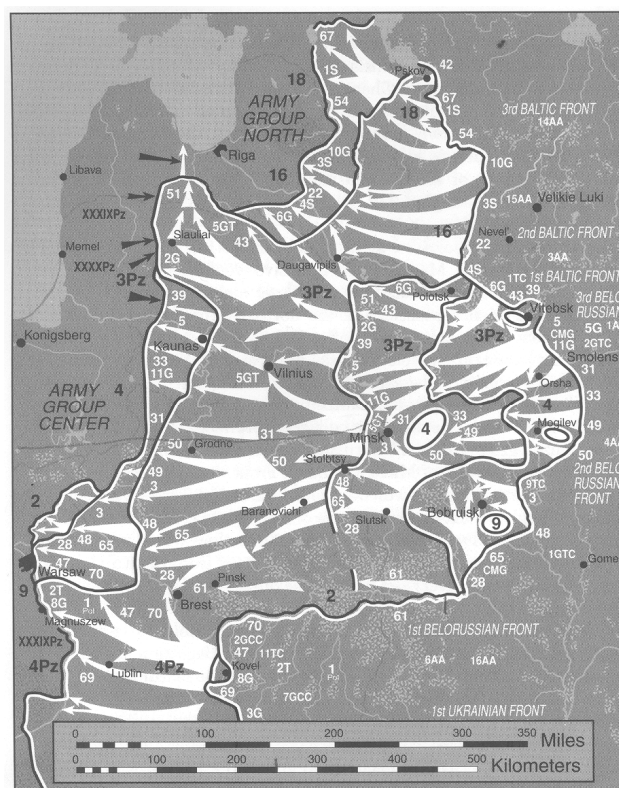
idea of dual main efforts, within a broad front, in contrast to the orthodox Soviet approach of a single main effort.

However, if the Belorussian Front's operations in autumn 1943 were notable for their success, those of winter 1943-44 were characterised by frustration and missed opportunities. A combination of wet weather, the diversion of Soviet resources into the Ukraine and mistakes by Red Army commanders, added up to a number of failed Soviet operations. Rokossovskiy's conduct does not appear to have contributed to these flawed operations.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, the sharp contrast between Rokossovskiy's operational successes and the mediocrity of Sokolovskiy's Western Front was a stark one.<sup>189</sup> This thesis will shed light on Rokossovskiy's operations in Belorussia during the winter and spring of 1944, operations that set the scene for the Belorussian Operation (23<sup>rd</sup> June-29<sup>th</sup> August 1944) in the summer of 1944.

The Normandy landings of June 1944 clearly played a part in accelerating and shaping the nature of Germany's defeat in World War Two, but in Normandy the German defeat took several weeks. In Belorussia, from 22<sup>nd</sup> June- 4<sup>th</sup> July 1944, German Army Group Centre was simply shattered<sup>190</sup>. Operation Bagration was the centrepiece of the Soviet campaign of 1944. It is now widely regarded as the most impressive Soviet operation of World War Two. Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front played a critical role in the strategic disaster that overwhelmed Army Group Centre in June 1944. The core elements of Rokossovskiy's operational style coalesced in a devastating display of operational art that submerged Ninth Army, induced the collapse of Fourth Army and the implosion of Army Group Centre.<sup>191</sup>

In spite of the overwhelming Soviet strength and crippling German weakness that prevailed in late 1944 and 1945, Army Group Centre, although weaker than between 1941-43, was not an empty shell. It was outnumbered,<sup>192</sup> but it was not full of old men and fanatically committed young boys. It was not 'undermined' by Romanians, Hungarians or Italians and it had strong defences, in difficult terrain, from which it had repeatedly beaten off numerous Soviet assaults. However, its defences lacked depth and defensive preparations were undermined by the refusal of German military intelligence

and senior Army Group Centre commanders to consider that a major, not a minor Soviet offensive was building in Belorussia.<sup>193</sup> Army Group Centre was, despite its weaknesses, a frontline German army group, manned by experienced, if no doubt worn troops, deployed in areas of marsh and forest, apparently unsuitable for rapid, agile manoeuvre war. Nevertheless, it is the contention of this thesis that in Operation Bagration, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front played a key tactical, operational, but also, uniquely, a strategic role, one that made the difference between defeat and disaster for Army Group Centre.



**Figure 24: The Belorussian Operation and the advance on Warsaw.**  
(Glantz and House, *When Titans Clashed*, 1995, p.200.)

The summer of 1944 was the zenith of Rokossovskiy's career, culminating, on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, in his promotion to Marshal of the Soviet Union.<sup>194</sup> However, autumn 1944 brought the horror of the Warsaw Uprising. Furthermore, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1944, Stalin informed Rokossovskiy that he was to be replaced by Zhukov<sup>195</sup> as commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>196</sup> At a stroke, Rokossovskiy was taken from the Warsaw-Berlin axis and appointed to command 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front, north of Warsaw, on the borders of East Prussia. In January 1945, Rokossovskiy began the East Prussian

Operation,<sup>197</sup> one of the more challenging and demanding Soviet operations of World War Two. It was conducted in an atmosphere of appalling, murderous retribution,<sup>198</sup> but in purely military terms, Rokossovskiy rose to the challenge and shattered the German defences. The East Prussian Operation, in conjunction with the East Pomeranian Operation of February-March 1945,<sup>199</sup> played an important role in breaking the fanatical military resistance of German formations fighting on German soil, before the Berlin Operation. Rokossovskiy's wartime career finished with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's Oder-Elbe Operation.<sup>200</sup> It began on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1945 although in Rokossovskiy's words "after April 27 the enemy was no longer capable of holding any line and we began a rapid pursuit of his fleeing units."<sup>201</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian's troops established contact with 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army, south of Wismar.<sup>202</sup> After two days of mopping up, on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front suspended active operations.



**Figure 25: Hero of the Soviet Union, Marshal of the Soviet Union, K.K. Rokossovskiy, 1944**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

<sup>1</sup> E-mail from Sir Roderic Braithwaite, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004. Braithwaite met Rokossovskiy's grandson Konstantin Vilevich who insisted that his grandfather was born in Russia. He cited a curriculum vitae that Rokossovskiy wrote before 1937, in which Rokossovskiy's birthplace was given as Warsaw as well as an identity document, given to Rokossovskiy in March 1940, upon his release from the Gulag, which also gave his place of birth as Warsaw.

<sup>2</sup> Viktor Anfilov, in Harold Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, Zhukov, (Phoenix, 1993), p. 343. See also *Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, (Moscow, 1977), Vol. 3. p. 345.

<sup>3</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, (Rostov-na-Dony), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 9. A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 10.

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- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 178. Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 125.
- <sup>11</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 178. Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 128 suggests Rokossovskiy was conscripted.
- <sup>12</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>13</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 515.
- <sup>14</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, 'Epokha v Avtobiografiyakh', (Epoch and Autobiography), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 12, December 1990, pp. 6-87, this p. 86.
- <sup>15</sup> Personal conversation with Colonel Michael Sadykiewicz on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2004.
- <sup>16</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. pp. 125-126.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art, 1904-37, And The Imperial Legacy In Soviet Military Thought*, (Ph.D Thesis, King's College, University of London, 1994), pp. 128-140 gives an excellent account of the Russo-Polish War, as well as the events around Warsaw, in August 1920.
- <sup>18</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983), p. 238.
- <sup>19</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 283 and p. 268.
- <sup>20</sup> Anthony Beevor, *Berlin The Downfall*, (Penguin, 2003), p. 100.
- <sup>21</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 316.
- <sup>22</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (Olma Press, Moscow, 2002), p. 352 was scathing about the timing and leadership of the insurrection.
- <sup>23</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 18.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 23.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 25.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 26.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 28. A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 165 says this was in March 1917.
- <sup>29</sup> V. Kardashov, p. 35.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 39.
- <sup>32</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 178.
- <sup>33</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 48.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 49.
- <sup>35</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2. (Moscow, 1976), pp. 18-20.
- <sup>36</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 52.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 53.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-54.
- <sup>39</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory*, (Cardinal, 1991), p. 249.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid. See also *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, (1978), pp. 296-298 on the Perm Defensive Operation and Third Army.
- <sup>42</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 59.
- <sup>43</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory*, op. cit. p. 249.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 249-250.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 250.
- <sup>46</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory*, op. cit. p. 249.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 65. Kardashov relates the story that Yushkevich was found dead with twenty-two wounds at Perekop.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 68.
- <sup>52</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 166.
- <sup>53</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. cites Bagramyan in 1924, describing Rokossovskiy as the acknowledged expert in cavalry tactics on a course that included Bagramyan, Zhukov and Antonov, amongst others who would play a key role in the Great Patriotic War.
- <sup>54</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 77. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 110.



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- <sup>55</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 80.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 87.
- <sup>57</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory*, op. cit. p. 255.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 256.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 268.
- <sup>61</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 18. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002 op. cit. p. 161.
- <sup>62</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 110.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 118.
- <sup>64</sup> See D.V. Pankov and D.D. Pankov, 'Komandarm 1 Ranga I.P. Uborevich', (Army Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Class I.P. Uborevich), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 1, January 1986), pp. 80-82 for a brief outline of Uborevich's career. He was killed in the Purge.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 179.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>68</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 128.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 126.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 123. However, Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 179 suggests that "it was about this time that Rokossovsky married Yulia Petrovna, daughter of an official in Kyakhta, a small town on the Soviet/Mongolian border."
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 131.
- <sup>73</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (1979), p. 139. Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 179.
- <sup>74</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 132.
- <sup>75</sup> Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005), p. 71.
- <sup>76</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 132.
- <sup>77</sup> Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders*, op. cit. p. 156.
- <sup>78</sup> James J. Schneider, 'V.K. Triandafillov, Military Theorist,' *Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September 1988, pp. 285-306 provides a good introduction to Triandafillov and his ideas.
- <sup>79</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 132.
- <sup>80</sup> Personal communication from Colonel Sadykiewicz concerning comments in F. Chudev, *Soldaty Imperiy*, (Moscow, 1998).
- <sup>81</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 137.
- <sup>82</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 180.
- <sup>83</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 140.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 141.
- <sup>86</sup> It was under the command of Vol'skiy who played a prominent part in Operation Uranus at Stalingrad and later commanded 5<sup>th</sup> Guard Tank Army, under Rokossovskiy, in 1945.
- <sup>87</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (London, 1962), p. 451.
- <sup>88</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshall Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 20.
- <sup>89</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 146.
- <sup>90</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshall Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 20.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Oleg Rzhesheshevsky, *Shaposhnikov*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. pp. 217-219. See also *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 8, (Moscow, 1980), p. 491.
- <sup>93</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshall Rokossovskii*, op. cit. pp. 20-21.
- <sup>94</sup> See David M. Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus: The Red Army on the Eve Of War*, (University Press Of Kansas, 1998), pp. 26-33 for a discussion of the impact of the Purge upon the Red Army's high command. For a general selection of articles on the Purges see Steven J. Main, 'The Arrest and 'Testimony' of Marshal of the Soviet Union M.N. Tukhachevsky', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1997, pp. 151-195. Also V.S. Mil'bakh, (trans Dr. Harold Orenstein), 'Repression in the Red Army in the Far East, 1936-1939', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, December 2003, pp. 58-130. Also 'Documents: American Military Attaché Assessment of the Impact of

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the Purges on the Red Army', *Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol .2, No. 3, September 1989, pp. 417-438.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.24. A.E. Romanenko, *60 Let Stalingradskey Bitvy*, (Megapir, Moscow, 2003), p. 126.

<sup>96</sup> John Erickson, *Soviet High Command*, op. cit. p. 742.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror*, (Pimlico, 1990, p. 451.

<sup>98</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag*, (Allen Lane, 2003), p. 250.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> A. Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, op. cit. p. 24. Roger R. Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers*, (University Press of Kansas, 1996), p. 38 suggests Rokossovskiy was released in 1939 but cites no evidence.

<sup>101</sup> A.V. Filimanov, 'Osobaya "PAPKA" Na Komdiva K.K. Rokossovskogo', (Special File on Komdiv K.K. Rokossovskiy), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 9, September 2006, pp. 12-15, this p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> For the following section on Rokossovskiy's alternative purge, I am very much indebted to Colonel Michal Sadykiewicz, in both personal conversation and in the written draft of his research that he passed on to me. Page references cited are from this draft entitled *Enemy of the People*.

<sup>107</sup> Michal Sadykiewicz, *Enemy of the People*, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2004, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> See *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), p. 213.

<sup>109</sup> See *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), p. 213 for details of Antonov's career. Also see Richard Woff, *Antonov*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. pp. 11-23.

<sup>110</sup> Sadykiewicz, op. cit. p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Woff, *Antonov*, op. cit. p. 12.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1. op. cit. p. 213. Sadykiewicz, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Sadykiewicz, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), p. 436.

<sup>115</sup> Sadykiewicz, op. cit. p. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Sadykiewicz, op. cit. pp. 5-6.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>122</sup> I.I. Kuznetsov, 'Stalin's Minister, V.S. Abakumov, 1908-54', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1999, pp. 149-165 gives details of Abakumov's career. See also Michael Parrish, 'Leadership of Special Branch and SMERSH During the Great Patriotic War', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, December 2005, pp. 631-660.

<sup>123</sup> I.I. Kuznetsov, 'Stalin's Minister, V.S. Abakumov, 1908-54', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1999, p. 151, provides details on the formation of SMERSH.

<sup>124</sup> Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen*, (Penguin, 2005), p. 383.

<sup>125</sup> Sadykiewicz, op. cit. p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>130</sup> Geoffrey Jukes, *Meretskov*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 129.

<sup>131</sup> I.I. Kuznetsov, 'Stalin's Minister, V.S. Abakumov, 1908-54,' op. cit. p.155 gives details of the extent to which SMERSH menaced the Red Army.

<sup>132</sup> Donald Rayfield, *Stalin's Hangmen*, op. cit. p. 383.

<sup>133</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 150.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. However, *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, op. cit. p. 139 says November 1940. Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, op. cit. p. 182 says October 1940.

<sup>135</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 150.

<sup>136</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 26.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>139</sup> See *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 8, (Moscow, 1980), p. 265. In 1943, Fedyuninskiy served under Rokossovskiy's command. Later, Rokossovskiy specifically recommended him when Stalin asked if he knew a good commander who could deal with a tough assignment in the Leningrad region. By 1944-45, Fedyuninskiy was back under Rokossovskiy's command with 2nd Shock Army. It stayed until the end of the war.

<sup>140</sup> S. Bialer, *Stalin's and His Generals*, (Souvenir Press, 1969), p. 243.

<sup>141</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty) (Olma Press, Moscow, 2002), p. 21.

<sup>142</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 19.

<sup>143</sup> Makmut Gareyev, Marshal Rokossovskiy, Commander of the Victory Parade, op. cit. p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 39.

<sup>145</sup> Anatoliy Korol'chenko, *Marshal Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 165.

<sup>146</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Volume 2, (Moscow, 1976), pp. 26-27.

<sup>147</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op. cit. p. 39.

<sup>148</sup> Dmitri Volkogonov, *Voroshilov*, pp. 313-324, in *Stalin's General's*, op. cit. presents more information on Voroshilov's career.

<sup>149</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (Frank Cass, London, 2001), p. 508 describes Kulik an upstart figure, and, in *The Road to Stalingrad*, op. cit. p.17 he is described as a nonentity.

<sup>150</sup> Viktor Anfilov, *Budenny*, in *Stalin's General's*, pp. 57-65. Budenny was brave with a magnificent moustache but a shabby brain.

<sup>151</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 164-165 suggests that Rokossovskiy was ordered to hand over 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps to A.G. Maslov on 14<sup>th</sup> July and following an interview with Kirponos on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> July 1941 he flew to the Western Front region on the Smolensk axis.

<sup>152</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 165.

<sup>153</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3804. d. 4. l. 60, 61 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (1), *Stavka VGK, Dokumenty i Materialny, 1941 God*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1996), p. 85. '*Direktiva Stavki VK Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Fronta Reservnykh Armii O Sozdaniy Operativnykh Grupp Voysk, Ikh Razvertyvaniy Dlya Operatsii Po Razgromy Smolenskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika*' (Stavka VK Directive To The Commander Of The Reserve Front Armies Concerning The Creation Of Operational Groups Of Forces, Their Deployment For Operations To Destroy The Enemy's Smolensk Grouping). Henceforth, ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (1), *Stavka 1941*, (Moscow, 1996).

<sup>154</sup> Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East*, (London, Hodder Arnold), pp. 71-73 has established the significance of the Smolensk engagements. They had been almost entirely overlooked in western literature before this.

<sup>155</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 174. A.E. Romanenko, *60 Let*, op. cit. p. 127, says it was on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1941.

<sup>156</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 168.

<sup>157</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, *Moscow-The Turning Point*, (Berg, Oxford, 1992).

<sup>158</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op. cit. pp. 250-252 and pp. 257-259.

<sup>159</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 264.

<sup>160</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 168.

<sup>161</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op. cit. pp. 354-355.

<sup>162</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 126. l. 123 cited in V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942 God*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1996), p.308. '*Prikaz Stavki VGK No: 170507 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Zapadnogo Fronta, Vrid Komanduyushchego Voyskami Bryanskogo Fronta i Komanduyushchemu 16-y Armiiy O Naznachenin Komanduyushchego Voyskami Bryanskogo Fronta*' (Stavka Order No:170507 To The Commander Of The Western Front, Deputy Commander Of The Bryansk Front And The Commander of 16<sup>th</sup> Army About His Appointment To Command Of The Bryansk Front). (Doc:416) Henceforth ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK 1942*, (Moscow, 1996).

<sup>163</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3408. d. 72. l. 169 cited in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), p.378. '*Direktiva Stavka VGK No:170593 Komanduyushchim Voyskami Bryanskogo i Voronezhnogo Frontov O Peredochinenii 38-Armii*' (Stavka VGK Directive No:170593 To The Commanders Of The Bryansk And Voronezh Fronts About The Transfer Of 38<sup>th</sup> Army).

<sup>164</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 186. V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 273.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, ed., *Velikaya Pobeda Na Volge*, (The Great Victory on the Volga), (Moscow, 1965), pp. 424-454. A.A. Grechko, ed., *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny 1939-1945*, (History of the Second World War), (Moscow, Voenizdat, 1976), Vol. 6, pp. 73-80. See also, K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. pp. 232-239

<sup>167</sup> See Bernd Wegner, *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. 6, The Global War, (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1158-1172.

<sup>168</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Na Pobede*, op. cit. pp. 424- 454. See also K.K. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, (Lancer International, Moscow, 1985), p. 222-253.

<sup>169</sup> David M. Glantz, Prelude to Kursk: Soviet Strategic Operations, February-March 1943, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, March 1995, pp. 1-35. David M. Glantz, 'The Failures of Historiography: Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol 8, No. 4, December 1995, pp. 768-808, this pp. 790-795. Also, for example A. Vasilevskiy, *Delo Vsey Zhizni*, (A Life's Work), (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Politizdat, Moscow, 1975), p. 311 has only a brief reference.

<sup>170</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. p.3409. d. 7. l. 33, 34 cited in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 61. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:46039 Komanduyushchim Donskogo I Bryanskogo Fronta O Peredislokatsii Upravleniya, Frontovikh Chastey I Uchrezhdeniy Donskogo Fronta' (Stavka Directive No:46039 To The Commanders Of The Don And Bryansk Front Concerning The Re-Deployment Of The Headquarters, Front Units And Establishment Of The Don Front)

<sup>171</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 253.

<sup>172</sup> Although K. Rokossovskiy, *Na Tsentral'nom Fronte Zimoy i Letom 1943 Godu*, (On The Central Front in the Winter and Summer of 1943), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No .6, June 1968, pp. 69-79, this pp. 70-71 does actually give an accurate one page overview of the basic aims of the operation without analysing the outcome.

<sup>173</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 226, op. 321. d. 96. l. 259-263 cited in V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvannaya*, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1997), pp. 371-374. *Doklad (Kratkiye Vykходы) Starshego Ofitsera General'nogo Shtaba Pri Tsentral'nom Fronte Nachal'niku Operativnogo Upravleniya General'nogo Shtaba Po Oboronitel'noy Operatsii Voysk Fronta Za Period s 5 Po 10 Iyulya 1943*. (Report (Brief Summary) Of The Senior Representative Of the General Staff Attached To The Central Front, To The Chief of Operations Department of the General Staff On The Defensive Operation of the Front's Forces In The Period 5 –10 July 1943.) Henceforth, ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997).

<sup>175</sup> See Karl-Heinz Frieser, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Zweite Weltkrieg*, (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munchen, 2007), *Der Mythos von Prokhorovka*, (The Myth of Prokhorovka), pp. 119-139.

<sup>176</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 609-610.

<sup>177</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999), devotes an entire chapter to Prokhorovka, pp. 151-196.

<sup>178</sup> Karl-Heinz Frieser, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Zwierte Weltkrieg*, op. cit. pp. 119-139.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 100 provides a detailed breakdown of the strength of these German forces.

<sup>180</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, op. cit. p. 121.

<sup>181</sup> G.A. Koltunov and B.G. Solovyev, *Kurskaya Bitva*, (The Battle of Kursk), (Moscow, 1983), pp. 79-80.

<sup>182</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. pp. 113-115.

<sup>183</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, (University Press of Kansas, 1995), pp. 154-157.

<sup>184</sup> See G.A. Koltunov and B.V. Solovyev, *Kurskaya Bitva*, op. cit. pp. 72-92.

<sup>185</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. pp. 289-290.

<sup>186</sup> *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*, (Moscow, 1976), Vol. 7, pp. 212-213.

<sup>187</sup> See Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat In The East*, (Center For Military History, US Army, Washington D.C., 1966), pp. 189-195.

<sup>188</sup> David M. Glantz, *Russia War, Peace & Diplomacy*, ed., Ljubica Erickson and Mark Erickson, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), p. 337.

<sup>189</sup> Makmut Gareyev, *Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voyna 1941-45, Kniga 3, Osvobodeniye* (The Great Patriotic War, Book 3, Liberation), (Moscow, 1999), pp. 10-20 contains a highly critical analysis of

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Sokolovskiy's conduct of operations in eastern Belorussia, during the period, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1943-1<sup>st</sup> April 1944.

<sup>190</sup> See Robert N. Watt, 'Feeling the Full Force of a Four Front Offensive :Re-Interpreting The Red Army's 1944 Belorussian and L'vov-Peremyshyl' Operations', *Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4, October-December 2008, pp. 669-705 provides an overview of these operations. See also Lee Baker, 'Explaining Defeat: A Reappraisal of "Operation Bagration" 1944', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January-March 2008, pp. 114-128 for a general discussion primarily from a German perspective.

<sup>191</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, (Frank Cass, London, 2001) offers a very detailed account of the planning and execution of Operation Bagration.

<sup>192</sup> Karl-Heinz Frieser, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Zweite Weltkrieg*, op. cit. p. 534, suggest that the three German armies directly attacked in Bagration, Third Panzer, Fourth and Ninth Armies had no more than 336, 573 men against 1,254,300 Soviet troops.

<sup>193</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception In The Second World War*, (Frank Cass, London, 1989), p. 378.

<sup>194</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 373.

<sup>195</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 221. l. 218 cited in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-45*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 169-170. 'Prikaz Stavki VGK No:220263 O Naznacheniakh i Peremeshcheniyakh Komandovaniya 1-go i 2-go Belorusskikh Frontov' (Stavka VGK Order No: 220263 Concerning Appointments And Transfer Of Command In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Fronts).

<sup>196</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 367.

<sup>197</sup> See *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza, 1941-45*, (The Great Patriotic War of The Soviet Union), (Moscow, 1963), Vol. 5 pp. 105-123 for an account of the East Prussian Operation.

<sup>198</sup> Christopher Duffy, *Red Storm on the Reich: The Soviet March on Germany, 1945*, (London, Routledge, 1991), pp. 270-280 has a discussion on the nature of the campaign in Prussia and Pomerania.

<sup>199</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza, 1941-1945*, Vol. 5, op. cit., pp. 138-149, gives a thorough account of the East Pomeranian Operation.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., pp. 272-273.

<sup>201</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 444.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 445.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **LITERATURE SURVEY**

This chapter will assess the general English and Russian language historiography of the Second World War, particularly the Eastern Front. It will then discuss Russian and Western impressions of Rokossovskiy. It will also comment on the nature, character and credibility of the relevant historical sources, primary and secondary concerning Rokossovskiy. It argues that for different reasons, in Russian and Western literature, Rokossovskiy is both famous and unknown. It will conclude that a survey of the current historical literature indicates the value of a thematic, analytical assessment of the leadership and command of the most significant, yet relatively unknown military commander of the twentieth century.

#### **General Literature of the Second World War**

In contrast to the more restrained total war in the west, the absolute war in the east was either a ghastly, apocalyptic crusade for the Fatherland, or a heroic, desperate, ultimately triumphant war for survival. In the western world there is an enormous body of literature concerning the Second World War. However, it is dominated by the experiences of the Anglo-American forces. Modern western historiography increasingly acknowledges that the Second World War was ultimately decided on the Eastern Front but rarely covers the war, especially from the Russian/Soviet perspective, in proportion to the historical significance of its outcome.

Nevertheless, the war in the East has been the source of many accomplished historical surveys. The relevant volumes of *Germany and the Second World War* provide a detailed account of the war in the east, primarily but not exclusively, from the German perspective.<sup>1</sup> In the English language, Ziemke's *Stalingrad to Berlin* and Seaton's *The Russo-German War*<sup>2</sup> record the course of military operations in the east in a thorough way, but mainly from a German perspective. The recollections of German officers provide an insight into the war in the east and the conduct of operations. However, these accounts are coloured by the emotional proximity of the individuals to events they were involved in, as well as their distinct cultural and psychological perspectives

concerning the nature of the war, the Red Army and the Russian/Soviet people and their culture. A more Russian/Soviet perspective is provided by John Erickson's works, *The Road to Stalingrad* and *The Road to Berlin*, whose breadth and depth continue to set the gold standard of English language historiography of the Nazi-Soviet war.<sup>3</sup> Equally, the sheer quantity and quality of work published by David M. Glantz, from *When Titans Clashed* to detailed accounts of Barbarossa and Kursk,<sup>4</sup> has done much to reveal how the Red Army survived and eventually prevailed over the Wehrmacht. Similarly, Chris Bellamy's *Absolute War* has provided a comprehensive insight into how the Soviet state and the Red Army approached, fought and ultimately prevailed in this most savage of human tragedies.<sup>5</sup> These are supplemented by Richard Overy's *Russia at War*,<sup>6</sup> Evan Mawdley's *Thunder In the East*,<sup>7</sup> and Catherine Merridale's *Ivan's War*.<sup>8</sup> All approach the war in a different style but as a group they provide the student of history with an introduction to the general nature of the Eastern Front.

The main Russian work on Rokossovskiy by Vasily I. Kardashov, a Soviet era biography of Rokossovskiy will be discussed at length later in the chapter.<sup>9</sup> It has been supplemented in the post Soviet era by three biographical texts that reveal Rokossovskiy's story and personality without sustained analysis of his leadership and operational command. A.F. Korol'chenko's work<sup>10</sup> focuses on the war but provides brief material on Rokossovskiy's experiences as a young man and during the interwar years. However, half the text is anecdotal recollection designed to embellish the 'legend' of Rokossovskiy. It is not a comprehensive examination.

Kirill Konstantinov's 2006<sup>11</sup> work is biographical and provides a sound historical narrative without being authoritative. It is a more substantial work than Korol'chenko with a six page section discussing Rokossovskiy experiences as 'a guest of the NKVD',<sup>12</sup> dating his arrest as 17<sup>th</sup> August 1937<sup>13</sup> However, it has little new information about aspects of Rokossovskiy's career that were obscured during the Cold War. The other biographical work on Rokossovskiy is that of Vladimir I. Kardashov.<sup>14</sup> It seems to do no more than 'build on' the earlier more substantial work by Vasily I. Kardashov.

## **Soviet Historiography of the Great Patriotic War**

During the Soviet era, Russian historiography was dominated by official histories such as *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz*<sup>15</sup> *The History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union* and *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny 1939-1945* - *The History of the Second World War, 1939-1945*.<sup>16</sup> These multi-volume histories produced in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s are extremely effective in conveying the sheer scale of the war and the Red Army's general conduct of operations. In many respects, complete with excellent maps and detailed historical narrative they are an important source of information about how the Red Army fought the Great Patriotic War. However, they are a reflection of their times, namely the Cold War, distorted by political censorship and the desire to present the Red Army's victory in the most positive light.

The credibility of Soviet official histories as authentic records of the Red Army's victory has inevitably been undermined by their insufficiently rigorous analysis of Soviet military operations, as well as the deliberate omission of information considered incompatible with the prevailing Soviet line. This policy of censorship and omission had a dramatic impact upon the official Soviet historical literature of the Cold War era. Several operations that Rokossovskiy was involved in during the Great Patriotic War, including an entire campaign in Belorussia in early 1944, find barely a mention, indeed usually no mention at all, in the general histories of the Soviet era. As such, despite their wealth of historical narrative, the Soviet official histories are an incomplete testimony to the wartime career of one of the Red Army's leading commanders. In contrast, the most recent Russian history of the war is considerably more rigorous in its analysis of the Soviet conduct of war, but has less basic information about the actual course and conduct of operations. It has more intellectual argument but less history.<sup>17</sup>

The Soviet historical record of the war was also notable for its massive body of journal literature, nostalgic anniversary accounts of great victories, unit histories and memoir literature. The journal literature contains numerous informative articles, many officially authored by, or about, famous Red Army commanders and operations during the Great Patriotic War. Indeed, several were officially written by Rokossovskiy,<sup>18</sup> some



involving conversation with an interviewer<sup>19</sup> and others telling of famous victory. These articles are often dismissed as historical propaganda and their limitations as a genuine historical source cannot be overlooked.

However, journal articles often give the reader detailed historical information about significant operations.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, some articles were of genuine historical significance. In the late 1980s and early 1990s previously censored sections of Rokossovskiy's memoirs were first published in Soviet journals.<sup>21</sup> Yet, in the main, Soviet journal literature of the Cold War consisted of detailed historical narrative designed to consolidate the received version of the Red Army's struggle against Nazi Germany. The Soviet journals are a flawed source of tampered or embellished historical record. However, they also contain detailed information about units and formations under Rokossovskiy's command during the Great Patriotic War.

As the Cold War dragged on Soviet historiography was influenced by nostalgia as well as a desire to honour the Red Army's wartime generation. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Soviet journal literature commemorated great victories<sup>22</sup> and/or heroic struggle in substantial detail. It celebrated and mourned famous sons<sup>23</sup> of the Red Army, such as Rokossovskiy. Indeed, Soviet journals such as *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal* (*The Military History Journal*) often marked significant birthdays of renowned Red Army commanders, as it did on the occasion of Rokossovskiy's seventieth birthday in December 1966. This article which claimed Rokossovskiy was born in Velikiye Luki is a celebration writ large of Rokossovskiy as a man, Bolshevik and commander.<sup>24</sup> Soviet literature that marked great victories such as Stalingrad, if translated into English, was often uncomfortably<sup>25</sup> bombastic in tone, wallowing in the Red Army's retrospective glory and the triumph of its struggle over great adversity. In general, such accounts usually involved a general narrative of military operations, punctuated with anecdotal accounts of deeds of individual heroism followed by formulaic recognition of the great work done by the Party.

These literary tributes to the Red Army were a form of retrospective historical witness concerning the Soviet regime's political legitimacy during the Cold War.<sup>26</sup> It was an

attempt to portray a wartime image of dynamic social cohesion with government, army and people fused as one in the struggle with Nazism. In addition, they were a licensed historical tribute to the millions lost in the war. The journal literature endorsed the Red Army and its soldiers' sacrifice, but remained silent about the true cost of historic victories and defeats, marred by huge loss of life, often the product of political and military incompetence on an almost unimaginable scale.

The panoramic picture painted by Soviet historiography was acutely conscious of the historical significance of the Great Patriotic War in relation to the political, social and cultural context of the Cold War. Soviet historiography went through several phases during the Cold War. The first phase of Stalinist adoration lasted from approximately 1946-1956, until Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress. In this period the outbreak of war and the horrendous trials of the Soviet people were blamed upon the aberrant nature of Nazism. Survival was achieved through the resolute socialist endurance of the Soviet people and a resurgent Red Army inspired and guided by Marshal Stalin.<sup>27</sup>

In the Stalinist world, Comrade Stalin had "laid the first foundations of Soviet operational art"<sup>28</sup> in the Russian Civil War, while later "Soviet operational art covered an enormous developmental path during the Great Patriotic War. Guided by Stalin's military genius, this development unswervingly followed ascending lines, having achieved its quintessence during the last stage of the war."<sup>29</sup> It was axiomatic that "Soviet operational art reached its heyday during the Great Patriotic War, when our armed forces, inspired and directed by Comrade Stalin's military leadership genius, provided numerous and unsurpassed models of organizing and conducting modern operations."<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 26: Stalin**  
(br.geocities.com)

Indeed, "led by Stalin's genius, Soviet operational art during the Great Patriotic War achieved unprecedented heights and a flowering not seen until then, and rightly occupied the position of the most perfect and progressive operational art in the world."<sup>31</sup>

Apparently, “Comrade Stalin personally directed the improvement of the operational expertise of Soviet forces”<sup>32</sup> and “Stalin’s wise leadership ensured the undeviating growth of the Soviet Army’s operational expertise during this most difficult war, the likes of which the history of past military art, covering many centuries had not known, and which was unattainable for our enemies.”<sup>33</sup> The victory had been won and “Soviet operational art achieved these results because its creator was the great Stalin.”<sup>34</sup>

These were the rituals of post-war Stalinist Russia. At a distance of half a century such commentary takes on an almost satirical character but in the late 1940s the need to humour Stalin’s malevolent ego was no joke. In all other respects, these are informative articles, written by intelligent and erudite military scholars of the Red Army. Stalin’s utter domination of Soviet society and culture, civil and military, ensured that in life and in death, the man who crippled the Red Army before the war took the credit for its victories after the war.



**Figure 27: N. Khrushchev**  
(nobelprize.org)

The period of Stalinist adoration was brought to an end by Khrushchev’s speech at Twentieth Communist Party Congress in 1956.<sup>35</sup> This speech, which also singled out Rokossovskiy’s experiences,<sup>36</sup> denounced Stalin’s Purge<sup>37</sup> and refusal to accept or disseminate intelligence about German war preparations. Khrushchev revealed how Stalin’s excesses had undermined the ability of the Soviet armed forces to fight effectively, thereby bringing down mayhem, slaughter and death on the Soviet people. The survival of the Soviet people and the Red Army was now attributed to socialism, the Red Army’s endeavour, the people’s loyalty and, of course, the selfless efforts of the Communist Party. The grotesque inclination to attribute all military success to Stalin’s benevolent guiding hand was abandoned.

The late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed an avalanche of Soviet literature such as *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz* and numerous memoirs, but de-Stalinization did not usher in a new era of historical objectivity and open inquiry

about the Red Army. In fact, the orthodoxy of Stalinist adoration was merely superseded by that of the Party in alliance with the Red Army. The genuinely nefarious consequences of Stalin's leadership and the caricature of Marshal Stalin, the great military leader, were convenient alibis that disguised or excused the gross incompetence displayed by many in the Party and the Red Army. Therefore, in an irony of history, just as many Germans blamed Germany's woes and her defeat on Hitler, ignoring their own acquiescence and culpability, so in the Khrushchev era, the calamities of the Great Patriotic War could be attributed to Stalin, thereby obviating, indeed effectively outlawing, further historical inquiry into the role of the Party and the Red Army.

The post-Stalin alliance of the senior political and military leadership of the Soviet Union ensured that leading Red Army commanders were spared rigorous critical examination of their conduct during the Great Patriotic War. Therefore, under Khrushchev, Soviet historiography asserted that Party, Socialism, Red Army and people had combined to rescue the Revolution from the mortal jeopardy in which Stalin had placed it. The Khrushchev era did facilitate an escape from Stalinist hagiography. In this, strictly relative sense, historical inquiry was more open and encouraged a surge in historical publications. However, it might be argued that given Stalin's hideous stranglehold upon the Soviet Union, an increase in historical activity, if not objectivity, was an inevitable consequence of Stalin's death. In reality, one form of historical orthodoxy supplanted another.

In the Brezhnev era (1965-87)<sup>38</sup> themes established under Khrushchev evolved, matured and atrophied into suffocating orthodoxy. The conspiracy of silence and conceit between Party and Army reached its apogee. There was less criticism and less praise of Stalin, indeed Stalin was more or less shunted off the historical stage. However, the renewed emphasis on conventional military operations, from 1965 onwards, generated a highly productive period in Soviet operational thinking, military historiography and literature. The Soviet Army drew inspiration and intellectual justification from Soviet inter-war theory and military practice during the Great Patriotic War. A flood of articles examined the operational problems of the 1960s and 1970s through the medium

of Soviet theory and practice in the period 1905-1945. Seminal articles such as Georgiy Isserson's 1965, *Razvitiye Teorii Sovetskogo Iskusstva v 30-ye Godu*<sup>39</sup> (*The Development of Soviet Operational Art in the 1930's*) and the publication of A.B. Kadishev's *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva v Sovetskikh Voyennykh Trudakh* (*Question of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Works 1917-1940*)<sup>40</sup> revealed the intellectual vitality of Soviet military thinking. In 1970, M.V. Zakharov's *O Teorii Glubkoy Operatsii*<sup>41</sup> (*On the Theory of Deep Operations*) confirmed the growing intellectual interest in the inter-war and Great Patriotic War years.

This massive intellectual effort was supported by the publication of the multi-volume *Soviet Military Encyclopaedia*, published in eight volumes in the period 1976-1980. The *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* shares all the strengths and weakness of Soviet military historiography. It is an unrivalled source of basic, detailed historical information on virtually all significant wars, operations, commanders, battles, weapons systems and military ideas, Russian and foreign in the modern era. In the case of Rokossovskiy it provides a detailed biographical record of his birth, military career, commands and operations ranging from World War One, the Russian Civil War and the whole of the Great Patriotic War.<sup>42</sup> However, the detail complied with the established rules of Soviet historiography carrying the same distortions and omissions of other Soviet literature. Nevertheless, *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* also contained exceptional articles such as Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov's 1977 exposition of deep operations<sup>43</sup> and other articles defining operational art.<sup>44</sup> In summary, the dynamic military thinking of the 1960s and 1970s was both a catalyst and a symptom of an explosion of literature that 'confirmed' the prowess of the Red Army and its commanders, during the Great Patriotic War.

The post Stalin orthodoxy of the Party, Red Army and people united under the socialist banner was sustained and deepened. Soviet historiography was compelled to acquiesce in the exaggeration of the wartime role of political leaders such as Brezhnev.<sup>45</sup> In return, the Party made no attempt to expose the incompetence and brutality of many famous Soviet wartime commanders. This is the era of public hagiographical recollection in

*Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, and the *Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya* of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, the Belorussian Operation and Berlin, legendary commanders with chests full of medals recounting the deeds of the Red Army. There was little attempt to acknowledge that between 1942 and 1945 many senior commanders were inept or had sustained serious defeats and massive losses. Soviet commanders, including Rokossovskiy, were presented as men of unswerving determination who, supported by the Party and the people, led the Red Army to victory. In summary, in the period 1965-87, at least in public, there was little objective historical analysis of Red Army commanders such as Rokossovskiy.

### **Russian Views of Rokossovskiy**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1968, Marshal of the Soviet Union Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy died. He was mourned, officially and spontaneously, as a true servant of the Soviet Union. As a Red Army commander associated with the Great Patriotic War, Rokossovskiy was a celebrated public figure, a historic figure, virtually a legend in his own lifetime. The Soviet leadership, the Soviet Army and the Soviet people knew who Rokossovskiy was, what he did, when he did it and where he did it, namely Moscow, Stalingrad and Kursk. In the wake of his death, few would have expressed any private, certainly not public, disquiet about the burial of Rokossovskiy's ashes in the Kremlin Wall.



**Figure 28: Rokossovskiy on Soviet Stamp, 1976**  
(stampRussia.com)

The Soviet Union's industrial scale official recollection of the Great Patriotic War ensured Rokossovskiy was famous. However, although millions knew of Rokossovskiy's life and career, few understood it, especially in terms of his style of leadership and operational command. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Soviet political and military leadership regularly manipulated history to project a dynamic retrospective image of the Red Army in World War Two. It is a fact that the historical records of Zhukov and Sokolovskiy were 'amended' during the Cold War in line with the political and military imperatives of the Soviet leadership. Equally, Soviet

historical literature presented Rokossovskiy in a manner that served the interests of the Soviet state at the expense of historical objectivity.

It is a matter of considerable historical irony that Rokossovskiy, so poorly treated during the Purges, presented the Soviet system with an ideal public figure. During the Cold War, Rokossovskiy was projected as a commander of knowledge and skill, possessing traditional martial virtues of physical and moral courage, an officer of the Red Army who led his men with unflinching dedication to the Socialist cause and the Soviet people. This was a man whose personal honour and sense of duty enabled him to overcome conditions of extreme duress in order to defeat the Wehrmacht. An officer and a Bolshevik, tall in stature, elegant of posture with the physical presence to dominate and the social grace to refrain from doing so in a crude, boorish manner. In summary, Soviet historiography presented Rokossovskiy as the idealistic epitome of the Red Army, a man who embodied its virtues and ethos.



**Figure 29: Rokossovskiy**  
(theeasternfront.co.uk)

The credibility of this projection lay in Rokossovskiy's genuine status as an outstanding leader and a field commander. It is hardly surprising that politically driven Soviet historiography presented him as an ideal, the custodian of the Red Army's spirit. The true historical irony is that Rokossovskiy fitted the bill precisely because he was *not* a shining representative of the Red Army's culture, but a much older, wider martial tradition. In fact, Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command was entirely at odds with the authoritarian nature of Stalin's Red Army. There was no real discussion of how radically Rokossovskiy's style of leadership differed from his famous contemporaries, nor any prolonged analysis of his operational art, except where it confirmed and legitimised existing Soviet claims. As a result, the truly radical nature of Rokossovskiy's military style, how and why it differed so conspicuously from other Soviet commanders, the implications of this and what that said about the 'orthodox' Soviet command methods used during the Great Patriotic War, were rarely addressed. Soviet historiography made Rokossovskiy famous. It also ensured other aspects of his leadership and command remained secret.

Rokossovskiy's posthumous memoirs clearly demonstrated he had distinct ideas on leadership. Equally, historical snippets in various memoirs suggested Rokossovskiy's style of leadership, certainly his personality, was different to his famous contemporaries. The constraints of the Soviet era ensured these opaque mirrors of historical inquiry were never really examined with any great clarity. In summary, the Soviet historical record presented a wealth of detail about Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, the Dnepr, Belorussia and East Prussia. It established Rokossovskiy's claim as a great Soviet commander. It also established a downright misleading impression of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command. Rokossovskiy was confirmed as a representative of the Red Army and Soviet martial 'traditions.' In truth, nothing could have been further from the truth.

### **Kardashov's Biography**

In 1972<sup>46</sup>, two years after the first Soviet edition of Rokossovskiy's memoirs was published<sup>47</sup>, a Soviet historian, Vasily I. Kardashov published a biography of Rokossovskiy, reprinted in 1980.<sup>48</sup> The edition referred to in this work and consulted by the author is the 1980 edition. It is a substantial piece of work covering Rokossovskiy's entire life and career. The reader is presented with a comprehensive account of who Rokossovskiy was, where he served, what he did and when it happened. In contrast to Rokossovskiy's own memoirs, Kardashov's biography is an excellent source of information concerning his early years. It also has substantial chapters concerning Rokossovskiy's experiences in World War One<sup>49</sup> and the Russian Civil War.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the reader is informed about Rokossovskiy's career during the 1920's and early 1930's. Kardashov's biography has a considerable commentary on the build up to the war following Rokossovskiy's release from the Gulag in March 1940.<sup>51</sup> Equally, Kardashov's presents an impressive narrative of the war years. The reader receives a detailed account of Rokossovskiy's war. Indeed, it is almost a daily account.

The biography contains detailed information about the conduct of operations. For example, in August 1941, Kardashov gives a detailed account of the Dukhovschina Operation, east of Smolensk.<sup>52</sup> He relates the actions of Group Rokossovskiy, the



objectives of the operation and the course of the fighting.<sup>53</sup> In a similar way Kardashov provides a substantial record of Rokossovskiy's improvised but successful operations on the River Vop, at Yartsevo, north of Smolensk, during July-August 1941.<sup>54</sup> He describes Rokossovskiy's arrival in the middle of the night on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1941,<sup>55</sup> with a small, inexperienced group of officers and relates how Group Rokossovskiy engaged 7<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, north of Smolensk and prevented it from encircling the city.<sup>56</sup> Kardashov also indicates that the battles for Yartsevo with 7<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division on the River Vop made Group Rokossovskiy a famous formation, whose exploits were covered in *Pravda*, *Red Star* and *Izvestiya*.<sup>57</sup>

There is considerable detail on a curious episode in early October 1941. On 5<sup>th</sup> October 1941, Rokossovskiy was ordered by Konev<sup>58</sup>, the Western Front commander, to leave 16<sup>th</sup> Army's troops and make his way to Vyazma. Rokossovskiy was mystified but obeyed. The promised troops were not there. Rokossovskiy led his men out of encirclement<sup>59</sup> to be faced with a board of inquiry; led by Voroshilov, Bulganin and Konev.<sup>60</sup> Rokossovskiy, a Gulag survivor, was in serious danger of facing an accusation that he had abandoned his forces and disobeyed orders. A more ominous charge in October 1941 can hardly be imagined. He was saved by the suggestion of Malinin, his Chief of Staff, that he take a copy of Konev's original order.<sup>61</sup>

The fighting at Volokalamsk during October 1941 is covered in detail and Kardashov is surprisingly frank about the mythical nature of the events surrounding the Panfilov's 316<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Volokalamsk.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Kardashov provides impressive detail concerning operations and events not really covered in other literature. Rokossovskiy's reaction to being seriously wounded<sup>63</sup> and hospitalised in March 1942 is recounted.<sup>64</sup> He provides information that Rokossovskiy's wife and daughter were first in Kazakhstan and then Novosibirsk during the war<sup>65</sup> He indicates that on the Bryansk Front Rokossovskiy emphasised to his fellow officers that it was necessary to listen to ordinary soldiers<sup>66</sup> In relation to the Loyev Operation of October 1943, Kardashov presents key information that the Dnepr was four hundred metres wide and eight metres deep in this sector.<sup>67</sup> Kardashov also provides considerable detail on the planning of Operation Bagration, especially Rokossovskiy's confrontation with Stalin in

May 1944.<sup>68</sup> In summary, as a basic source of information concerning the life, career and times of Marshal Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, who he was, what he did, who he did it with, what he was trying to do, the course of events during the Great Patriotic War and the nature of Rokossovskiy's personality, Kardashov is an important source.

However, as well as exemplifying the strengths of Soviet historiography, such as detailed historical narrative, Kardashov's work contains several flaws that undermine its credibility. Kardashov had access to significant, undisclosed sources of historical information, verbal and written, concerning Rokossovskiy's experiences but there are no references at all, throughout the book. Equally, while Kardashov provides a detailed account of Rokossovskiy's experiences in World War One and the Perm Defensive Operation in Siberia (29<sup>th</sup> November 1918-6<sup>th</sup> January 1919)<sup>69</sup> during the Russian Civil War, he supplies just twelve lines on Rokossovskiy's ordeal during the Purges.

Equally, Kardashov can provide extensive details of alleged dialogue between Rokossovskiy and his senior commanders. It is, of course, entirely possible that the dialogue is a faithful rendition of what took place, but it is impossible to check. The suspicion is that the dialogue conforms to an image entirely in keeping with the official version of the war. The narrative is characterised by anecdotal reflection of the course of events rather than a considered analytical overview. There is no real analysis of why an operation took place, whether it was the correct operation or whether it could have been carried out in a different manner. In a similar way, although Kardashov will acknowledge that an operation failed to achieve all its objectives, there is no sustained analysis of why it failed or how, if it all, an operation might have been conducted in a different manner.

For example, Kardashov provides information about the Don Front's attacks north of Stalingrad, in October 1942, but does not comment on the fact that Rokossovskiy had earlier informed *Stavka* he did not believe that these attacks should take place.<sup>70</sup> The February 1943 Operation is mentioned but is not analysed in proportion to its significance.<sup>71</sup> Equally, in common with other Soviet sources, Kardashov either could

not or would not discuss the full scope, duration and implications of Rokossovskiy's Belorussian campaign of autumn 1943-spring 1944.<sup>72</sup> In essence, operations are reported in substantial detail but this is not used as a springboard for a sustained critical analysis of Rokossovskiy's command.

In addition, beyond relating the commonly accepted aspects of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command, there is no real attempt to identify and analyse the key themes, beyond approval of the universal martial qualities that he possessed. There is no analysis because it would have exposed the gap between Rokossovskiy's methods and the wider Red Army, especially other senior commanders. In summary, the Kardashov biography of Rokossovskiy is a product of the Brezhnev era. It is detailed and informative, but its main purpose was to present Rokossovskiy as the historic custodian of the Red Army's martial virtues, the symbol of its professional competence in the service of the Revolution, Army and people. It was not to provide a systematic and sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy's leadership and operational command.

### **English Impressions**

In English historiography Rokossovskiy is a footnote, connected with historic events viewed mainly from a German perspective. He is famous in passing, but in reality quite unknown. A recent British publication discussing the great military commanders of history does not include Rokossovskiy, but does include Konev and Zhukov.<sup>73</sup> Richard Overy observes that while western audiences may have heard of up to a dozen Red Army commanders, only two, Konev and Zhukov, are genuine household names.<sup>74</sup> In a similar way Rokossovskiy is not included in *The Oxford Companion to Military History*.<sup>75</sup> It is absolutely extraordinary that a senior commander involved in such significant historical events as Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, the Belorussian and East Prussian Operations has possessed such a low, almost invisible historical profile in the English speaking world. There is one dedicated piece of historical literature in the English language on Rokossovskiy although recent works have thrown light upon this famous but still unknown Soviet commander.

Bellamy presents Rokossovskiy as a talented operational commander known as ‘dagger’, respected by the Germans, *Stavka* and those under his command.

Rokossovskiy is depicted as thoughtful but dynamic, with a discerning intellect, a commander who revelled in responsibility and craved independence in the planning and conduct of operations.<sup>76</sup> Pleshakov presents Rokossovskiy as a tough, professional



**Figure 30: Rokossovskiy**  
(theeasternfront.co.uk)

soldier, imposing and decisive with a pronounced commitment to duty. Pleshakov also cites Rokossovskiy dealing with defeatism and desertion in a robust, ruthless manner. Pleshakov suggests that this public refusal to tolerate defeatism and desertion was a matter of calculated self-preservation for a Gulag survivor, as much as a principled abhorrence of the abdication of duty. Indeed,

Rokossovskiy is presented as a commander with scores to settle in his memoirs, a member of a senior command group compared to mafia dons, each with their own chosen men.<sup>77</sup>

Zhukov’s biographer Otto Chaney<sup>78</sup> also questions Rokossovskiy’s personal qualities. Chaney argues Zhukov’s fury at Rokossovskiy’s subversion of the chain of command, at Istra, near Moscow, in November 1941, was entirely justified. Chaney suggests that Zhukov was not an impossible boss, more that Rokossovskiy was an awkward subordinate, talented, but jealous of his independence. Chaney argues it was Rokossovskiy’s reaction to Stalin’s appointment of Zhukov to command of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, in November 1944 that poisoned their personal relations, not Zhukov’s abrasive character.<sup>79</sup> Rokossovskiy was a fiercely independent and confident commander but Chaney’s portrayal of him as a petulant individual dominated by the desire for glory is not supported by other sources. On the other hand, Chaney’s argument that Zhukov’s anger was reserved for difficult subordinates who failed to comply with orders, is contradicted by an overwhelming body of evidence.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Richard Woff Article**

One dedicated piece of historical scholarship on Rokossovskiy exists in the English language. *Stalin’s Generals*, edited by Harold Shukman<sup>81</sup> contains biographical

sketches of Red Army commanders during the Great Patriotic War. It is not an exhaustive and authoritative encyclopaedia. It is an informative collection of biographical narratives designed to communicate who these commanders were, where they had been, what they had done and in a general sense, the nature of their personality, style of leadership, operational command, strengths and weakness and historical reputations.

It contains a chapter, written by Richard Woff, on Rokossovskiy. It provides information about his alleged place of birth, experiences in World War One, the Russian Civil War, the inter-war years, the Purge and the Great Patriotic War. It also provides a chronological narrative of major operations that Rokossovskiy was involved in on the Eastern Front. It is an informative general account of Rokossovskiy's life and career, before, during and after the war. It argues Rokossovskiy's personality, demeanour and style of leadership were different from other more abrasive contemporaries.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, there is a strong implication that Rokossovskiy was primarily an officer and a gentleman, infused with a noble warrior ethos. In this sense, the chapter achieves its objective of introducing the general reader to one of the Red Army's most impressive but relatively unknown commanders.

However, Woff's chapter does not analyse Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command. In fact, it poses and leaves unanswered, as many questions as it resolves. Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations is not discussed in sufficient depth to convey a true impression of his military style as a field commander. Also, Woff's chapter is occasionally undermined by lack of evidence and factual errors. For example, Woff implies that Rokossovskiy's decision to side with the Reds was more opportunistic than ideological but supplies no evidence. Similarly, he states that many German generals considered Rokossovskiy the Red Army's best general,<sup>83</sup> but presents no evidence. Equally, unlike other sources, including Rokossovskiy's own memoirs, Woff suggests that on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1941, *Stavka* ordered Rokossovskiy to take command of 4<sup>th</sup> Army, not Group Rokossovskiy. He cites no evidence, although he points out that 4<sup>th</sup> Army was disbanded before Rokossovskiy arrived at the Western Front.<sup>84</sup>

In addition, Woff suggests that in 1935 Rokossovskiy returned to the Far East in order to command 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. According to Woff, after a brief period he returned, in February 1936, to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps, in the Leningrad Military District.<sup>85</sup> Yet, all other sources agree that Rokossovskiy spent three years, 1932-35, in command of 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. This was not a minor episode: in 1937 one of the main accusations against Rokossovskiy was that he spied for the Japanese, while in command of 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division between 1932-35. Similarly, Woff suggests the row between Rokossovskiy and Zhukov, in November 1941, at Istra, “did not, however, affect the close relationship and mutual respect which developed between Zhukov and Rokossovsky thereafter.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, as Rokossovskiy’s memoirs show, it fundamentally affected their relationship. There may have been mutual respect and professionalism, but Rokossovskiy and Zhukov had a tense personal relationship.

Woff’s article never establishes the wider themes of Rokossovskiy’s operational command. Therefore, Woff devotes only one sentence to Operation Ring, the final operation that liquidated Sixth German Army at Stalingrad.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Rokossovskiy’s frustrations during Operation Kutuzov in July-August 1943 enable the student to gain a wider understanding of Rokossovskiy’s military style. It is barely mentioned in passing by Woff. Equally, Woff devotes only a couple of sentences to Belorussia in autumn 1943. In a general sense, it was not a major Red Army campaign but it was an extremely important phase in the evolution of Rokossovskiy’s operational style. Woff’s article has only five lines on Operation Bagration in June-July 1944; two on the Lublin-Brest Operation of July 1944. In essence, Woff’s article does not contain any sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy’s operational command.<sup>88</sup>

In contrast, Rokossovskiy’s personality and the human dimensions of his command are, in relative terms, discussed in more detail. Rokossovskiy’s attitude to the Warsaw Uprising, its timing and its leaders are covered. Rokossovskiy’s interview with Alexander Werth, the British war correspondent at Warsaw is synthesised and Rokossovskiy’s comments on the military situation east of the Vistula, in August 1944 are revealed, but not analysed. However, the German counter-attack east of Warsaw on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1944, a critical event, that undermined 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front’s ability to cross

the Vistula, east of Warsaw, is not mentioned. Similarly, in relative terms, considerable space is devoted to the human drama of Rokossovskiy's disconsolate, proud conversation with Stalin, in November 1944, following what he perceived as the humiliation of being transferred to East Prussia, away from the main Warsaw-Berlin axis. Equally, while Woff has little say on Rokossovskiy's conduct of the East Prussian Operation, he does assess the human calamity that descended on East Prussia and Rokossovskiy's reaction.<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, the only dedicated piece of historical literature on Rokossovskiy in the English language is primarily descriptive rather than analytical. Indeed, beyond a general claim that Rokossovskiy was more humane than many of his contemporaries, Woff does not identify or examine the key themes of his leadership and command. However, Woff does capture the essence of Rokossovskiy's personality and provides an insight into his character. Indeed, there is much to commend Woff's argument that "of the leading Red Army commanders, Rokossovsky (sic) combined outstanding professional ability with self-effacing modesty, and a sense of traditional military values."<sup>90</sup>

### **English Snapshots and Russian Narratives: Rokossovskiy's War**

The English language literature on Rokossovskiy consists mainly of snapshots about the Purge, Stalingrad, Kursk or Belorussia. Several authors, including Erickson and Conquest, discuss Rokossovskiy's arrest and incarceration. There is little agreement on location, duration and release concerning Rokossovskiy's imprisonment. Applebaum suggests Rokossovskiy was imprisoned in Vorkuta,<sup>91</sup> Bellamy in Kamchatka,<sup>92</sup> Woff in Leningrad.<sup>93</sup> Beevor introduces Rokossovskiy as a survivor of the Purge,<sup>94</sup> a former inhabitant of Beria's Gulag.

In Sebag Montefiore's *Stalin*, Rokossovskiy is mentioned twice in relation to the Purge. On 6<sup>th</sup> May 1940, just weeks after Rokossovskiy's release from the Gulag, Stalin notes Rokossovskiy's lack of fingernails and asks if he was arrested and tortured.<sup>95</sup> Secondly,



**Figure 31: Rokossovskiy, 1940**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

Rokossovskiy is depicted as a figure of great moral courage, a survivor of the Purge, who in May 1944, is prepared to confront Stalin over the Belorussian Operation.<sup>96</sup> Reese suggests Rokossovskiy was in Leningrad's Kresty prison and the Lubyanka in Moscow. He suggests Rokossovskiy was released in March 1939, not March 1940, but provides no evidence. Sadykiewicz argues Rokossovskiy's was under house arrest two months before his formal arrest, imprisoned

in the Kresty and the Lubyanka and suffered three trials, including one before the Supreme Soviet.<sup>97</sup> In summary, in English Rokossovskiy is generally known as a victim of the Purge and is presented, accurately enough, as the most significant military survivor.

Rokossovskiy's role at Moscow during November-December 1941 is discussed in Erickson's *Soviet High Command* and *The Road to Stalingrad*. The shattering ordeal is vividly portrayed but there is no real analysis of Rokossovskiy's leadership and command. Similarly, *Klaus Reinhardt's Moscow-The Turning Point*, records the importance of Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army at Moscow,<sup>98</sup> but does not discuss his operational methods or leadership. In a similar way the Soviet literature of the Moscow defensive operation focuses on historical narrative and there is no sustained, thematic analysis of Rokossovskiy's leadership and command.

The second volume of the *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* discusses Moscow. However, Rokossovskiy is mentioned merely in passing. The impersonal historical narrative relates 16<sup>th</sup> Army's presence at Vyazma<sup>99</sup> and its actions at Volokolamsk,<sup>100</sup> but has little analysis of Rokossovskiy. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army's crisis, at Moscow, in late November 1941, has two pages of narrative but Rokossovskiy is a peripheral figure.<sup>101</sup> Equally, Volume 4 of *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny 1939-1945*



discusses Volokolamsk.<sup>102</sup> It also covers 16<sup>th</sup> Army's struggle north-west of Moscow, in late November 1941,<sup>103</sup> but with no real analysis of its commander. The *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* has a lengthy entry on the battle of Moscow. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army's role is recounted but there is no analysis.<sup>104</sup> In summary, the official Soviet literature is narrative in character with a shallow acquaintance with a multitude of events, involving numerous formations. There is no considered analysis of Rokossovskiy. This is also true of Shaposhnikov's *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta* (The Moscow Operation of the Western Front)<sup>105</sup> and E.M. Sokolov's *Bitva za Moskvu* (*The Battle for Moscow*).<sup>106</sup> These are extraordinarily detailed historical narratives about Moscow and the subsequent Soviet counter-offensive. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army's role is outlined in terms of dates, objectives and progress but there is no thematic analysis of Rokossovskiy's leadership and command.

The western literature of Stalingrad is dominated by the German experience. It concentrates on Paulus' character, the German failure to anticipate encirclement, the Romanians, the airlift, the German failure to breakout, Hitler's interference, Paulus' surrender and the ordeal of the German soldiers. It is as though the Russians, apart from Chuikov, are extras in a German drama played out in Russia. The English speaking literature also focuses on Operation Uranus, the encirclement of Sixth Army, in which Rokossovskiy's Don Front played a subordinate role. At Stalingrad, from September 1942-February 1943, Rokossovskiy was involved in the preparation, encirclement, containment and final destruction of Sixth German Army. In fact, he was the only Soviet field commander involved in all phases of the Stalingrad campaign. However, although Erickson provides snippets of information about Rokossovskiy's role, in general, in western historiography, he is not instinctively associated with Stalingrad.

Indeed, occasionally, Rokossovskiy seems nothing more than an historical prop, written out of the main script. The German defeat at Stalingrad was a pivotal historical event, but Sixth German Army's annihilation by Rokossovskiy's Don Front is often lost in the nightmarish last days of the German soldiers. There is very little analysis, in English, of Operation Ring the final Soviet operation at Stalingrad. Rokossovskiy is mentioned just

three times in Beevor's discussion, although his meeting with Paulus is recorded.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, history remembers the Soviet ultimatum on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1943, but forgets it was Rokossovskiy's idea.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, although Rokossovskiy is superficially famous for his involvement in the Stalingrad campaign, his style of leadership and operational command during this period are virtually unknown.

Volume 3 of *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* covers the Stalingrad encirclement in considerable detail<sup>109</sup> but Rokossovskiy's Don Front is mentioned just once.<sup>110</sup> It contains ten pages on Operation Ring, but actually there is little discussion of the fighting conducted by Rokossovskiy's Don Front in the period 10<sup>th</sup> –24<sup>th</sup> January 1943.<sup>111</sup> The last phase of Operation Ring, 24<sup>th</sup> January–2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943, is covered in less than two pages, with Rokossovskiy barely mentioned.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the Soviet ultimatum of 8<sup>th</sup> January 1943, signed by Voronov and Rokossovskiy is given greater consideration than Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations.<sup>113</sup> In summary, there is no substantial analysis of Rokossovskiy's leadership and operational command during operations at Stalingrad.

Volume Six of *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* also covers Operation Uranus in an extended narrative of events. The Don Front's contribution is incidental: its dispositions are identified<sup>114</sup> with 65<sup>th</sup> Army's breakthrough briefly recounted<sup>115</sup> as well as 24<sup>th</sup> Army's unsuccessful attacks north of Stalingrad.<sup>116</sup> The Don Front and Rokossovskiy's contribution to Operation Uranus is overshadowed by the more significant actions of the South-West and Stalingrad Fronts. The Don Front's destruction of the German Sixth Army in January 1943 is covered in more detail than in *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*. The decision to place all Soviet forces at Stalingrad, including Chuikov's 62<sup>nd</sup> Army, under Rokossovskiy's command is recounted<sup>117</sup> as is Rokossovskiy's plan for Operation Ring. Naturally, the Soviet ultimatum occupies a prominent place<sup>118</sup> but the actual conduct of operations during Operation Ring is dealt with in just two pages. In summary, there is no proper analysis of Rokossovskiy's planning and conduct of Operation Ring. Equally, although the *Sovetskaya Voennoye Entsiklopediya* gives a detailed overview of Stalingrad,<sup>119</sup> it does not examine Rokossovskiy's actions in any depth.

The *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz* and *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* are not the authoritative Soviet accounts of the Stalingrad Operation. In 1965, Soviet historians, operating under Rokossovskiy's editorial name published *Velikaya Pobeda na Volge (The Great Victory on the Volga)*.<sup>120</sup> It is a comprehensive examination of the entire Stalingrad campaign dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 1942-2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943. The conception, planning, organisation and execution of Operation Uranus are examined in substantial detail,<sup>121</sup> including Rokossovskiy's Don Front.<sup>122</sup> The Don Front's involvement in Operation Uranus is assessed and *Velikaya Pobeda na Volge* also provides unusual detail on the Don Front's intense operations against German forces north of Stalingrad between 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> November 1942.<sup>123</sup> An extended narrative discusses the futile efforts of Rokossovskiy's Don Front and Yeremenko's Stalingrad Front, to crush the German pocket between 2<sup>nd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December 1942.<sup>124</sup> The Middle Don Operation (16<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> December 1943) often known as Operation Small Saturn is assessed<sup>125</sup> as is Operation Winterstorm, the German relief operation on Stalingrad in December 1942.<sup>126</sup>

*Velikaya Pobeda Na Volge* also provides the most detailed account of Operation Ring.<sup>127</sup> The planning and preparation of Soviet forces are examined with Rokossovskiy's orders to the Don Front's armies covered in a concise and simple manner.<sup>128</sup> This is followed by a detailed narrative of Operation Ring covering the entire operation 10<sup>th</sup> January-2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943.<sup>129</sup> However, *Velikaya Pobeda Na Volge* is not analytical in character and there is no sustained attempt to examine Rokossovskiy's leadership and operational command. It is a comprehensive historical record of the whole Stalingrad campaign but does not assess Rokossovskiy's military style either at Stalingrad or in a wider comparative context before and after Stalingrad.

In addition to *Velikaya Pobeda na Volge* A.M. Samsonov's *Stalingradskaya Epopyeya*<sup>130</sup> (*The Stalingrad Epic*) provides a massive, detailed assessment of the Stalingrad campaign. It contains chapters written by (or under the name of) senior commanders such Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Yeremenko, Voronov and Rokossovskiy. Rokossovskiy's chapter *Na Stalingradskom Napravleniy (On the Stalingrad Direction)* is a detailed overview of his involvement in the Stalingrad campaign. It is more analytical in

character and contains valuable insights into the initial counter-offensive proposed at Stalingrad in September 1942.<sup>131</sup> It also covers the early days of his command of the Don Front and the general situation north of Stalingrad in September-October 1942.<sup>132</sup> It discusses Operation Uranus (19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November 1942) and the Don Front's operations.<sup>133</sup> There is a detailed discussion about the initial planning for the destruction of the German pocket and Rokossovskiy analyses the prospective role of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army.<sup>134</sup> Rokossovskiy indicates that he disagreed with Vasilevskiy's response to Operation Winterstorm, a controversial matter dealt with at greater length in Rokossovskiy's uncensored memoirs.<sup>135</sup> Rokossovskiy's account concluded with a detailed examination of Operation Ring.

A.M. Samsonov's other work *Stalingradskaya Bitva*<sup>136</sup> is a detailed history of the Soviet campaign at Stalingrad. It includes brief details on the Don Front's plan for Operation Uranus<sup>137</sup> and a short review of 65<sup>th</sup> Army's role in the German encirclement.<sup>138</sup> Operation Ring is examined but the dominant theme is narrative rather than thematic. The Don Front's initial plan and *Stavka*'s response is covered<sup>139</sup> and Samsonov provides a detailed narrative of Operation Ring.<sup>140</sup> It identifies key decisions taken by Rokossovskiy<sup>141</sup> but there is no substantial analysis of his command. It concludes with Rokossovskiy's understated communiqué to Moscow, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943 that the Don Front had fulfilled its orders.<sup>142</sup>

History's obsession with the Germans and the southern end of the Kursk bulge, in both English and Russian, has overshadowed Rokossovskiy's critical role at Kursk. However, English language historiography is not entirely ignorant of Rokossovskiy's role at Kursk. The Soviet General Staff Study, *The Battle For Kursk 1943* provides substantial information on Rokossovskiy<sup>143</sup> but contains no real analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command. David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House's *The Battle of Kursk*<sup>144</sup> is an excellent account with a brief, if basic biographical sketch of Rokossovskiy.<sup>145</sup> It is a concise account of the Central Front's struggle with Ninth German Army but does not analyse Rokossovskiy's leadership and command. In the end, Rokossovskiy's experiences at Kursk are overshadowed by the clash between Vatutin's Voronezh Front, the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzer Corps, Fourth Panzer Army and Prokharovka.<sup>146</sup> In summary, at least in English, Rokossovskiy is famous for being

at Kursk but there is little analysis of his actual leadership and operational command. A recent account of Kursk is five hundred pages long: Rokossovskiy is mentioned just twice, in passing, a member of the supporting cast.<sup>147</sup>

The Soviet coverage of Kursk follows a familiar pattern of general narrative in broad ranging official histories or extraordinarily detailed historical narrative in specialist studies. Volume 3 of *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvenoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* outlines the Central Front's plans<sup>148</sup> and highlights the massive concentration in 13<sup>th</sup> Army's sector, adding a quotation from Rokossovskiy<sup>149</sup> A detailed account reveals the Central Front's defensive operation against Ninth German Army<sup>150</sup> but there is no analytical overview of Rokossovskiy's command. Operation Kutuzov, the multi-front Soviet counter-offensive, on the northern face of the Kursk bulge is covered<sup>151</sup> but the Central Front's initial attack, on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943, merits just four lines.<sup>152</sup> Subsequently, the Central Front narrative jumps forward to 12<sup>th</sup> August 1943 and there is no other coverage of Rokossovskiy's Kromy Operation. Therefore, 15<sup>th</sup> July-16<sup>th</sup> August 1943, a period of continuous fighting against fierce German opposition is dismissed in ten lines. There is no examination of Rokossovskiy's command.

Volume 7 of *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* outlines the position, plans and dispositions of the Central Front at Kursk,<sup>153</sup> followed by a narrative of the struggle with Ninth German Army.<sup>154</sup> The Central Front's participation in Operation Kutuzov is mentioned<sup>155</sup> with a brief indication that it was a difficult operation.<sup>156</sup> The operations of late July and early August 1943 merit no more than a single line indicating *Stavka's* intentions.<sup>157</sup> In summary, the Soviet general histories provide a basic outline of events at Kursk, followed by a general narrative designed to mark the Red Army's progress to victory. There is no sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy's operational art. The *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* has an overview of Kursk<sup>158</sup> but it considers the 5<sup>th</sup> July-23<sup>rd</sup> August 1943 in a single entry. It has no detailed reflection on Rokossovskiy. The *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* also has a narrative of Operation Kutuzov.<sup>159</sup>

*Bitva pod Kursk*, (*The Battle for Kursk*) the original Soviet General Staff Study of 1946-47, reprinted in 2006,<sup>160</sup> is an extraordinarily detailed narrative of the entire Kursk Operation, encompassing the defensive phase and the subsequent counter-offensives launched by the Red Army. The course of events, decisions made, formations involved are recounted in remarkable detail. As a comprehensive source of information *Bitva pod Kursk*, like Shaposhnikov's work and *Velikaya Na Pobede*, is a treasure chest of data. There is a wealth of detail concerning the actions of commanders such as Rokossovskiy but little systematic analysis of his operational command.

If there is a general familiarity with the Russian crossing of the Dnepr in autumn 1943 in the western world, few know Rokossovskiy's Central Front crossed the Dnepr first, in September 1943. Volume 3 of *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* presents the reader with a comprehensive account of Rokossovskiy's advance to the Dnepr.<sup>161</sup> The success of the Central Front's left-wing is highlighted but the laboured advance of the right-wing is acknowledged,<sup>162</sup> before its success in crossing the Desna on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1943 is recorded.<sup>163</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Army's historic forcing of the Dnepr on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1943 is covered in detail as is the struggle to establish a bridgehead over the Dnepr.<sup>164</sup>

Volume 7 of *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* gives a detailed account of the Central Front's advance to the Desna and the Dnepr.<sup>165</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Army's struggle to consolidate its bridgehead is covered and there is an appraisal of the Central Front's struggle on its right-wing, between the Pripyat and the Dnepr. Similarly, there is detailed information on 60<sup>th</sup> Army, especially, 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Mechanised Corps' success in establishing another bridgehead over the Dnepr, closer to Kiev. The section concludes with a ringing endorsement of the Central Front's progress.<sup>166</sup> In a similar way, *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* provides a very detailed and highly informative account of the Chernigov-Pripyat Offensive.<sup>167</sup> Indeed, the coverage of Rokossovskiy's advance to the Dnepr seems strangely out of proportion to the scant coverage of his conduct at Moscow and Stalingrad. However, one should not assume this is an intensely analytical, thematic examination of Rokossovskiy's military style. Rokossovskiy is mentioned by name, but beyond his flexible use of 60<sup>th</sup> Army, his operational conduct is

not scrutinised in any depth, despite the unusual detail concerning the Central Front's operations in August-September 1943.

John Erickson's *The Road to Berlin* acknowledges Rokossovskiy's autumn 1943 Belorussian campaign but it is really no more than historical snippets that record the existence of these operations.<sup>168</sup> Ziemke's *Stalingrad to Berlin* pays some attention to this sector but his discussion of Rokossovskiy is brief.<sup>169</sup> In general, English language historiography has paid little attention to the Belorussian campaign. The Belorussian campaign of October 1943-April 1944 also reveals the limitations of the *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* and the *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* as credible historical records of the Red Army's conduct of operations on the Eastern Front. The *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* and public Soviet historiography in general, seriously misrepresented the scale and significance of the Soviet Belorussian campaign, particularly Rokossovskiy's operations in 1943-1944.

Volume 3 of *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* initially acknowledges, almost in passing, that *Stavka* was planning the liberation of Belorussia.<sup>170</sup> It acknowledges that in October 1943, the Red Army received the mission to liberate Belorussia and that *Stavka* developed detailed plans to destroy the enemy across the whole central sector of the Soviet-German front, from Vitebsk to Orsha.<sup>171</sup> By spring 1944, the Red Army had clearly failed to achieve this. Indeed, between October 1943-April 1944, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front, east of Vitebsk and the Western Front, on the Smolensk direction, east of Orsha, created an attritional bloodbath that saw Soviet forces grind out victories at massive cost. In short, in strategic terms the Belorussian campaign of 1943-44 was a failure. The *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* makes no attempt to explore, explain or analyse this anomaly. Indeed, apart from a passing reference or two, it makes virtually no comment on Rokossovskiy's extensive operations in south-eastern Belorussia during autumn 1943. It provides little more than a brief summing up of Rokossovskiy's position by December 1943.<sup>172</sup>

Volume 7 of *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* acknowledges that the 1943 Belorussian campaign was strategic in scale.<sup>173</sup> It cites the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation of November 1943 as a simultaneous operation planned to coincide with other Soviet operations in eastern and north-eastern Belorussia. It does provide a more extensive commentary on Rokossovskiy's operations than *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz* but explicitly states that operations began on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1943 with Rokossovskiy's brilliant Loyev Operation. It is now known that Rokossovskiy began operations in early October 1943. In common with other Soviet literature, including Rokossovskiy's own memoirs, the *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* connives in creating the impression that the Loyev Operation was curtailed on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943. There is a deliberate emphasis on the Loyev Operation's early successes, ignoring the more extended operations conducted by Rokossovskiy. In a similar vein, the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation of November 1943 is presented with a specific termination date of 26<sup>th</sup> November 1943.<sup>174</sup> The extension of Rokossovskiy's operations into a drive on Kalinkovichi, a key German position, in late November and early December 1943 is not mentioned.

In Volume 8 of *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* there is a brief discussion of Soviet strategy in Belorussia during 1943-44<sup>175</sup> together with a brief overview of operations in Belorussia in autumn 1943.<sup>176</sup> The Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation of January 1944 is given token recognition, despite its success,<sup>177</sup> although there is more discussion of the successful Zhlobin-Rogachev Operation of February 1944. There is also a terse acknowledgement that 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front and the Western Front had been less than successful in achieving their objectives east of Vitebsk and Orsha.<sup>178</sup> However, there is no comparative analysis of this sustained failure in contrast with the relative success of Rokossovskiy's Belorussian operations. Indeed, these operations are not covered in Rokossovskiy's memoirs, even the uncensored version. Rokossovskiy conducted far more extensive operations in Belorussia than those officially recognised by Soviet historiography. The reasons for this will be debated in detail at a later stage: suffice it to say that the official Soviet historical record of Rokossovskiy's Belorussian campaign was the victim of serious historical duplicity.



In comparison with Stalingrad, western historiography is ignorant about the scale, sophistication and success of the Belorussian Operation. It was an operation that reflected the essential characteristics of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command, but in English there is no real understanding of Rokossovskiy's role in the Belorussian Operation. The translated Soviet General Staff study gives a detailed insight into the planning and conduct of the Belorussian Operation.<sup>179</sup> It is a dry, terse account and very informative on Rokossovskiy's command of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. Nevertheless, there is no real assessment of Rokossovskiy's operational art. There is no comparative analysis, no attempt to place Rokossovskiy's leadership and operational command in a wider context. It tells us what he did, but it does not analyse the wider nature of his style of leadership and command. The most authoritative Russian source on the Belorussia Operation is A.M. Samsonov's *Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii (The Liberation of Belorussia)*, a comprehensive, detailed account of the entire operation by senior commanders involved in the destruction of Army Group Centre.<sup>180</sup>

John Erickson provides an excellent overview of the planning and execution of the Belorussian Operation but his direct analysis of Rokossovskiy is limited.<sup>181</sup> Carell vividly recounts Army Group Centre's defeat making brief reference to Rokossovskiy in comparison to Manstein.<sup>182</sup> Ziemke and Seaton cover the defeat of Army Group Centre primarily from the German perspective. Rokossovskiy is mentioned in passing but no more. Equally, the calamity that befell Army Group Centre is covered in considerable detail, again mainly from the German perspective, in Volume 8 of *Germany and the Second World War*.<sup>183</sup> In *Where Titans Clashed*, Glantz conveys the sheer scale of the Belorussian Operation<sup>184</sup> but is unable to investigate Rokossovskiy's contribution, its significance and his methods in any sustained way. In *Soviet Blitzkrieg*, Walter S. Dunn provides an excellent assessment of the Belorussian Operation,<sup>185</sup> but not an analysis of Rokossovskiy. Gerd Nieplod's excellent *The Battle for White Russia: The Destruction of Army Group Centre*<sup>186</sup> is a comprehensive account of the German defeat with substantial information on the use of 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division south of Minsk to counter Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. It is, however, written primarily from the German perspective. Finally, although it is idiosyncratic and

dominated by the German perspective, Rolf Hinze's *East Front Drama-1944* does convey the catastrophe that submerged the German forces in Belorussia.<sup>187</sup>

The Lublin-Brest Operation, conducted by Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, 18<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> July 1944, has been overshadowed by what preceded it, the Belorussian Operation, and what followed it, the Warsaw Uprising. Erickson's *The Road To Berlin* contains half a dozen detailed pages on the Lublin-Brest Operation.<sup>188</sup> It conveys the apparently overwhelming success achieved by the left-wing of Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, but is almost alone as an English language account. Equally, there is little analysis of Rokossovskiy's operational command. In *Soviet Military Deception*, Glantz assesses 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's attempts to deceive the Germans<sup>189</sup> but in *Where Titans Clashed*, Glantz devotes just one page to the Lublin-Brest Operation.<sup>190</sup> It is a brief narrative of who did what, why, where and when, no more. However, elsewhere Glantz provides a more extensive documentary account of the Lublin-Brest Operation but it is mainly a narrative of events.<sup>191</sup> This is symptomatic of the relatively meagre attention paid to the Lublin-Brest Operation. Yet, the Lublin-Brest Operation actually offers a splendid opportunity to assess Rokossovskiy's style of leadership, particularly in relation to the Soviet concept of operational synchronisation.

Rokossovskiy's connections with the Warsaw Uprising have been recorded in far more detail. Norman Davies' *Rising '44*<sup>192</sup> discusses Rokossovskiy and is critical of Rokossovskiy's failure to help the insurgents. Alexander Werth's *Russia at War* contains an interview in which Rokossovskiy criticised the timing of the rising and explained 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's failure to enter Warsaw.<sup>193</sup> Erickson discusses the political and strategic context of the Warsaw Uprising in great detail.<sup>194</sup> Rokossovskiy's involvement is assessed sporadically, but there is little analysis of how Rokossovskiy's conduct at Warsaw fits into a wider analysis of his leadership and command. Indeed, Erickson is more critical of Rokossovskiy, or at least 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's HQ's, inconsistent treatment of Chuikov's 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army in the Magnuszew bridgehead.<sup>195</sup> Yet, even here, in relation to the notorious events of the Warsaw Uprising, Rokossovskiy is overlooked, famous but unknown. Hitchcock's *Liberation*:

*The Bitter Road to Freedom, Europe 1944-1945*, discusses Warsaw and the Soviet failure to help in some detail, yet Rokossovskiy is not even mentioned, once.<sup>196</sup>

The brutal, but highly effective East Prussian Operation conducted by Rokossovskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front in January-February 1945 has been extensively documented. It has been the subject of considerable comment, reflecting the appalling, savage character of the fighting and in particular the ghastly retribution taken by Soviet troops on the people of East Prussia.<sup>197</sup> This has rather overshadowed analysis of the military aspects of the operation, but in many respects it is an important indicator of the nature of Rokossovskiy's leadership and operational command.

The human dimensions of the East Prussian Operation are studiously avoided in official Soviet literature. However, they are a useful source of detailed historical narrative. Volume 5 of the *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza* presents an overview of the detailed planning of the East Prussian Operation.<sup>198</sup> A narrative outlines the tough fighting that took place and in an unusually direct personal attribution it singles out Rokossovskiy's decision to commit 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps.<sup>199</sup> It identifies 19<sup>th</sup> January 1945 as the critical day and delivers an account of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's spectacular progress, highlighting the cultural and historic significance of East Prussia.<sup>200</sup> A similar structure is adopted to recount Rokossovskiy's East Pomeranian Operation of February-March 1945. The plan of operations is described, formations identified and the course of operations discussed in a chronological narrative punctuated by key events.<sup>201</sup> Nevertheless, the discussion of both operations does not include any sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy's role or his conduct of operations.

The *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* account of the East Prussian Operation is similar in character and structure. It describes the general operational situation and the plan of operations,<sup>202</sup> including a detailed outline of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's deployment in the bridgeheads over the River Narev.<sup>203</sup> However, Rokossovskiy is mentioned just once and there is no real attempt to analyse his operational concept. This is followed by a chronological narrative of the East Prussian Operation that does not differ in its essentials from that provided in the *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo*

*Soyuza*. It is a concise but limited overview that does not identify or examine the key aspects of Rokossovskiy's conduct during this operation in any systematic manner.

John Erickson<sup>204</sup> reveals the barbaric, almost apocalyptic frenzy of the East Prussian Operation giving public witness to scenes of savage inhumanity as Rokossovskiy's troops swept through East Prussia. He also records, along with Beevor that Rokossovskiy tried to curb the unbridled, merciless depravity. Certainly he is no sense accused of encouraging or instigating the wave of retribution that engulfed East Prussia. Once again Hitchcock does not mention Rokossovskiy even though the shocking progress of Soviet troops through Germany is central to his discussion. Rokossovskiy is not blamed for the mayhem, but nor is his futile attempt to halt the carnage acknowledged.<sup>205</sup>

Naturally, the sadistic behaviour of the Soviet troops has overshadowed Rokossovskiy's handling of his forces in a highly complex, dynamic operation.<sup>206</sup> Erickson discusses 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's scattering of the German forces in late January 1945, while Seaton observes that the German military were impressed by the speed and power of the East Prussian Operation. Hastings records the campaign but also emphasises the grinding horror of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's progress through East Prussia and later Pomerania.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, although Rokossovskiy is both famous/infamous for his involvement in the East Prussian Operation, the highly controversial nature of the operation has undermined any sustained analysis, in English, of his style of leadership and operational command, other than in the moral context, in which Rokossovskiy has generally fared better than other Soviet commanders.

In 1945, Rokossovskiy was no longer on the main Warsaw-Berlin axis. The East Prussia Operation and East Pomeranian Operation were of great political, military and psychological significance but were overshadowed by Zhukov's advance on the Oder, east of Berlin and the question of whether the Red Army would attempt to bounce the Oder, then advance, without pause, on Berlin. The East Pomeranian Operation of February-March 1945 is the subject of a detailed historical narrative in *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*.<sup>208</sup> The *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz*

gives a similar narrative of the East Pomeranian Operation.<sup>209</sup> Rokossovskiy was not directly involved in the Berlin Operation of April 1945.

Indeed, perhaps it is Rokossovskiy's absence from Berlin that explains why he has not entered western consciousness in the same way as Zhukov or Konev. In an official sense, the April 1945 Oder-Elbe Operation, undertaken by Rokossovskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front, was part of the Berlin Operation. It was conducted simultaneously and one of its objectives was to prevent German forces, north of Berlin, interfering in the German capital. The Oder-Elbe Operation is hardly covered by the *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*. The initial stages are covered in less than a page.<sup>210</sup> The narrative is concluded with a brief outline of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's progress by the end of April 1945.<sup>211</sup> In a similar way, after briefly outlining its aim<sup>212</sup> Volume 10 of the *Istoriya Velikoy Mirovoy Voyny* covers the actual conduct of the Oder-Elbe Operation in less than a page.<sup>213</sup> In reality, Rokossovskiy was a peripheral figure at Berlin. The Oder-Elbe Operation is covered by Erickson,<sup>214</sup> but barely mentioned in other English language sources.

### **Rokossovskiy's Personal Legacy: A Soldier's Duty**

At the time of Rokossovskiy's death in 1968, his memoirs, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, were written but unpublished. Batov, Rokossovskiy's former army commander and trusted subordinate supervised their publication. In 1985, an English translation of Rokossovskiy's memoirs, entitled *A Soldier's Duty* was produced.<sup>215</sup> Rokossovskiy's memoirs are eloquent but simple in expression, written with a light touch untarnished by bombast, rhetorical denunciation or excessive self-justification. The memoirs give an important insight into his personality, style of leadership, operational command and the Great Patriotic War. However, they began in 1940 and finished in May 1945. They contained hardly a sentence on Rokossovskiy's service in World War One, the Russian Civil War and the inter-war period. There is not a word about Rokossovskiy's experiences during the Purge. Rokossovskiy's original memoirs were heavily censored. Naturally, this means that in retrospect Rokossovskiy transmitted a sanitised impression of the war. This is particularly the case with regard to relationships within the Red Army's high command, its preparation for and subsequent conduct of the war. It is now

known that Rokossovskiy was prevented from discussing many things about *Stavka*, Soviet strategy, other Soviet commanders, certain Red Army operations and his own leadership and command during the war.

It is clear that such ‘doctored’ publications should be treated with caution. Yet, it is too easy to simply dismiss censored memoir literature as just personal and public propaganda. In fact, despite extensive censorship, Rokossovskiy’s original memoirs were surprisingly informative and with close reading, quite revealing. Rokossovskiy’s censored memoirs unambiguously reveal the inadequacy of South-Western Front in June 1941. The weakness of Rokossovskiy’s 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps, allegedly an elite formation, is openly discussed.<sup>216</sup> The censored memoirs candidly document the chaotic, disorganised and improvised nature of South-Western Front’s response to the German invasion.<sup>217</sup> Rokossovskiy condemns Kirponos as an inadequate *Front* commander and does not hide his relief that 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps did not face the main German attack.<sup>218</sup> Rokossovskiy also indicates that while some Soviet formations fought hard, some did not and that most formations were disorganised, ill-prepared and poorly led, at all levels of command.<sup>219</sup> It is, in short, a damning commentary, censored or not, upon the Red Army in June 1941.



**Figure 32: M.N. Kirponos**  
(en.wikipedia.org)

In a similar way, Rokossovskiy’s censored memoirs reveal his sharp disagreements with Zhukov during the battle of Moscow. It is absolutely clear from these ‘dodgy’ memoirs that Rokossovskiy and Zhukov had diametrically opposed ideas about leadership and command.<sup>220</sup> Rokossovskiy’s irritations about the postponement of Operation Ring, the annihilation of the Sixth German Army, at Stalingrad, in December 1942, are made clear.<sup>221</sup> Rokossovskiy’s manipulated memoirs also reveal his anger that the Central Front’s contribution at Kursk had been overlooked, while the Voronezh Front had been lauded. The evident difference in leadership and command style between Rokossovskiy and Vatutin, two leading field commanders is laid bare.<sup>222</sup>



**Figure 33: Red Army border deployment in June 1941 showing 9<sup>th</sup> (IX) Mechanised Corps.**  
 (Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.180.)

In addition, Rokossovskiy's clash with the General Staff and Stalin over the Belorussian Operation is revealed<sup>223</sup> while Rokossovskiy's anger at the General Staff over the East Prussia in January 1945 positively hums out of the page.<sup>224</sup> Therefore, Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs cannot be entirely dismissed as the anodyne, neutered product of the state. It is of course true that they demonstrate the lengths to which the Soviet leadership went to in order to present their war in the fairest odour. Nevertheless, they are a generally informative, occasionally revealing insight into how one of the Red Army's leading commanders fought the war. They are an important building block in any study that seeks to understand and analyse Rokossovskiy's wartime career.

However, the censors made their mark and ensured the memoirs Rokossovskiy wrote were not those the reader bought. As a result, there is a sense of much left unsaid. In general, the key historical events of Rokossovskiy's command are discussed, but not fully analysed. On several occasions a contrived sense of frankness is created in order to disguise the true nature of the events being discussed. In effect issues are raised in order that they should remain undisclosed or at the very least to avoid creating curiosity through brazen omissions. In short, the Soviet authorities manipulate a shallow notion of revelation to conceal serious duplicity. Rokossovskiy was a leading historical witness with the power to endorse the official version of the Red Army's Great Patriotic War or to blow it out of the water. In general, the aim was to contrive Rokossovskiy's endorsement of the received version of the Great Patriotic War. However, it is also true that censorship demanded stuff was omitted, buried or left out.

Rokossovskiy's memoirs were lucid, almost eloquent, but occasionally they are abrupt, indeed strangely terse. A close reading of Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs indicates that significant issues involving the Red Army's conduct of the war, Rokossovskiy's role and other leading Soviet commanders are not discussed in any depth at all. In early December 1942, Rokossovskiy strenuously objected to Vasilevskiy's diversion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army to deal with Operation Winterstorm, the German attempt to cut a corridor through to German forces trapped in the Stalingrad pocket. The censored memoirs reduce this to "I said I was against it."<sup>225</sup> In December 1943, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front launched the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation in south-eastern



Belorussia. It was a major operation designed to target key German rail and road communications and supply lines. It came very close to significant success but was reduced to “troops of the 65<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Armies had advanced in the general Mozyr-Kalinkovichi direction.”<sup>226</sup> In summary, Rokossovskiy’s censored memoirs are both illuminating and misleading.

### **Rokossovskiy’s Real Memoirs: Historical Dynamite**

In 1989-1991, a series of articles in *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal* revealed the truly draconian censorship imposed upon Rokossovskiy’s original memoirs.<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, in 1997 a new Russian language edition of Rokossovskiy’s memoirs was published.<sup>228</sup>



**Figure 34: Rokossovskiy on cover of memoirs**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

These revealed that approximately 25 percent of Rokossovskiy’s original text had been deleted. The new version of Rokossovskiy’s memoirs used the clever device of incorporating new, previously censored material in written Cyrillic alongside the original censored text in printed Cyrillic. This enabled the original narrative of Rokossovskiy’s memoirs to survive but with more analytical depth and breadth. The 1997 Russian version of

Rokossovskiy’s memoirs is also particularly helpful as it contains a very useful chronological outline of the major operations that Rokossovskiy was involved in on the Eastern Front. It gives the official name of the operation, the particular Stavka *directive*, the aim of the mission and a brief summary of the conduct and course of the operation including the precise date it began and finished.<sup>229</sup> It also contains a brief autobiography written in December 1945, by Rokossovskiy, in which he states that he was born in Velikye Luki, in Russia, not Warsaw.<sup>230</sup> Therefore, he suggests that his birth was Russian even if his official nationality according to the evidence of July 1937 and April 1940 was Polish.

It also contains a brief historical introduction by Dr. Alexsey Basov. This is a biographical narrative. It outlines Rokossovskiy’s birth, early years, experiences in World War One and the inter-war years. It is noteworthy that a post Soviet era, uncensored version of Rokossovskiy’s memoirs, compiled with the assistance of his

family insists Rokossovskiy was born in Velikiye Luki, not Warsaw. It is also interesting it contains only twenty lines on the Purge. It suggests that Rokossovskiy was formally arrested in August 1937, relates Rokossovskiy's Yushkevich defence, namely that his alleged accomplice had died in 1920, with a new twist, that Rokossovskiy told the court Yushkevich's death had actually been reported in *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Red Army's official newspaper.<sup>231</sup> This introduction is included in the 2002 edition of Rokossovskiy's memoirs, but the useful table of operations is not. Nevertheless, the main body of the text in both versions of Rokossovskiy's new memoirs is the same and will be treated as Rokossovskiy's uncensored memoirs with references drawn from the 2002 Olma Press edition of *Soldatskiy Dolg*.<sup>232</sup>

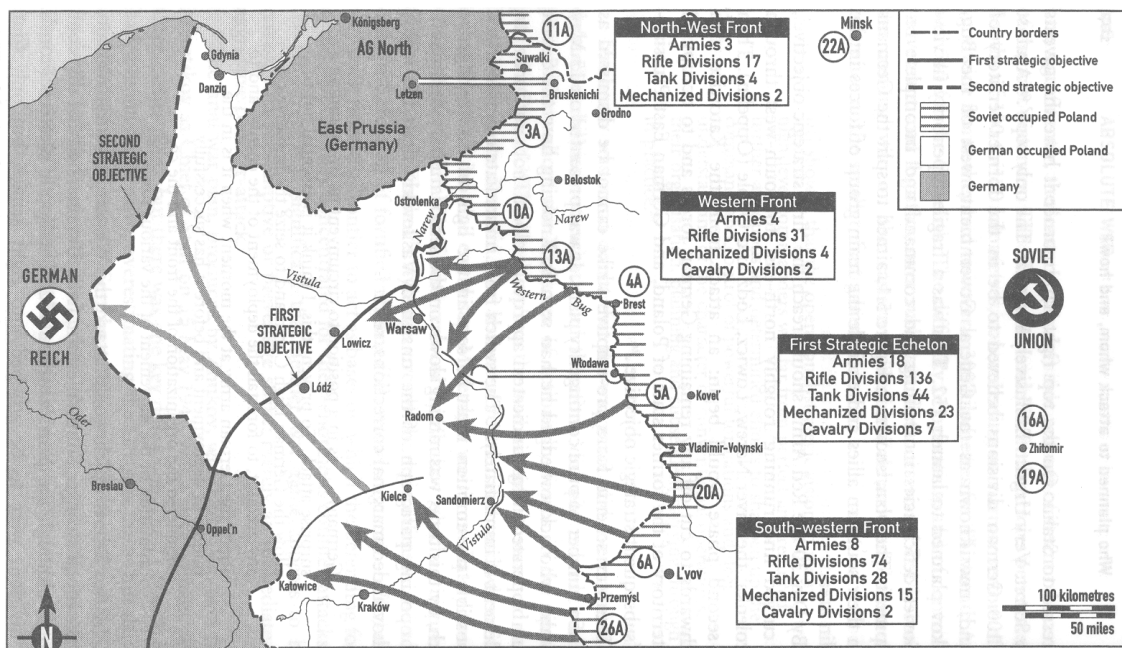
Rokossovskiy's real memoirs reveal his full, scathing criticisms of not only Kirponos and the South-Western Front, but the military leadership of the Red Army. Rokossovskiy is deeply critical of the decision to cannibalise the defences of the Soviet western border between 1918-1939, in order to utilise the extra territory gained through the annexations of the Baltic States, Bessarabia and Eastern Poland. In June 1941, the Soviet Union was left with two incomplete defence lines<sup>233</sup> and Rokossovskiy indicts the General Staff's failure to persuade Stalin<sup>234</sup> of the strategic risks involved in fortifying the new frontier by stripping the old border.

Rokossovskiy reveals his sealed orders of 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1941 the day of the German invasion, actually envisaged a deep operational advance by a fully equipped mechanised corps into enemy territory.<sup>235</sup> These orders bore no relation to the operational capability of 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps. It was barely capable of moving never mind deep operational manoeuvre. In Rokossovskiy's words,

“Put simply, the Corps was unready for military operations as a mechanized unit in any form. There was no way the Kiev Special Military District (KOVO) headquarters and the General Staff did not know this.”<sup>236</sup>

This plan is discussed by Pleshakhov and Bellamy.<sup>237</sup> It suggests, either the plans were unchanged from the strategic pre-emption plan put forward by Zhukov on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1941, or the General Staff had not actually written new orders, either through ineptitude or an inability to face the Red Army's lack of preparedness for war.

Similarly, although Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs discussed poor fighting spirit among some Soviet troops in June 1941, they did not reveal the full malaise or the direct action that Rokossovskiy took to deal with it. The new memoirs indicate Rokossovskiy confronted open insubordination, bordering on mutiny; that he personally threatened an officer with summary execution, rounded up hundreds of malingers, sent them back to the front<sup>238</sup> and ordered the execution of over a hundred.<sup>239</sup>



**Figure 35: The Red Army Scheme of Operations for a potential pre-emptive war.**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.108.)

Rokossovskiy's unedited memoirs also demonstrate that Rokossovskiy's disagreements with Zhukov were not confined to the famous incident at Istra in late November 1941. The mercurial, bullying and authoritarian nature of Zhukov's leadership is revealed by an incident that occurred at the height of the battle of Moscow. Zhukov personally berated Rokossovskiy in the presence of 5<sup>th</sup> Army's commander, Lieutenant-General Leonid Aleksandrovich Govorov, (1897-1955). Zhukov ridiculed Rokossovskiy's abilities and performance, rhetorically inviting Govorov to teach Rokossovskiy the art of command.<sup>240</sup> A few minutes later, in receipt of information that



**Figure 36: G.K. Zhukov**  
(answers.com)

Govorov's 5<sup>th</sup> Army was being driven back, Zhukov summoned Govorov for a foul-mouthed humiliation in front of Rokossovskiy.<sup>241</sup> Rokossovskiy concedes Zhukov was under immense pressure but,

“I can't remain silent about the fact that, at the start of the war, and in the battle of Moscow, in significant instances which were not infrequent, he took no account of the time, and the forces, which his instructions and orders were throwing away.”<sup>242</sup>

### **An Alternative Strategy?**

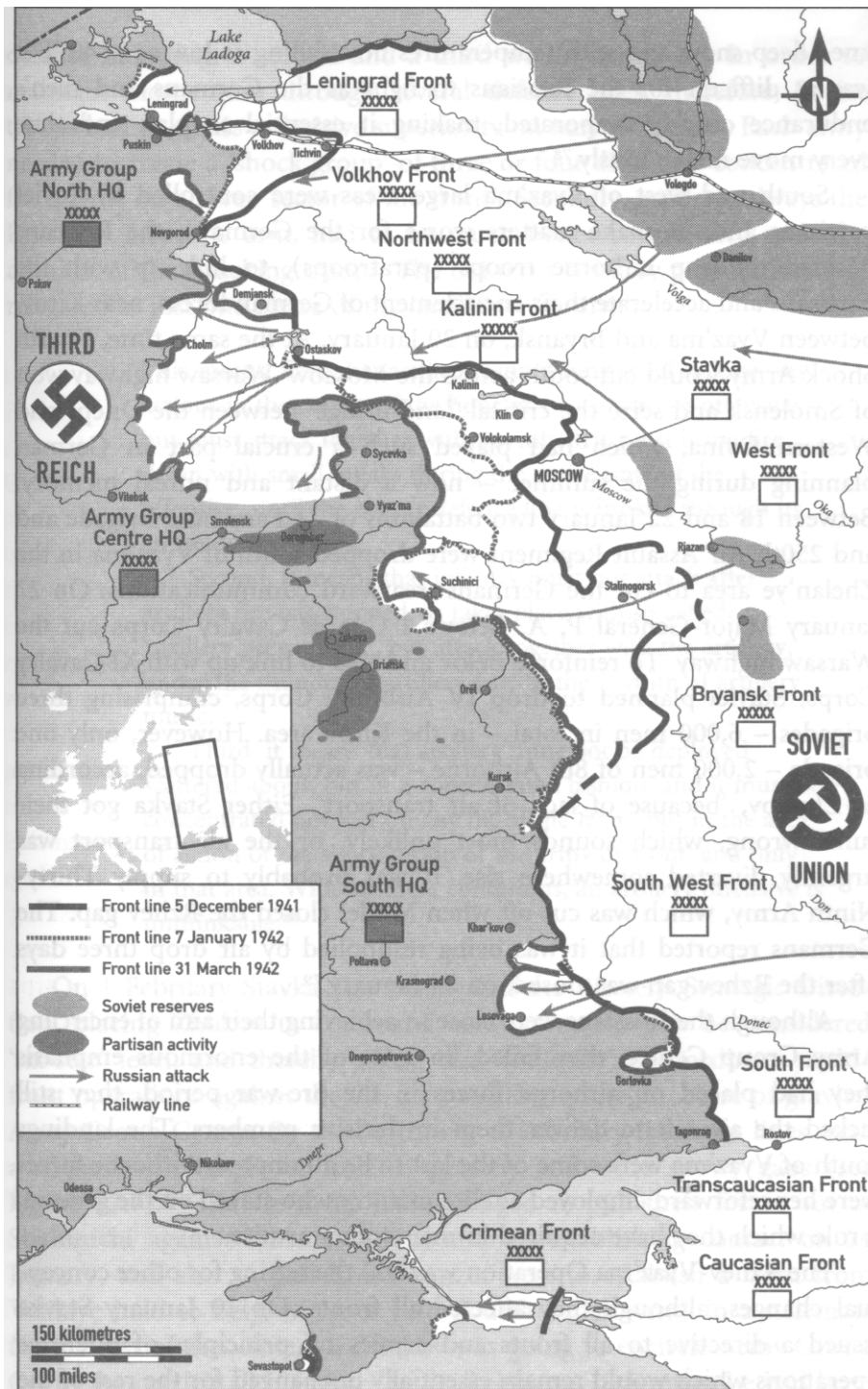
Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs were 'allowed' to reveal Rokossovskiy's tactical and operational abilities. However, they did little to bring out Rokossovskiy's ability to link tactical, operational and strategic factors. The real memoirs demonstrate that Rokossovskiy presented an extended operational and strategic critique of Stavka's conduct of the war, especially its unrealistic attitude towards constant operations and the massive loss of life. Rokossovskiy's comments on the 1939 and 1941 borders indicate his strategic insight. However, this was not an isolated incident. The complete memoirs show that Rokossovskiy presented an alternative operational and strategic appreciation of the Soviet conduct of the war at Moscow, Stalingrad, Belorussia and East Prussia, key turning points of the war.

Rokossovskiy's real memoirs indicate his awareness of the parallels between the German invasion and Napoleon's march in 1812.<sup>243</sup> They also demonstrate Rokossovskiy's profound strategic, operational and tactical appreciation of the battle of Moscow. Rokossovskiy believed the German defeat at Moscow was a turning point, an event of strategic significance that revealed the limits of German military power. As early as December 1941, Rokossovskiy foresaw a war that ended in Berlin.<sup>244</sup> This might be dismissed as retrospective strategic insight or the infection of Rokossovskiy's judgement by the general euphoria of victory at Moscow. Yet, Rokossovskiy's understanding of Moscow was extremely sophisticated. He appreciated that just because the limits of German military power had been exposed, this did not mean the Germans were finished, or that an unthinking commitment to a series of relentless, unceasing blows could rapidly destroy the Wehrmacht.

In complete contrast, Rokossovskiy argued that patient, intelligent operational and strategic command, that husbanded resources and then committed them to selective, key operations, was required to defeat the Wehrmacht. The Soviet success at Moscow created the possibility, perhaps the probability of Soviet victory, but it would not be achieved quickly or easily. In summary, the last thing the Red Army required was a blind, emotionally driven commitment to all-out attack. All out attack was what the Red Army got: between December 1941-March 1942, Zhukov, *Stavka* and Stalin demanded over-ambitious, unceasing offensives from shattered, exhausted troops.<sup>245</sup> The polite version of Rokossovskiy's memoirs indicated his irritation at being ordered to carry out relentless, pointless attacks during January-February 1942, with exhausted, ill-equipped troops for trivial objectives against an enemy who had recovered his composure.

The real memoirs demonstrate Rokossovskiy's anger at the blind strategic poverty of the Soviet conduct of the war in January-February 1942. Rokossovskiy argued that,

“Too many losses had been sustained by the armed forces from the first day of the war. In order to recoup these losses, time was necessary. We understood, that the war, in essence, had only just begun, that our victory in the great battle before Moscow where forces of three fronts had participated, was a turning point in the whole war, that this victory had given us a breathing-space, which we needed as much as air itself.”<sup>246</sup>

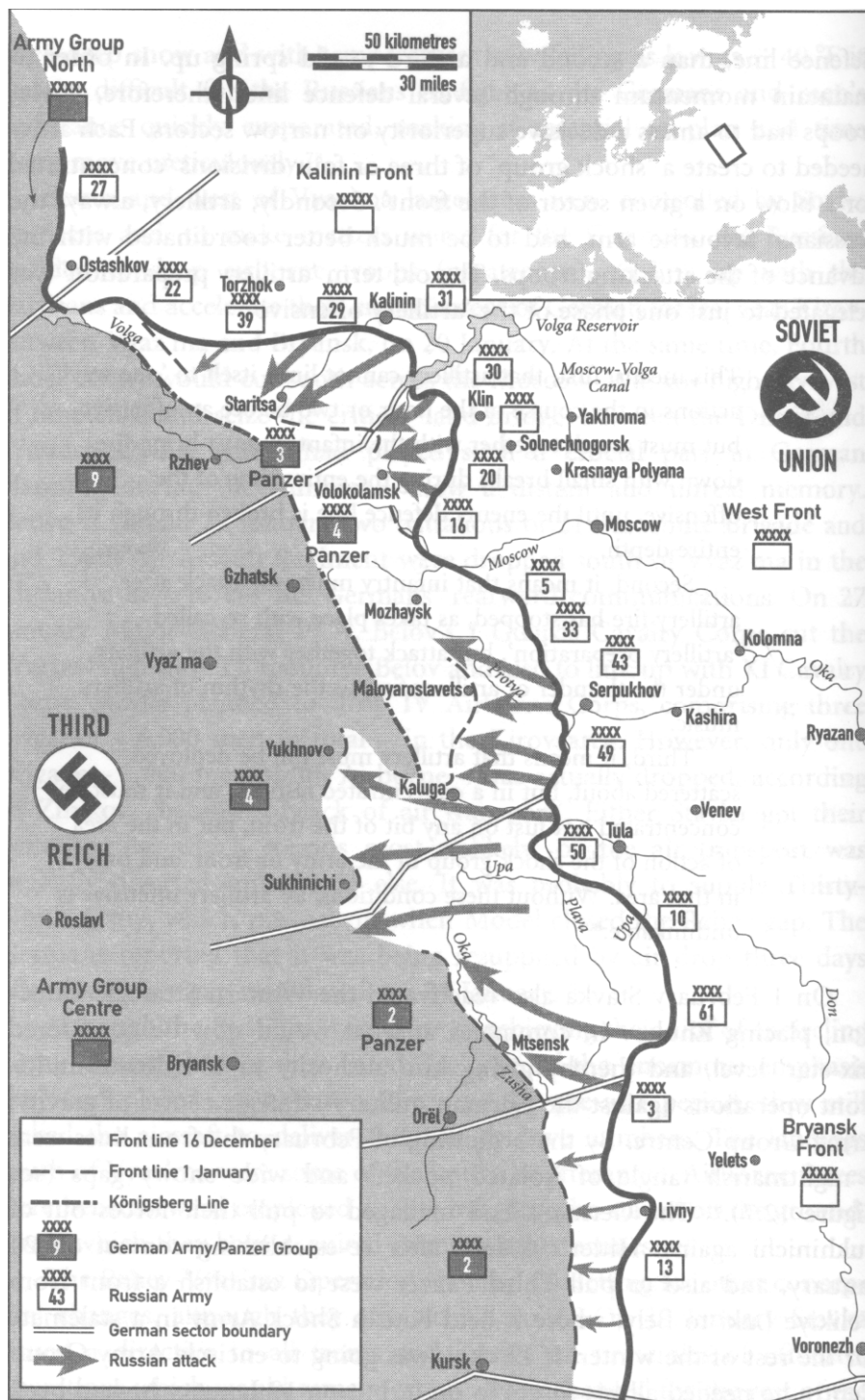


**Figure 37: Red Army operations in late 1941 and early 1942 on the Eastern Front.**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War* 2007, p.343.)

Rokossovskiy believed the Germans recognition of their defeat at Moscow had introduced fundamental strategic change across the entire Soviet-German front. In January 1942, the Germans adopted a position of strategic, operational and tactical defence, a posture that forced Soviet troops into protracted, attritional assaults against strong enemy positions. Rokossovskiy felt this raised many critical questions such as,

“why did our high command, the General Staff, and Front commanders keep on with these pointless offensive operations? It was clear that the enemy, although thrown back from Moscow for a hundred kilometres, had not lost his combat worthiness, that he had sufficient fighting power to organise solid defences, and, in order to launch a decisive, ‘destructive’ assault, it was necessary to gather sufficient forces, equipped with enough armaments and equipment. All told, in January 1942, we did not have that. Why, in such circumstances did we not use the time we had won from the enemy to prepare our armed forces for the operations planned for the summer, but we continued to wear out, not the enemy, but ourselves, in offensives without perspective.”<sup>247</sup>

Rokossovskiy is sharply critical of Zhukov and Konev, for not persuading Stavka that it was foolish to attack an enemy who had dug in to defend his ground. In Rokossovskiy’s words “there was a kind of paradox. The stronger side defended, and the weaker attacked.”<sup>248</sup> In summary, Rokossovskiy memoirs argue that, at least in the Moscow region, not only Stalin, but senior military commanders such as Zhukov and Konev wilfully ignored reality and got Soviet troops slaughtered.



**Figure 38: Red Army Counteroffensive in the Moscow region: December 1941-March 1942.**

(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.325.)



Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs persistently but mildly expressed the refrain that *Stavka* was unrealistic in its expectations and did not give field commanders sufficient time to prepare operations. It is a good example of how Soviet Cold War historiography raised an issue in order to avoid it. However, Rokossovskiy's real memoirs are consistently critical of *Stavka* and the senior military command of the Red Army. Rokossovskiy's ire was directed at *Stavka's* wider strategic direction of the war, its unrealistic expectations about the Wehrmacht, constant operations, inadequate preparations and the meaningless massive loss of life, not just in 1941-42 but throughout the war.

Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs did discuss the Central Front's ambitious February 1943 operation against Army Group Centre, an operation driven by *Stavka's* strategic ambition after Stalingrad. The operation was acknowledged, but elsewhere it was written out of official Soviet historiography with Rokossovskiy censored memoirs allowed to raise it in order to obscure the true scope of the operation, thereby concealing the extent of *Stavka's* failure. Rokossovskiy's real memoirs are forthright about *Stavka's* lack of realism concerning the relative strengths of the Soviet and German forces. He argued that,

“in undertaking such a grandiose operation as a deep encirclement of the enemy's Orel grouping, *Stavka* committed a coarse misjudgement, having overestimated its own capabilities and underestimated those of the enemy.”<sup>249</sup>

Rokossovskiy reveals more about his disagreement with *Stavka* over the planning of the Belorussian Operation. A censored section on why he insisted on a two-pronged assault despite objections from Stalin, *Stavka* and the General Staff is restored.<sup>250</sup> Equally, he is scathing about the General Staff's planning of the East Prussian Operation. In effect, he accuses it of utter ineptitude involving an ignorant failure to heed the lessons of history concerning the relative merits of invading East Prussia from the south or the east.<sup>251</sup>

In summary, Rokossovskiy's relationship with *Stavka* involved conflict and disagreement. *Stavka* is condemned as unprepared in 1941, unrealistic in its expectations throughout the war, and lacking intellectual and strategic coherence in its

planning, preparation and delivery of operations. Above all, according to Rokossovskiy, *Stavka* was consistently over-optimistic about the Red Army's power and the Wehrmacht's weakness. Therefore, instead of well planned, clearly thought out and prepared operations that could have had a decisive impact upon the war, like Stalingrad, Rokossovskiy accused *Stavka* of repeatedly ordering a series of impetuous headlong charges, in pursuit of victories that ignored the Red Army's real combat power and the Wehrmacht's resilience. In short, *Stavka* was unrealistic in its expectations of Soviet operational commanders. Rokossovskiy felt *Stavka's* strategic grasp was inept and that even when it got it right, the prospects of decisive success were undermined by its impatience and lack of realism.

### **Antagonism in the High Command**

The personal rivalry within the Soviet high command during the Great Patriotic War is



**Figure 39: A. Yermenko**  
(<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

well known, partly because even the censored memoirs of the Soviet era were actually quite frank about the antagonism between certain Soviet commanders, especially in the context of victory. The censored memoirs show that at various stages of the war Rokossovskiy was in conflict with Zhukov, *Stavka* and the General Staff. There was rivalry between Rokossovskiy and Vatutin in the period

July 1942-December 1943. Equally, at Stalingrad, there was tension between Rokossovskiy and Malinovskiy. Similarly, there was distinct antagonism between Rokossovskiy and Yermenko during the Stalingrad Operation. Finally, Rokossovskiy makes it



**Figure 40: A.I. Antonov**  
(generals.dk)

clear that while he respected Antonov's intellect, Antonov, in clear contrast to Rokossovskiy, did not hold his ground against senior people and that his planning of the East Prussian Operation was badly flawed.<sup>252</sup> Furthermore, Rokossovskiy's uncensored memoirs reveal the extent to which animosity between leading Soviet commanders affected Soviet strategy even in the most famous engagements of the Great Patriotic War.



**Figure 41: The Red Army's Cosmic Strategic Plan: November-December 1942.**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.530.)

The Soviet censors were less charitable to posterity if personal conflict involved defeats, undermined operations, threatened famous reputations or tarnished heroic moments in the collective memory of the Great Patriotic War. Therefore, a significant passage of Rokossovskiy memoirs involving Vasilevskiy at Stalingrad was removed. It reveals the



**Figure 42: A.M. Vasilevskiy**  
(cache.gettyimages.com)

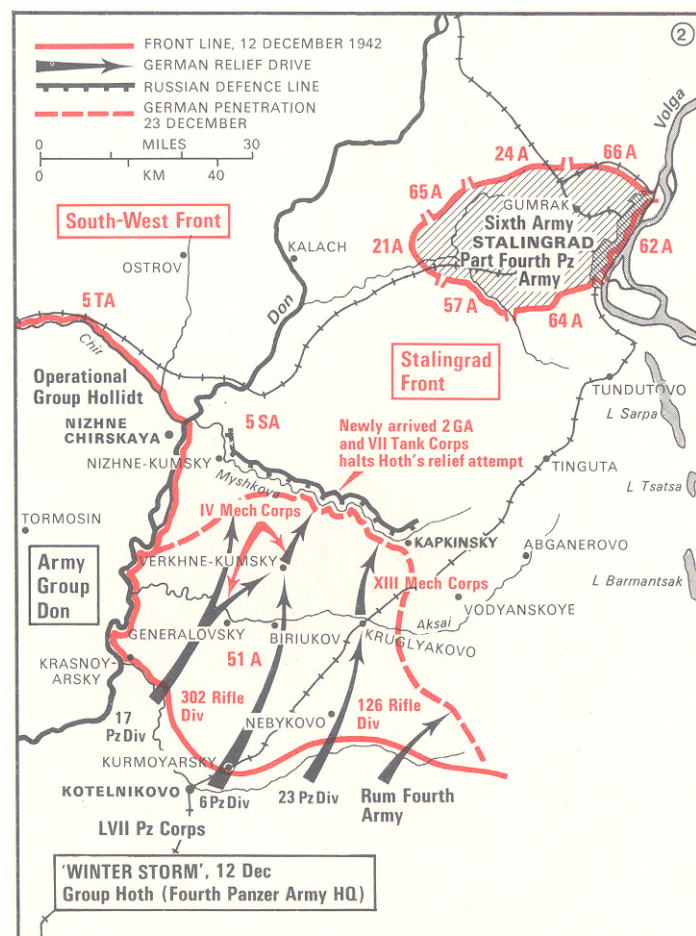
personal needle between them and Rokossovskiy's belief that *Stavka* representatives interfered with the effective conduct of operations. On 12<sup>th</sup> December 1942, in response to Operation Winterstorm, Vasilevskiy truncated Operation Saturn, the deep operation on Rostov, and by diverting 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army from the destruction of the German pocket at Stalingrad, effectively delayed its annihilation for a month, until January 1943. Furthermore, by not returning 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army, the Don Front was robbed of the ability to destroy the pocket rapidly. Rokossovskiy argued that "a brave variant would have opened up the prospect of significant future actions on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front."<sup>253</sup> This criticism was not entirely new for Rokossovskiy had indicated his dissent from Vasilevskiy's approach in *Stalingradskaya Epopeya*.<sup>254</sup> It was perhaps, no accident that just months later Vasilevskiy explained his decision to divert 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards and truncate Operation Saturn, in an article that contained a detailed account of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army's interception of Operation Winterstorm, southwest of Stalingrad.<sup>255</sup>

However, the scope of the criticism that Rokossovskiy unveiled in his memoirs and the implications of the argument he made, had significant implications for the historiography of Soviet strategy at Stalingrad. Rokossovskiy argued 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army should be used with 21<sup>st</sup> Army to destroy the encircled German troops. It should then be utilised for a deep operation on Rostov, designed to trap German forces belonging to Army Group A, south of the River Don. In Rokossovskiy's words,

"Stavka preferred the variant suggested by Vasilevskiy. They considered that he was more reliable...the operation was narrowed down because all attention and significant forces were diverted to the so-called Manstein group. That helped the Germans escape an even worse fate."<sup>256</sup>

Therefore, Rokossovskiy argues that by diverting 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army from Operation Ring and curtailing the depth of Operation Saturn, Vasilevskiy missed the opportunity to annihilate the Stalingrad pocket and trap German Army Group A in the Caucasus. <sup>257</sup>

Rokossovskiy's Don Front was subsequently criticised by the General Staff for its failure, in January 1943, to rapidly annihilate the German Stalingrad pocket. The clear implication was that the delay at Stalingrad undermined other Soviet operations in the winter of 1943, one of which was Rokossovskiy's failed February 1943 operation, a failure he blamed on *Stavka*'s unrealistic timetable. Furthermore, in February-March 1943, the Soviet forces hammered in Manstein's counter-offensive were mauled partly by the forces of German Army Group A, 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Army, a force that escaped from the Caucasus, as well as by German troops transferred across from western Europe.

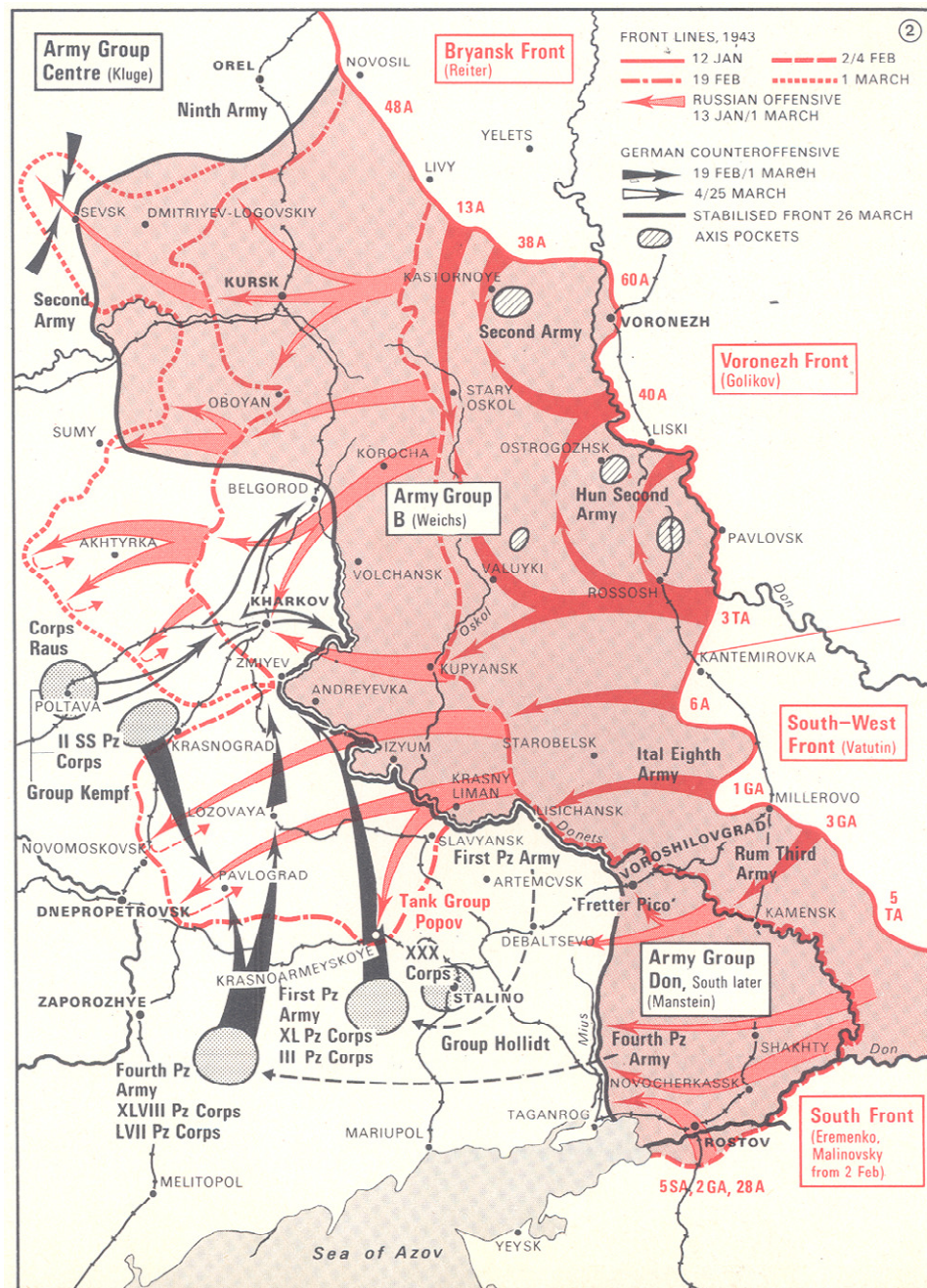


**Figure 43: German Operation Winterstorm and 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army.**  
(Times Atlas of the Second World War, P. Young (ed.), 1973, p.199.)

Rokossovskiy openly states that if Vasilevskiy had not been at Don Front headquarters, 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army would not have been diverted. Furthermore, that Operation Saturn, the deep operation designed to cut off German forces in the Don bend and the North Caucasus, would have gone ahead as planned. The implications of this argument about Soviet strategy at Stalingrad are profound. Rokossovskiy clearly implies that the blame for creating the strategic time and space that led to the events of February-March 1943 lies with Vasilevskiy and the General Staff. He is certainly suggesting that without the permanent diversion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army, time could have been saved *and* created at Stalingrad. Equally, a bold execution of Operation Saturn would have denied German Army Group A time to escape. This, in turn, would have denied 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Army to Manstein, thereby undermining the German counter-offensive of February-March 1943. Time would also have been created for the proper preparation and execution of Rokossovskiy's February 1943 offensive, an operation launched in an improvised and *ad hoc* manner that was largely curtailed in response to Manstein counter-offensive. Furthermore, time and space would have been created for the sustainable conduct of Operation Star and Operation Gallop,<sup>258</sup> the very Soviet offensives that were heavily attacked in February 1943, by the same German troops that had escaped from the Caucasus region and been transferred from western Europe.

The Manstein counter-offensive of February-March 1943 played havoc with Soviet operational and strategic calculations in spring 1943. Rokossovskiy is arguing that Vasilevskiy's decisions in December 1942 were not a piece of inspired operational art that secured the fate of Sixth German Army, but a major strategic blunder that rescued the Germans from an even bigger strategic catastrophe on the Eastern Front, the ramifications of which ran through March 1943, the Kursk Operation of July 1943 and beyond. In summary, Rokossovskiy's real memoirs contain a devastating critique of Soviet strategy, the Chief of the General Staff, *Stavka* and the influence of *Stavka* representatives during the winter of 1942-43. It is hardly surprising that an analysis which suggested that as well as a great victory, Stalingrad was a missed opportunity was not allowed to sully the collective national memory.





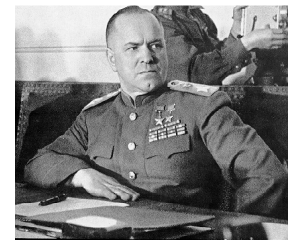
**Figure 44: Soviet offensives in January-February 1943 and German counter-offensive in February-March 1943**  
(Times Atlas of the Second World War, P. Young (ed.), 1973, p.203)

### Stavka Representatives

The system of *Stavka* representatives by which *Stavka*<sup>259</sup> imposed strategic direction on the war infuriated Rokossovskiy. Rokossovskiy felt *Stavka* denied sufficient autonomy to field commanders and did not place enough trust in their ability to achieve operational objectives as part of the overall military strategy. In both memoirs,

censored and real, Rokossovskiy repeatedly states that trust and confidence in the ability of commanders, at all levels, was central to effective command. In other areas of the censored memoirs, Rokossovskiy often hints that for him the question of trust was fundamentally linked to autonomy, but it is only in the uncensored memoirs that the full implications of this emerge.

During major operations Zhukov and Vasilevskiy were the main *Stavka* representatives although it was done by Voronov, Timoshenko and briefly, ironically, by Rokossovskiy, in December 1943. In both emotional and intellectual terms Rokossovskiy deeply resented *Stavka's* intrusion on the field commander's autonomy. He bristled under *Stavka's* shackles and seized every opportunity to assert his independence in the planning and conduct of operations. To Rokossovskiy, *Stavka* should plan, but field commanders should have autonomy in the creation and execution of operations designed to achieve *Stavka's* objectives.



**Figure 45: G.K. Zhukov**  
(univer.omsk.su)

“Such a representative, arriving at the headquarters of one of the fronts, more often than not, interfered in the front commander's business, and undermined him. In addition, he had no actual responsibility for the way things were done on the ground. That was entirely the front commander's responsibility, and often you got contradictory instructions on this or that question. From *Stavka*, you would get one. From its representative-another.....apart from that, the presence of a *Stavka* representative who was no less than the Deputy of the Supreme High Commander at the front commander's headquarters cramped initiative, tied the front commander's hands and feet, as it were. It also raised questions about how much faith *Stavka* had in the front commander.”<sup>260</sup>

Rokossovskiy practised what he preached: delegation was central to his style of leadership in a way that was entirely unnatural to most senior Soviet commanders.

It is not difficult to see why Rokossovskiy's true memoirs were suppressed during the Cold War. The post-Stalin consensus between the senior political and military figures of the Soviet Union, concerning the Great Patriotic War would have been shattered. In



the early 1990's short-lived archival access enabled scholars to present a more objective analysis of the Great Patriotic War. This historical revision revealed the Red Army's shocking incompetence, brutality and disregard for casualties, not just in the fight for survival in 1941-42, but in pursuit of victory between 1943-45. These historical revelations exploded the convenient myth that only Stalinist excess, not Party complicity and military incompetence lay behind the appalling defeats and sickening casualties.

Rokossovskiy's uncensored memoirs would have seriously de-stabilised the post-war Soviet political and military edifice and the official version of the war. In recent years access to Russian archives has been curtailed because unfettered access threatened to poison the collective memory of the Great Patriotic War, for many the one genuinely historic achievement of the Soviet Union. In an era of alarming, deeply unsettling change, perceived by many as national humiliation, the undermining of the national memory of harmonious political, military and social cohesion and heroic reputations of men like Zhukov,<sup>261</sup> perceived to be the saviours of their nation, has been a painful one. If it has been painful in the post Soviet era, one can imagine what the publication of Rokossovskiy's unexpurgated memoirs would have done to the Soviet political system, the Red Army and the national memory of the Great Patriotic War. Zhukov was a man of his times, Stalin's times, Hitler's times. The objective of national survival appeared to override any reservations about his use of the means, namely the Red Army. It was necessary and unavoidable.

The true historical significance of Rokossovskiy's memoirs, his style of leadership and operational command is that while a war of national survival was unavoidable, the manner in which it was fought was not inevitable. Therefore, an uncensored version of Rokossovskiy's memoirs raised very awkward questions about the Soviet military elite's conduct of the war. A censored version, amended to support, not challenge, the post-war orthodoxy offered the opportunity to validate the Red Army's achievement by securing the endorsement of the 'people's marshal', a man renowned for his traditional martial virtues. It is worth remembering that Rokossovskiy was the victor of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, Belorussia and East Prussia, the man who had commanded the Red

Army's victory parade. This was no ordinary Red Army officer and these were no ordinary memoirs. It is hardly surprising the Soviet authorities suppressed Rokossovskiy's uncensored memoirs: this was the public custodian of the Red Army's ethos; its untarnished marshal challenging the received version of the Great Patriotic War.

Rokossovskiy's real memoirs portray a Soviet commander with the self-confidence and independent judgement to repeatedly challenge the basic strategic, operational and tactical direction of the war. Rokossovskiy criticisms are incisive and thoughtful, challenging and occasionally revising the received version of grand Soviet historical events in a new light. In the fullness of time history has invariably, if not entirely, endorsed Rokossovskiy's criticisms of Stavka and the Soviet high command. In summary, Rokossovskiy's memoirs are an important historical document. It is quite clear that in terms of his memoirs, style of leadership and operational command Rokossovskiy is no minor footnote in history.

### **The Lost Rokossovskiy**

Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy's real memoirs do not tell the whole story of Rokossovskiy's war. In a series of self-published volumes, analysed and studied by the present author, Glantz has demonstrated that several operations conducted by Rokossovskiy were removed from the public record of the Great Patriotic War. Indeed, many of these operations are not discussed or even mentioned in the real version of Rokossovskiy's memoirs.

The Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation (5<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 1942) was conducted by Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army and Lieutenant-General Pavel Alekseyevich Belov's (1897-1962) 61<sup>st</sup> Army. Zhukov, as the Western Front's commander personally supervised the operation that also involved the new, full strength, 10<sup>th</sup> Armoured Corps, a relatively rare asset in June 1942. This indicates a significant operation. Yet, Rokossovskiy's old memoirs do not openly discuss this operation. In fact they 'misplace' the Zhizdra-Bolkov Operation and deliberately or otherwise, do not really analyse the two distinct operations conducted by 16<sup>th</sup> Army in this area, in early summer 1942. The first operation around the Zhizdra is



“the Front Commander arrived in person to observe the fighting, accompanied by the Air Force Commander. Our neighbours, the 10<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Armies, had been assigned only to pin down the enemy by stepping up activity. The artillery support was somewhat less than in May as the assault frontage was wider. There were fewer tanks, but this in Zhukov’s view was compensated by aircraft, which would be participating in considerable force.”<sup>266</sup>

The presence of airpower, armour, Zhukov and the commander of the air force is indicative of a highly significant operation, particularly as the true date of this operation was 5<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> July 1942. This was the same time as major Soviet counter-offensives co-ordinated by Vasilevskiy, involving several tank corps and 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army, were trying to attack the northern wing of the German forces that had recently launched Operation Blau on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1942. Therefore, the Zhizdra-Bolhkov Operation of July 1942 was significant enough to involve Zhukov at a time of great crisis further south, on the Voronezh Axis. It also explains why Rokossovskiy did not actually take up command of the Bryansk Front until 17<sup>th</sup> July 1942, even though he was officially appointed on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1942. This would not have happened if the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation was an insignificant skirmish in June 1942, not as we now know, a highly significant Soviet operation of early July.1942.

According to Glantz, the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation of June 1942 was never adequately discussed in any official Soviet publication. However, it was examined in secret Soviet sources.<sup>267</sup> These sources have recently been published in two forms, a CD Rom and in *Soviet Documents on the Use of War Experience*.<sup>268</sup> A comparative reading of Rokossovskiy’s memoirs and the newly available secret accounts indicate they are both discussing the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation of July 1942. These indicate that on 6<sup>th</sup> July July 1942, the first day of the offensive, 16<sup>th</sup> Army achieved surprise.<sup>269</sup> In Rokossovskiy’s censored memoirs, surprise was achieved on the first day of the May 1942 attack. In July 1942,

“the situation urgently dictated taking advantage of the enemy’s confusion and quickly engaging the tank corps in battle.....the tank corps was engaged only by the evening of 7 July. As a result of poor reconnaissance of the

terrain and direction of movement, the corps' first echelons were tied up in a swamp. The entire night of 7-8 July was spent dragging out the vehicles.....thus as a result of great shortcomings in use and leadership of the tank corps, its commitment to battle on 8 July had no effect on the changing situation.”<sup>270</sup>

In Rokossovskiy's censored memoirs the late May 1942 attack in the Zhizdra area creates the opportunity for success and,

“now was the time to bring in the armoured corps. However, it failed to show up. It had been ‘smooth on paper, but they forgot about the gullies’, as a Russian saying has it. The corps approach routes crossed a paltry brook with marshy banks, and the tanks had got bogged down there. The commanders had not reconnoitred the terrain before drawing up the plan, the result being a delay that tipped the scales against a successfully launched operation. This unfortunate event taught us all a good lesson for the future. It took two hours for the corps to extricate itself from the bog and reach the battlefield; two hours which the Germans did not waste.”<sup>271</sup>

Therefore, what is presented in Rokossovskiy's old memoirs as the May 1942 attack was really the major Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation of 5<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> July 1942.

It is possible Rokossovskiy was concealing his own failings but he openly admits he gave his subordinates too much freedom and did not scrutinise their plan. However, Rokossovskiy's new memoirs discuss the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation in considerable detail as well as Zhukov's presence and his alleged failure to properly communicate his plan to army commanders such as Rokossovskiy.<sup>272</sup> Glantz suggests Zhizdra-Bolkhov was deleted from public Russian sources to hide the shortcomings of the Red Army.<sup>273</sup> In May-July 1942, the Red Army suffered a series of massive reverses. In the Cold War it was easy to blame Stalin and the malign influence of political commissars. However, the Red Army's defeats in May 1942 at Kharkhov, eastern and western Crimea<sup>274</sup> as well as the disastrous armoured counter-offensive, north of Voronezh, in early July 1942, owed as much, if not more, to military incompetence, as they did to Stalin.

In early July 1942, the Red Army finally began to trade space for time against the Germans, in contrast to Stalin's 1941 policy of stand, fight and be slaughtered. The Red Army's strategic retreat in the face of Operation Blau has been presented as the rational product of sane military strategy, formulated by senior military commanders and endorsed by a chastened Stalin.<sup>275</sup> Yet, in July 1942, the Red Army actually had no choice but to retreat. In May-June 1942, the Wehrmacht had repeatedly demonstrated its superiority. The Red Army had either not learned the lessons of 1941 or had not applied them. In spring 1942, the Red Army, driven by senior military commanders such as Timoshenko and Zhukov, encouraged by Stalin, charged at the Wehrmacht and was repeatedly thrashed, suffering immense losses. Therefore, even if it had been competent enough, in the early stages of Operation Blau Timoshenko's South-Western Front had insufficient troops to confront the Wehrmacht.<sup>276</sup> The South-Western Front had been smashed at Kharkov in May 1942, an operation enthusiastically endorsed by Timoshenko, not imposed on a reluctant Red Army by Stalin.

As Rokossovskiy's real memoirs show, senior Red Army commanders repeatedly overestimated the Red Army's power vis-à-vis the Wehrmacht. This suggests the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation was an incompetent operation launched by an inexperienced army learning to fight against a formidable enemy. In all probability the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation was suppressed to protect Zhukov's reputation and the post-war image of the Red Army. The historical record of Operation Mars,<sup>277</sup> in November 1942, was also suppressed to preserve Zhukov's reputation.<sup>278</sup> Similarly, Rokossovskiy's comments on the Moscow counter-offensive and the Red Army's response to Operation Blau, north-west of Voronezh, in July 1942 were removed. This suggests the censors were acutely aware of the need to protect the personal and professional reputation of senior commanders and the Red Army. In summary, this strongly suggests that the primary catalyst of Zhizdra-Bolkhov's misrepresentation in Rokossovskiy's memoirs was the censor, not the author.



In addition, Glantz has demonstrated that in July-August 1942, Rokossovskiy's Bryansk Front <sup>279</sup> and Vatutin's Voronezh Front undertook expensive, ineffectual military operations against German forces. These operations are not mentioned in Rokossovskiy's memoirs.<sup>280</sup> Rokossovskiy's Bryansk Front was the minor player but it was ineffective. It is possible these operations were forgotten in order to protect Rokossovskiy's reputation. However, Rokossovskiy was prepared to curtail operations that endured heavy casualties for little gain. In contrast, Vatutin was reprimanded by *Stavka* for continuing offensives beyond the point they had ceased to be effective. It is more likely these operations were 'ignored' because they reveal the Red Army's ongoing military incompetence in the summer of 1942.

### **Belorussia: Autumn 1943**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1943, *Stavka* issued directives that determined the future operational and strategic direction of the Red Army's strategy until spring and summer of 1944. These strategic decisions had profound implications for Rokossovskiy and the subsequent post-war literature of the Great Patriotic War. The *Stavka*, much to Rokossovskiy's chagrin, ordered him to transfer 13<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Armies, to the Voronezh Front and altered Rokossovskiy's axis of advance, moving it north-east into Belorussia, away from the Ukraine. The Bryansk Front was disbanded and its three armies, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup>, incorporated into Rokossovskiy's Central Front.<sup>281</sup> The directive also assigned Rokossovskiy strategic objectives that dominated his conduct of operations until July 1944. In essence,

“The Central Front's mission is to defeat the enemy Zhlobin-Bobruisk grouping and capture Minsk, the capital of Belorussia, by delivering its main attack in the general direction of Zhlobin, Bobruisk, and Minsk. Allocate a separate group of forces for an offensive along the northern bank of the Pripiat' River toward Kalinkovichi and Zhitkovichi. The immediate mission is to capture the Bykhov, Zhlobin, and Kalinkovichi line and subsequently reach the Minsk, Slutsk and Sluch' River line.”<sup>282</sup>

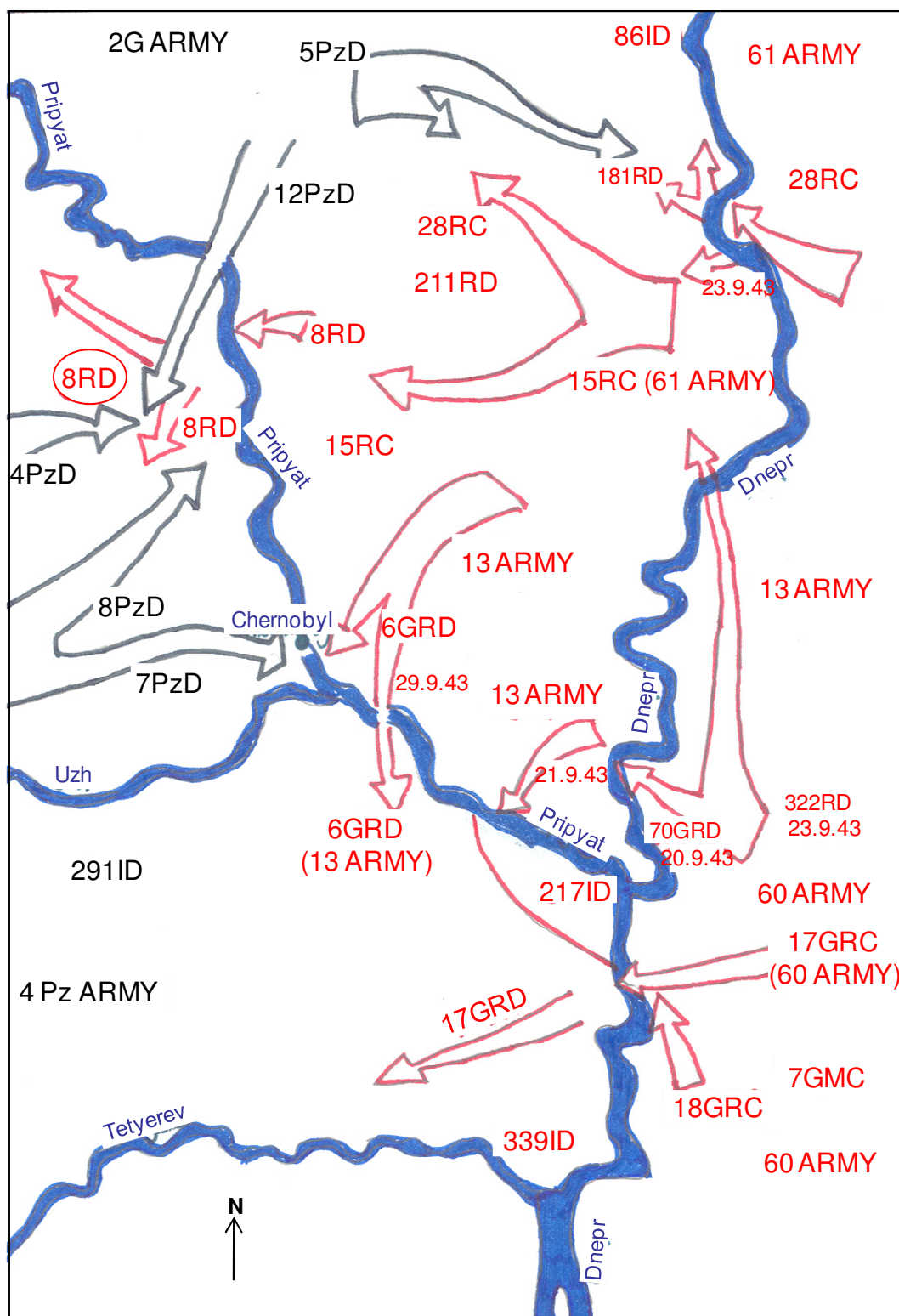
These were significant operational and strategic objectives. The strategic objectives were not actually achieved until July 1944. Yet, in Soviet histories, journals and



memoir literature the Belorussian campaign is significantly under-reported. In Rokossovskiy's memoirs, censored and uncensored, late November 1943-April 1944 is dealt with in a few lines. In the post-war era there was a concerted attempt to downplay the significance of Soviet operations in Belorussia from October 1943-April 1944. Indeed, a whole series of operations that Rokossovskiy undertook in Belorussia, during spring 1944, have been overlooked. In summary, official Soviet historiography is less than candid about Rokossovskiy's operations in Belorussia.

As Glantz reveals the Central Front's Chernobyl-Radomysl Operation (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> October 1943) and the substantial German counter-attack (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> October 1943) have been written out of Soviet history.<sup>283</sup> These events are not discussed in either version of Rokossovskiy's memoirs, nor are they covered in official Soviet publications.<sup>284</sup> Yet, they were of considerable significance. In strategic terms the Central Front's crossing of the Dnepr<sup>285</sup> threatened to split Army Group Centre and Army Group South. In operational terms it threatened German forces in Kiev. However, in tactical terms 13<sup>th</sup> Army was struggling hold the bridgehead. Nevertheless, *Stavka* ordered the Central Front to expand its bridgehead and drive west, to the north of Kiev. Simultaneously, further south, closer to Kiev, the Central Front's 60<sup>th</sup> Army was also to move out of its bridgehead on the Dnepr.

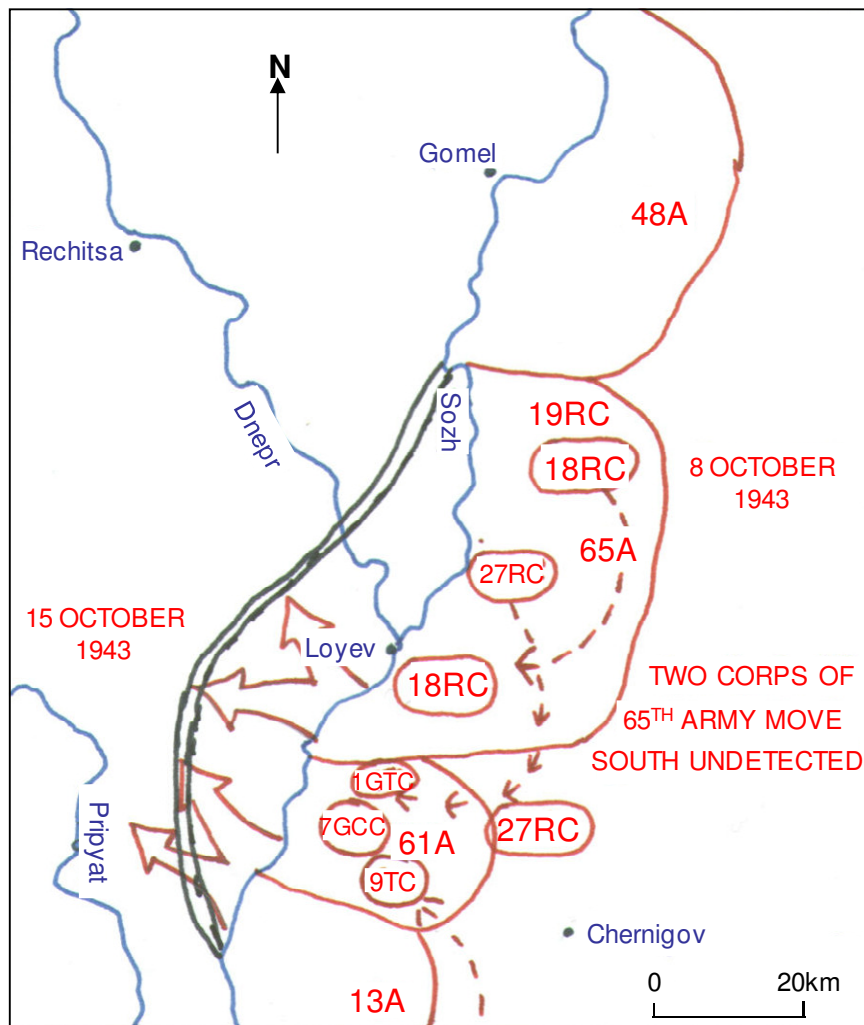
On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1943, 13<sup>th</sup> Army and 60<sup>th</sup> Army undertook the Chernobyl-Radomysl Operation designed to expand the bridgehead, split German forces and outflank German troops in Kiev. It was a massive gamble, and despite initial progress, after 72 hours, the Germans reacted ferociously. In the north, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer Divisions, part of Army Group Centre, struck south against 13<sup>th</sup> Army's northern shoulder, while further south, three German divisions crashed into 60<sup>th</sup> Army's northern flank. This German counter-stroke of 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> October 1943, cut off Soviet forces moving west, split the Central Front's bridgehead and forced 13<sup>th</sup> Army in a bitter fight to preserve the Dnepr bridgehead. It was saved by Rokossovskiy's foresight in giving 13<sup>th</sup> Army an entire anti-tank artillery brigade and the urgent committal of 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps.<sup>286</sup>



**Figure 48: Forcing of the Dnepr and the struggle for the Chernobyl Bridgehead, 20 Sep - 8 Oct 1943**

(Stephen Walsh: adapted from David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles*, Vol. V, Part Two, p.567.)

In Belorussia, Soviet historiography has lauded Rokossovskiy's Loyev Operation on the Dnepr 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October 1943. It is reported, accurately enough, as a burst of operational brilliance deliberately curtailed by Rokossovskiy. Soviet historiography has also presented Rokossovskiy's Gomel-Rechitsa Operation (10<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> November 1943) as another burst of creative, imaginative operational art. In fact, as Glantz shows, far from being brief, isolated spurts of activity, these operations were part of a wider Gomel-Rechitsa Offensive that began on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1943,<sup>287</sup> two weeks earlier than generally acknowledged, in pursuit of the operational objectives laid down by *Stavka* on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1943. Furthermore, the Belorussian Front's active operations continued well into December 1943, they did not cease on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1943.



**Figure 49: The Loyev Operation: 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October 1943**  
(Stephen Walsh: adapted from Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, p.255.)

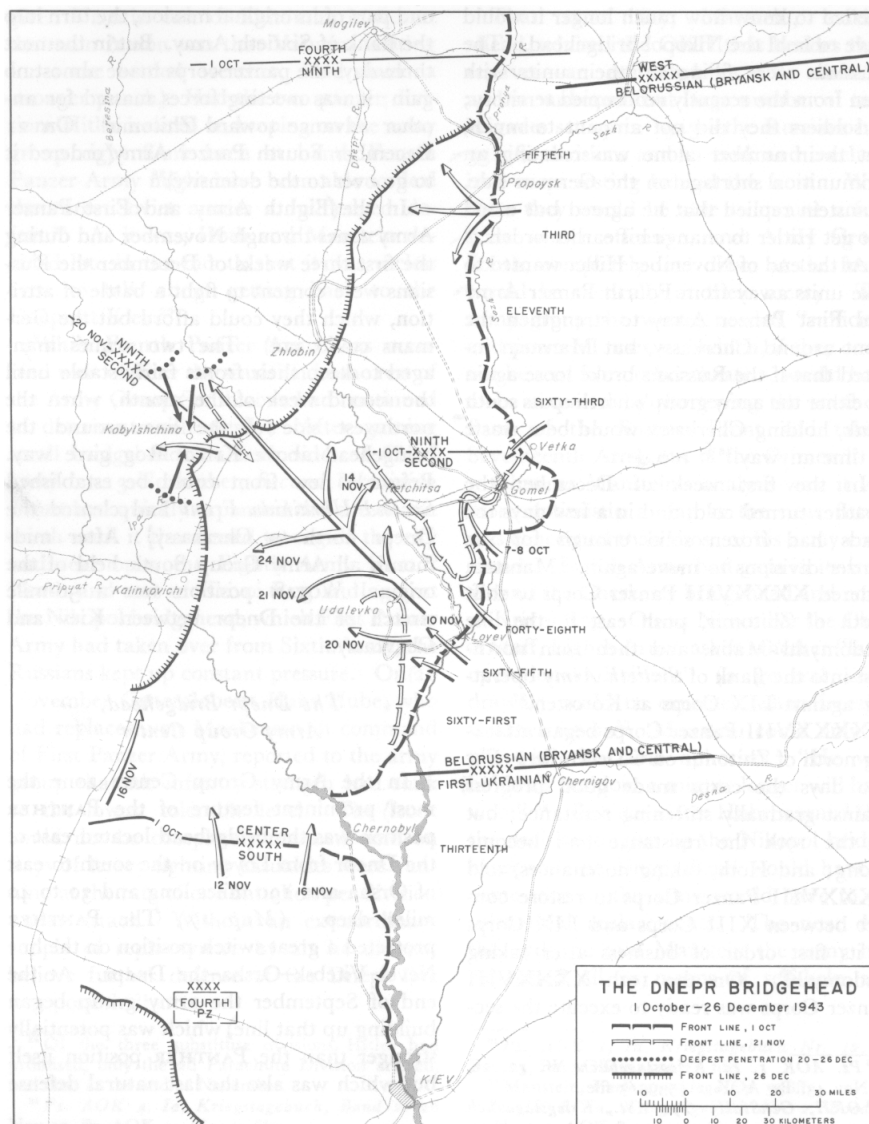
This, the extended Gomel-Rechitsa Offensive began in early October 1943, not on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1943. It did not get off to an auspicious start as Belov's 61<sup>st</sup> Army failed to expand its Dnepr bridgehead it had first won in the last days of September 1943. In response, Rokossovskiy terminated the operation on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1943. This was the background to 65<sup>th</sup> Army's brilliant operation at Loyev from 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October 1943. Soviet official histories, journals<sup>288</sup> and memoirs including Rokossovskiy's memoirs, wax lyrical about the Loyev Operation, a genuinely brilliant creative response to the difficult terrain and the close proximity of rivers such as the Pronia, Sozh and Dnepr. However, Soviet literature also indicates that Rokossovskiy curtailed the Loyev Operation on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943. In fact, active operations continued until the end of October 1943.<sup>289</sup> These operations caused consternation within the German high command and came very close to major operational success. However, there is no sustained record of these operations in Soviet official histories, journal literature or memoirs.<sup>290</sup> The only source is an obscure unit history.<sup>291</sup>

Indeed, Rokossovskiy's real, uncensored memoirs do not discuss the extended fighting of late October 1943. Rokossovskiy suggests that on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943 "I decided to halt the offensive temporarily."<sup>292</sup> As Glantz demonstrates, 61<sup>st</sup> Army had an important role in the Loyev Operation,<sup>293</sup> but Rokossovskiy reduces it to "units of the 61<sup>st</sup> Army, operating to the south, on the western bank of the Dnieper, also went into action."<sup>294</sup> Similarly, although 65<sup>th</sup> Army's progress is recorded in detail, Rokossovskiy delivers a cryptic report on 61<sup>st</sup> Army "which also improved its positions on the western bank of the Dnieper by sending its main forces from the eastern bank."<sup>295</sup>

### **The First Kalinokovichi Operation: 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December 1943**

Soviet histories, journals and Rokossovskiy's memoirs also fail to reflect the scale and significance of the Belorussian Front's assault on Kalinokovichi in December 1943. These operations of early December 1943 are not discussed by Batov<sup>296</sup> even though his 65<sup>th</sup> Army was heavily involved and Kalinokovichi was a key German communications and supply point. In late October and early November 1943, Rokossovskiy had briefly threatened it and provoked an immediate German reaction.<sup>297</sup> In early December 1943,

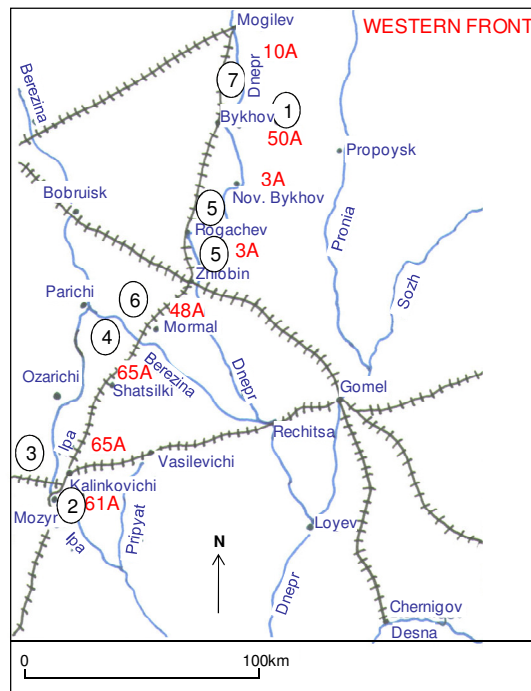
once again Rokossovskiy created the opportunity to take Kalinokovivchi, but his mobile forces, two cavalry corps', 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps and 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps did not have the fighting power to take an objective the Germans regarded as pivotal to their position in south-eastern Belorussia, a vital link between Army Group Centre and Army Group South. In short, Rokossovskiy had no forces capable of conducting sustained deep operations in Belorussia, because in line with *Stavka's* strategic priorities, all five Soviet tank armies were in the Ukraine. It is worth recalling that according to *Stavka's* directive of 1<sup>st</sup> October 1943, Kalinkovich was a key operational objective for Rokossovskiy.



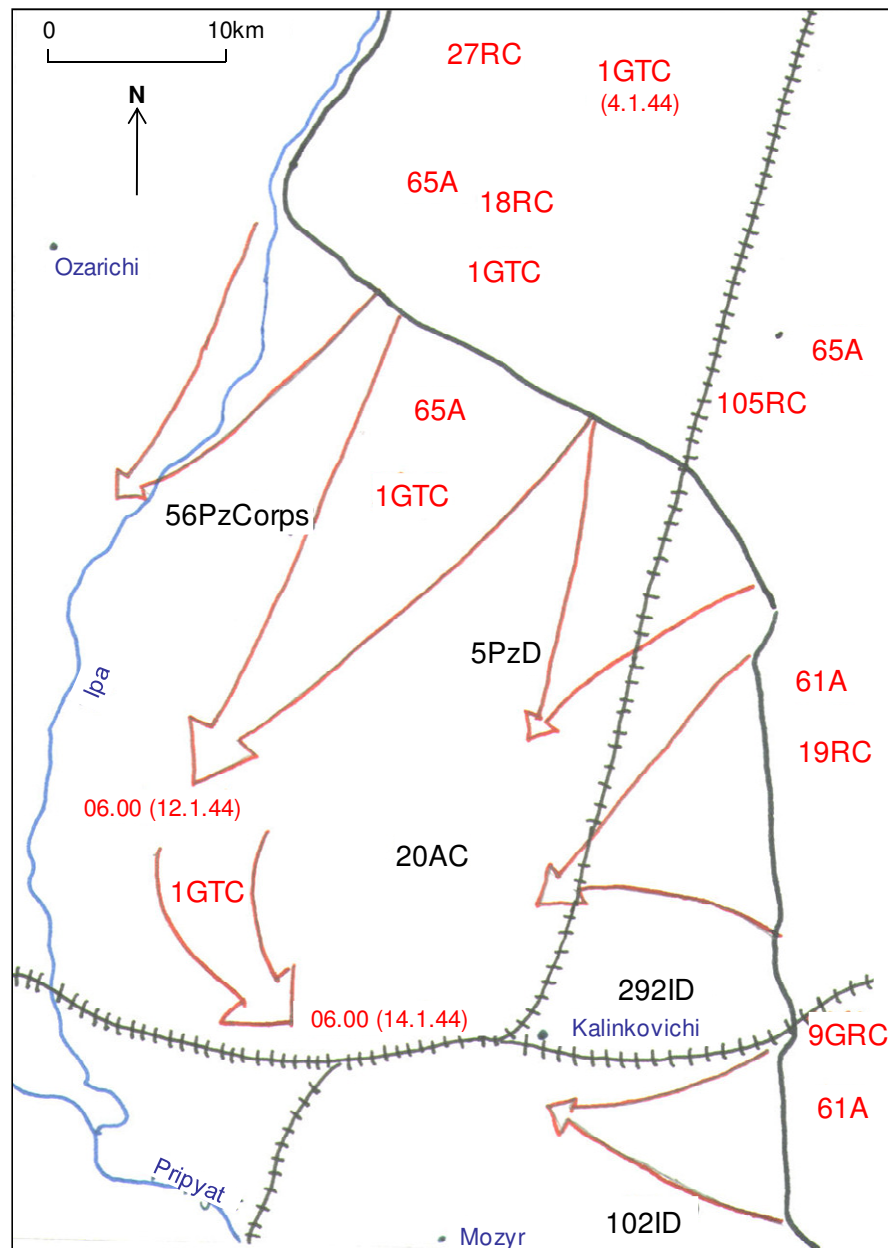
**Figure 50: The Gomel-Rechitsa Operation 10<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> November 1943.**  
(Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, 1987, p.190.)

## **Winter 1944: Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Vanishing Act**

However, the patchy coverage of Rokossovskiy's operations in autumn 1943 is positively loquacious in comparison with the disappearance of an entire series of operations conducted by Rokossovskiy in spring 1944. There is no official recognition<sup>298</sup> of these operations and no record of them in Rokossovskiy's memoirs, censored or uncensored. However, Glantz has established that Rokossovskiy conducted several operations in Belorussia during spring 1944.<sup>299</sup> These operations were designed to harass the Germans, improve the Belorussian Front's position and divert German resources. They involved one or at most two armies, and were not designed to achieve decisive operational success. Rokossovskiy's aim was to keep the Germans off balance through a series of probes designed to make German tactical positions untenable, thereby undermining the operational coherence of their defences. Rokossovskiy handled them with the balance of creativity, harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre and operational synchronisation that were the hallmarks of his operational command on the Eastern Front. In summary, these unknown operations do not contradict the main argument of this thesis rather they endorse and sustain its claim that Rokossovskiy was a highly creative and imaginative commander.



**Figure 51: Rokossovskiy's Lost Belorussian Operations: Winter 1944.**  
(Stephen Walsh)



**Figure 52: The Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation (8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> January 1944).**  
 (Stephen Walsh: adapted from Glantz, *Forgotten Battles*, Vol VI, Part Two, 2004, p.554.)

These operations began with the Byhkov Operation (3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> January 1944) conducted by the Belorussian Front's 3<sup>rd</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Armies. The aim was to eliminate a German bridgehead on the Dnepr. It was also designed to distract German attention from the more substantial Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation,<sup>300</sup> The Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation (8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> January 1944)<sup>301</sup> conducted by 61<sup>st</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> Armies, featuring a deep operation by 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps and 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, supported by 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps finally drove the Germans from Kalinkovichi. This was a major, not a minor operation, involving over 200,000 troops,<sup>302</sup> but there is hardly any trace of it in Soviet<sup>303</sup> or western literature. Rokossovskiy's imaginative use of his mobile groups and the prolonged German resistance at Kalinkovichi indicate this was a key operational position and a significant Soviet success.

Yet, the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation is not discussed in detail in Rokossovskiy's memoirs or any other Soviet publications. A brief account of what is termed the Kalinkovichi-Mozyr Offensive Operation (8<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> January 1944) is given in the 1997 version of Rokossovskiy's memoirs. The dates of the offensive are different to those presented by Glantz, but no details of the location and duration of the fighting are presented.<sup>304</sup> Therefore, despite its success, the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation was not recorded, in detail, in any public sources with the exception of one obscure unit history.<sup>305</sup> It was discussed by Panov in 1978<sup>306</sup> but its absence from mainstream Soviet literature is bizarre given that it was a substantial Soviet operational victory.

The Ozarichi-Ptich Operation (16<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> January 1944) is not discussed by Rokossovskiy<sup>307</sup> but was mentioned briefly by Batov.<sup>308</sup> The Belorussian Front's forces advanced 15-30 kilometres and took Ozarichi. The operation was "successful but nonetheless overlooked by Russian history."<sup>309</sup> It was conducted simultaneously with the Parichi-Bobruisk Operation (16<sup>th</sup> January-23<sup>rd</sup> February 1944) carried out by 48<sup>th</sup> Army and 65<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>310</sup> According to Glantz, "few records document the course of operations during this offensive."<sup>311</sup> The Parichi area had witnessed a major German counter-attack in December 1943. It had left a salient protruding into the Belorussian Front's lines. It also meant German forces sat astride the route to Bobruisk, a major operational objective for Rokossovskiy. Indeed,



“the fact was that this axis lay at the intersection of two important main railroad lines: Zhlobin-Bobruisk and Bobruisk-Parichi. The enemy understood that if the Soviet force reached these railroad lines, further resistance in this region would be almost impossible and useless.”<sup>312</sup>



**Figure 53: P.L. Romanenko**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

In the first phase, 16<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January 1944, Romanenko’s 48<sup>th</sup> Army made little headway against fierce German opposition.<sup>313</sup> After a short pause, Rokossovskiy renewed the attack on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1944 but against strong German opposition, Rokossovskiy halted the assault on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1944. In the third phase of fighting (14<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> February 1944) “as a result of combat in the difficult conditions of the forested and swampy terrain, the army (48<sup>th</sup> Army) did not fulfil its overall combat mission but achieved some tactical successes by the end of February.”<sup>314</sup>

However, Rokossovskiy had attracted German reserves into the area. This meant when he launched the Zhlobin-Rogachev Operation (21-26<sup>th</sup> February 1944), conducted by 3<sup>rd</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Armies, it was an outstanding success. This is not a lost operation.<sup>315</sup> There is a concise account of the operation in the chronology that accompanies the 1997 edition of Rokossovskiy’s memoirs.<sup>316</sup> Equally, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army’s commander, Gorbатов left an extensive account of the operation.<sup>317</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that the secret of its success lay partly in the obscure Parichi-Bobruisk Operation is not well known. The Parichi-Bobruisk Operation is not mentioned in the 1997 memoirs but the relative timing of these operations was designed to link them and maximise the chances of success in the Rogachev-Zhlobin Operation.

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1944, Rokossovskiy’s 48<sup>th</sup> Army’s began the Mormal-Parichi Operation (24<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> February 1944).<sup>318</sup> It overlapped with the Zhlobin-Rogachev Operation and was designed to support as well as capitalise on it. It was relatively successful, certainly in comparison with the Parichi-Bobruisk Operation, with 48<sup>th</sup> Army advancing from “2-18 kilometers along a 20-kilometer front, carving another

sizeable chunk of territory from German defences west of the Dnepr river.”<sup>319</sup> The final assault carried out by Rokossovskiy’s troops in the lost spring of Belorussia was conducted by 10<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Armies to expand the Dnepr bridgeheads in the Bykhov region.<sup>320</sup> These battles were not successful: in five days of fierce fighting 50<sup>th</sup> Army made little progress.

These operations stretched German resources in south-eastern Belorussia to the limit. The Germans had excellent defences and helpful terrain that together with their tactical prowess and Rokossovskiy’s lack of deep operational manoeuvre groups, prevented major Soviet victories. Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy adapted his ends to his means and did not pursue operational victories beyond the capabilities of the Belorussian Front. The deliberately linked, successive and simultaneous nature of his attacks enabled Rokossovskiy to make use of his superior overall numbers and wear down the Germans in south-eastern Belorussia. In this respect Rokossovskiy might be said to have



**Figure 54: Rokossovskiy**  
(Shukman, 1993)

conducted a campaign of attrition but the operational and tactical elements in winter 1944, as in autumn 1943, were notable for their creativity and imagination, certainly in comparison with the performance of other Soviet commanders in Belorussia. In common with other Soviet forces in Belorussia, Rokossovskiy’s *front* failed to secure its strategic objectives, but despite setbacks and tactical defeats,

Rokossovskiy did achieve several operational objectives assigned to him on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1943.

Rokossovskiy’s success in Belorussia raised several awkward questions for the post-war literature of the Soviet Union. First, why did other Soviet commanders in Belorussia, achieve far less at much greater cost? Second, what could Rokossovskiy have achieved if *Stavka* had provided him with more resources? Third, was *Stavka* actually correct in its strategic prioritisation of the Ukraine? Four, why did *Stavka* set Rokossovskiy such unrealistic objectives in October 1943? Five, why did Rokossovskiy hardly mention these operations in either version of his memoirs? Six, what induced official Soviet historiography to delete successful, never mind failed operations, from the historical

record, including Rokossovskiy's uncensored memoirs? During winter 1944, Soviet historiography records just one operation by Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Front: the Zhlobin-Rogachev Operation. Rokossovskiy's memoirs, perhaps in a pointed, cryptic fit of pique, make no mention at all, of the Zhlobin-Rogachev Operation. Did Rokossovskiy deliberately leave these operations out or was he forced to? Were Rokossovskiy's resources greater than he conceded and the operations left out to protect his reputation? This seems unlikely. Rokossovskiy did not achieve his strategic objectives in Belorussia but at the operational level, as several German sources suggest, Rokossovskiy had regularly outwitted and out-fought the Germans in south-eastern Belorussia.<sup>321</sup> Rokossovskiy had nothing to hide, indeed quite the opposite.

In the period October 1943-April 1944, Soviet military strategy chose the Ukraine over Belorussia, but this did not diminish *Stavka's* expectations of Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Front. During the Cold War, by engaging in sparse, occasionally downright misleading coverage of the Belorussian campaign, Soviet historiography sought to create the impression that Belorussia was a relatively minor theatre of operations. In fact, as the *Stavka* documents show and the official histories quietly concede, almost in passing, the Belorussian campaign was not a strategic holding operation, orchestrated by *Stavka* to release resources for the Ukraine before returning to Belorussia in summer 1944. On the contrary, in October 1943, Rokossovskiy was ordered to achieve extremely ambitious objectives with limited resources, resources that were significantly inferior to Red Army forces in the Ukraine.

It seems clear that the Belorussian campaign was considerably more significant than official post-war Soviet literature was prepared to concede. The idea that Rokossovskiy's forces sat on their hands for over four months and conducted just one, short operation, the Zhlobin-Rogachev Operation, is absurd. As Rokossovskiy testified in his memoirs, *Stavka* was notoriously over-ambitious and demanded more or less constant operations. The urgent German response to Rokossovskiy's operations in autumn 1943 indicates the Germans considered Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Front a significant operational, potentially strategic threat. Why did *Stavka* fail to appreciate the possibilities in Belorussia if the Germans did? Why did it fail to support

Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Front once it became clear the Germans were extremely concerned about the link between Army Group Centre and Army Group South. Why did *Stavka* not reduce Sokolovskiy's Western Front to a holding role and switch resources to Rokossovskiy? By December 1943, Sokolovskiy was presiding over an attritional stalemate in eastern Belorussia, while opportunities created by Rokossovskiy went begging in south-eastern Belorussia.

Therefore, in its strategic planning and conduct of the Belorussian campaign of 1943-44, *Stavka* had much to hide. First, Rokossovskiy's success and the German reaction raised the possibility the Red Army could have split the Eastern Front by dividing Army Group Centre and Army Group South. Second, *Stavka* clearly set objectives that were far beyond the means of Rokossovskiy's forces. Third, the Belorussian Operation of June-July 1944 actually achieved objectives set by *Stavka* in October 1943, objectives that might have been achieved earlier if *Stavka* had given Rokossovskiy more forces. Fourth, Rokossovskiy's intelligent and imaginative command of the Belorussian Front formed an embarrassing contrast with other Soviet commanders in Belorussia.

In recent years modern historical opinion has suggested that the Belorussian campaign of 1943-44 was deliberately misrepresented to protect the reputation of other Soviet commanders, mainly Sokolovskiy. In October 1943, in three separate phases of fighting



**Figure 55: V. Sokolovskiy**

(Photograph by Margaret Bourke-White, images.google.com)

Sokolovskiy's Western Front had relentlessly attacked and failed to penetrate the German defences east of Orsha, in eastern Belorussia.<sup>322</sup> In the middle of October 1943, *Stavka* strongly reprimanded Sokolovskiy for his handling of the Western Front.<sup>323</sup> Nevertheless, Sokolovskiy was permitted to try again. In five days of fighting, 14-19<sup>th</sup> November 1943, despite massive superiority in firepower and manpower, the Western Front advanced between 400-4,000 metres. Orsha was

not taken. The Western Front suffered 38,756 casualties including 9,167 dead and 29,589 wounded. *Stavka* ordered the Western Front to continue: the assault was renewed from 30<sup>th</sup> November-5<sup>th</sup> December 1943. In six days fighting, the Western

Front again failed to take Orsha. It advanced between 1-2 kilometres and incurred 22, 870 casualties including 5, 611 dead and 17, 259 wounded.<sup>324</sup> These failures carried on into 1944. In February-March 1944 around Vitebsk, in conjunction with Bagramyan's 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front, Sokolovskiy presided over a further series of failed operations, followed by more defeats east of Orsha in March 1944. In the end, on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1944, *Stavka* finally removed Sokolovskiy from command.<sup>325</sup>

During the Cold War this record of incompetent, bloody failure, was removed from public view. However, in recent years, General Makhmut Gareyev, a former Chief of the Soviet General Staff, who served in the Western Front during 1943-1944, has exposed the scope, scale and failure of the 1943-1944 Soviet Belorussian campaign. Gareyev explicitly compared Sokolovskiy's Western Front's conduct of operations in eastern Belorussia, between October-December 1943, with that of Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Front during the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation. He concluded,

“These two *fronts* conducted their operations in very difficult operational situations and terrain conditions and with roughly comparable correlations of forces with the enemy. However, if the Western Front's forces did not advance and did not fulfil their missions, in spite of all the difficulties, the Belorussian Front's forces broke open the enemy's defences along a front of about 100 kilometers, advanced to a depth of up to 130 kilometers, captured the cities of Gomel' and Rechitsa, and liberated tens of other populated points in southeastern Belorussia. Therefore, the quality of preparations, the organization of combat operations, and the skill in commanding and controlling forces determined the outcomes of these operations.”<sup>326</sup>

A secret *Stavka* commission condemned Sokolovskiy.<sup>327</sup> The *front* command was cited as “the chief reason for the unsuccessful operations in the Western Front.”<sup>328</sup> It concluded that “Army General Sokolovskiy has not risen to the occasion as a *front* commander”<sup>329</sup> and “instead of learning from its mistakes and eliminating them, the Western Front command displayed wilfulness and conceit.”<sup>330</sup> Sokolovskiy, Zhukov's protégé, was condemned as inept, arrogant and unfit for operational command. Yet, Sokolovskiy's career flourished. In April 1944, he became Zhukov's Chief of Staff at

1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front. In November 1944, Sokolovskiy followed Zhukov to 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front and he played a prominent part in the Berlin Operation of 1945.

During the Cold War, from 1946-49, a period incorporating the Berlin airlift, Sokolovskiy commanded Soviet forces in Germany. He was Minister of War for the Soviet Union (1950-52) at the height of the Korean War and fears about a Soviet attack on western Europe. This was followed by an extended period of service as Chief of the Soviet General Staff (1952-60).<sup>331</sup> In 1962, the definitive Soviet work on military strategy was published under his name and in 1963 Sokolovskiy served another year as Minister of War. In summary, in the first two decades of the Cold War, Sokolovskiy was arguably *the* most important officer in the Soviet Army, a man who held the highest offices in the land. It was imperative that his military incompetence during the Great Patriotic War, especially in comparison with Rokossovskiy in Belorussia, was kept secret.<sup>332</sup> Therefore, Soviet historiography hid the defeats and failures of one of its worst operational commanders, Sokolovskiy, by obscuring the achievements of one of its best, Rokossovskiy.

### **Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya**

During the writing of this thesis, despite repeated attempts the author was unable to secure direct access to the Red Army's wartime archive in Podolsk. However, it was possible to examine substantial primary archival material concerning Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command during the Great Patriotic War. In the mid to late 1990's a period of archival glasnost released a massive body of original Russian language documents from the Great Patriotic War. This archival collection runs to thirty two volumes, of selected but not edited or annotated primary documents. These documents, often several pages long, contain information ranging from the pre-war discussions, key *Stavka*<sup>333</sup> and General Staff<sup>334</sup> directives as well as extensive documentary information on every major theatre of operations. In short, this archival collection provides a vital insight into the sheer scale of the Soviet Union's struggle for survival and the Red Army's strategic conduct of the war. However, the archival collection also provides an unprecedented and as yet unsurpassed insight in to the operational conduct of the Great Patriotic War.

It provides detailed archival information on all of the key operations that Rokossovskiy conducted during the war. It has information concerning the formation of Group Rokossovskiy in July-August 1941. It has an extensive section on the battle of Moscow with specific archival material on Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army during both the defensive and offensive phases of the engagement. Documentary evidence about Rokossovskiy's involvement in the Stalingrad campaign proves that as early as October 1942 Rokossovskiy was prepared to challenge *Stavka*'s insistence on more or less continuous ill-prepared offensive operations. These primary sources also have extensive archival records concerning Rokossovskiy's Central Front's conduct of operations in February 1943.<sup>335</sup> Some of these documents are used in Glantz's recent publication *After Stalingrad*<sup>336</sup> but these operations have not been analysed in relation to Rokossovskiy's wider style of leadership and operational command.

In addition, the archival collection provides an extensive range of documents that highlight Rokossovskiy's preparation for and subsequent conduct of the defensive phase of the battle of Kursk. These documents offer a daily, almost hourly insight into the course of the battle during the critical period of 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July 1943. They provide a detailed insight into how Rokossovskiy reconciled the competing tactical demands of the various army commanders under his control in order to maintain the operational coherence of the Central Front's defences. The original documents in this archival collection also provide a daily record of Rokossovskiy's protracted struggle to wrestle the initiative from German forces in the Orel region in July-August 1943. The collection contains a whole series of directives issued by Rokossovskiy to his army commanders. It also contains Rokossovskiy's nightly reports to *Stavka* about the Central Front's offensive. The archival documents provide a unique and extensive insight into Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command during a period of operations that has never been analysed in a sustained thematic manner. It enables one to compare Rokossovskiy's conduct in this period with the wider, underlying characteristics of his style of leadership and operational command.<sup>337</sup>

The archival collection also reveals the distinct character of Rokossovskiy's operational method during the Belorussian Operation of June-July 1944 and indicates that, at least from Rokossovskiy's perspective, the Belorussian Operation was never a great operational encirclement but a turning move or *obkhod*, a distinctly Russian form of operation. These documents prove that Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, in contrast to the other fronts involved, had a distinct, absolutely key strategic role in the Belorussian Operation, one that turned a series of operational defeats into a strategic calamity for Army Group Centre. The archival papers also contain information on the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's neglected Lublin-Brest Operation. These demonstrate how decisions taken by *Stavka*, not Rokossovskiy, ensured that 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was in no condition to approach and cross the Vistula, east of Warsaw, in early August 1944. Finally, the collection has a whole series of archival documents concerning the East Prussian Operation of January 1945.<sup>338</sup> These documents throw little or no light upon the conduct of Soviet troops but provide an insight into the planning, preparation and conduct of the operation.

These primary sources reveal *Stavka's* interaction with key commanders, its response to key events, the origins of major operations, their original objectives, their conduct and eventual outcome. The documents, particularly the ones relating to the conduct of operations are often several pages long and are usually presented in chronological order enabling one to build up an overall picture of certain operations from beginning to end. In Rokossovskiy's case there are individual documents relating to virtually all phases of the war. However, the extensive documents relating to the period October 1942-January 1945 enable one to establish not only the character and conduct of individual operations but also to form an overview of Rokossovskiy's operational command. Therefore, in conjunction with Rokossovskiy's memoirs one is able to establish the key themes of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command. For example it is possible to chart the evolution of Rokossovskiy's operational methods in the period October 1942-May 1944. It is also possible to establish incidents which are simply peculiar to one operation or event, as well as identify consistent themes and trends in Rokossovskiy's leadership and operational command.



In addition, the documents enable one to create a picture of the realities of operational command on the Eastern Front. This might involve a snapshot of Rokossovskiy's mood on a single day such as 18<sup>th</sup> August 1943, or an archival record of several days concerning one operation such as Kursk. Equally, as in July-August 1943, it might document days and weeks of continuous, frustrating operations with tired troops that had suffered heavy casualties against a determined and skilful opponent. These documents provide a key insight into how Rokossovskiy reacted, his operational *modus operandi*, how he dealt with frustration and the nature of his leadership in such circumstances.

Furthermore, by providing extensive archival material about Rokossovskiy during 1943 the documents enable one to analyse the overall pattern of Rokossovskiy's operations. This was a period of extensive trial and error with some success and relative failures far removed from the rampaging success of 1944-45, when Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command inflicted defeat after defeat upon the Wehrmacht. The documents of 1943 reveal the Wehrmacht's extraordinary resilience through Stalingrad, Kursk and into the late summer and early autumn of 1943. Rokossovskiy was fighting an opponent that retained its tactical fighting prowess late into 1943, especially if it had prepared defences and the Luftwaffe's support. Indeed, the archives show that the Luftwaffe was a major problem for Rokossovskiy's Central Front during July-August 1943.

In summary, an extensive analysis of these documents in conjunction with Rokossovskiy's memoirs enables one to identify, establish and confirm the essential hallmarks of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command. It is clear from these archival sources, in conjunction with his memoirs that Rokossovskiy consistently objected to poorly prepared operations launched with no serious chance of decisive operational success. The archival documents also indicate that Rokossovskiy's refusal to allow breakthrough battles to stagnate into prolonged positional attrition was a consistent theme of his operational command. This is particularly clear from the documents relating to the Central Front's offensive operations in July-August 1943 as well as the East Prussian Operation of 1945.

The archival documents reveal much about the nature of operational command on the Eastern Front. Rokossovskiy's initial operational directives, the key document that transformed a concept into an operational plan, are detailed documents that carefully outlined the role of each army within a front operation. These directives clearly indicate the shock armies and holding armies, which armies are to put in the main assault and which armies are to conduct supporting attacks. The directives reveal the distinction between 'close' tactical objectives and 'further' operational missions. The directives indicate that for the first few days of an operation Rokossovskiy invariably laid down a specific timeline indicating by which day an army should have reached a certain line or town. These detailed timelines, for each army, might run as far as the fifth or sixth day of an operation. However, in line with Rokossovskiy's emphasis on delegation and the use of initiative, these directives rarely contain specific instructions on how these objectives are to be achieved.

The archival record also indicates the sheer physical and mental demands of operational command on the Eastern Front. A *front* commander such as Rokossovskiy had to report every night to *Stavka*. Rokossovskiy's Central Front was in more or less continuous action from 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943-12<sup>th</sup> December 1943. Naturally, not all Rokossovskiy's armies were in continuous action all of the time but with the exception of a handful of days Rokossovskiy and his staff were either planning or conducting operations. The archival record of six weeks of more or less continuous operations from 5<sup>th</sup> July- 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943,<sup>339</sup> at the height of summer in 1943 indicates that front commanders such as Rokossovskiy were filing reports in the early hours of the morning just a few hours before operations began again in earnest in order to capitalise on maximum daylight hours. The mental and physical strain on all involved on both sides from the lowest soldier to senior operational commanders such as Rokossovskiy must have been immense, truly staggering even without the nightly requirement to report to the likes of Zhukov and Stalin.

## Summary

Therefore, a substantial body of academic literature concerning the war does exist, and in general terms, this body of work does succeed in conveying the truly savage nature of the war, the sheer size of the military operations and the ghastly misery endured by millions of ordinary people caught up in an event of truly global historic significance. The Soviet official literature, massive multi-volume histories of the war, journals and memoirs does, in some respects, provide a detailed factual and chronological narrative of the war, but with regard to Rokossovskiy they have perhaps become more notable for what they left out rather than what they put into the public domain. The Kardashov biography of Rokossovskiy is a substantial piece of historical narrative and an important source of uncontested, uncontroversial information about Rokossovskiy's life and career. There is however, relatively little detailed analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command. This is the purpose of this academic thesis: to analyse the military style of Marshal Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, one of the most significant but relatively unknown military commanders of the twentieth century. It will begin with a detailed analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Horst Boog et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. 4, *The Attack on the Soviet Union*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998) is full of detailed information mainly from the German side. Similarly, Horst Boog et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. 6, *The Global War*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001). Also, Karl-Heinz Frieser, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 8, Die Ostfront, 1943*, (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munchen, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin; The German Defeat In The East*, (Center For Military History, US Army, Washington D.C., 1966. Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, (London, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975) and John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983) are unsurpassed as detailed works of scholarship on the Eastern Front.

<sup>4</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, (University Press of Kansas, 1995). Also David M. Glantz, *Before Stalingrad, Barbarossa-Hitler's Invasion of Russia 1941*, (Tempus, 2003). David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War*, (Pan MacMillan, 2007) is a powerful insight into the nature of the war in the east.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, (AllenLane, 1997) is a good general book but lacks the time and space to analyse the conduct of operations in detail.

<sup>7</sup> Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East*, (Hodder Arnold, 2005) is an excellent account of the war in the east with more analysis of specific operations.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, (Faber and Faber, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980),

<sup>10</sup> Anatoliy F. Korolchenko, *Marshal Rokossovskii*, (Rostov-na-Dony, 1999)

<sup>11</sup> Kirill Konstantinov, *Rokossovskii*, (Moscow, 2006).

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-46.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir I. Kardashov, 'Rokossovskiy'. (*Druzhba Narodov, Moscow*), 2003.

<sup>15</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voiny Sovetskaya Soyuz* was published in six volumes that roughly corresponded with the chronological pattern of the war. Volume One was published in 1961 and Volume 6 in 1963. They were very much the product of the Khrushchev, post-Stalin era of Soviet historiography.

<sup>16</sup> *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voiny* was published in twelve volumes during the 1970s under the general editorship of Marshal Grechko, a genuinely able rather than political wartime commander who commanded 56<sup>th</sup> Army and 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Army. Volume 1 was published in 1973 and Volume 12 in 1982.

<sup>17</sup> V.A. Zolotarev et al., *Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voina 1941-1945, Kniga 3, Osvobozhdeniye*, (Moscow, 'Nauka', 1999). See also V.A. Zolotarev, et al., *Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voina 1941-1945, Kniga 4*, (Moscow, 'Nauka', 1999).

<sup>18</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Severnee Belina*, (North of Berlin), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, (Military History Journal), No. 5, May, 1965, pp. 36-41.

<sup>19</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, (Military History Journal), *Na Berlinskoy i Vostochno-Prusskom Napravleniyakh*, (On The Berlin and East Pomeranian Directions), No. 2, February 1965, pp. 124-128.

<sup>20</sup> A. Luchinskiy, '28-ya Armiya v Bobruyskoy Operatsii,' (28<sup>th</sup> Army in the Bobruisk Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 2, February 1969, pp. 66-76 provides a detailed account of 28<sup>th</sup> Army's role in the preparation, planning and execution of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's Bobruisk Operation conducted under Rokossovskiy's command. See also A. Luchinskiy, 'Osvobozhdeniye Bresta,' (The Liberation of Brest), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 8, August 1969, pp. 92-99 which provides a detailed narrative of the one of Rokossovskiy's armies in the highly significant battle for Brest (22<sup>nd</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> July 1944), in western Belorussia.

<sup>21</sup> See K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, (Military History Journal), No. 4, April 1989, pp. 52-57. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 5, May 1989, pp. 59-62. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 6, June 1989, pp. 51-57. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 2, February 1990, pp. 47-52. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 7, July 1991, pp. 4-11. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 3, March 1992, pp. 26-32.

<sup>22</sup> See *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.6, June 1944 which has an entire edition dedicated to the Belorussian Operation, an operation that began on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1944. It contains six articles on the Belorussian Operation by a variety of commanders including Rokossovskiy. See K. Rokossovskiy, *Dva Glavniye Udara* (Two Main Blows), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 6, June 1964, pp. 13-18, which also includes Rokossovskiy's account of how he defied Stalin three times over the planning of Operation Bagration on pp. 14-15. See also K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobeda na Volge*, (The Great Victory on the Volga), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 1, January 1968, pp. 64-75 published on the twenty fifth anniversary of the Operation Kol'tso (Ring), the final Soviet operation at Stalingrad, the one that destroyed the German pocket, commanded by Rokossovskiy. This is a thorough article but it was also designed to celebrate as well as commemorate. *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 7, July 1983, pp.12-64 has seven articles on Kursk to correspond to the fortieth anniversary of the battle while *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 6, June 1984, pp. 10-61 has six articles on the the Belorussian Operation.

<sup>23</sup> K. Kraikov, 'Talantliviy Polkovodets, K-70 Letiyu So Lina Rozhdeniya N.F. Vatutin', (Talented Commander, 70 Years Since The Birth of N.F. Vatutin), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 12, December 1971, pp. 32-37. Vatutin died during the war after being wounded in January 1944.

<sup>24</sup> P.I. Batov and P. Troyanovskiy, 'K-70 Letiyu K.K. Rokossovskogo', (To 70 Years of K.K. Rokossovskiy), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 12, December 1966, pp. 32-43 article that contains just one line on Rokossovskiy arrest in the Purge and dates it from August 1937, pp. 33-34. It also maintains that Rokossovskiy was born in Velikiye Luki.

<sup>25</sup> *Two Hundred Days of Fire*, (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970) is a good example of a commemorative book that contains a great deal of information but whose tone oscillates between nostalgic, bombastic, sorrowful, heroic and glorious.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Ellis, 'The Great Fatherland War In Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian Literature,' *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4, October-December 2007, pp. 609-632, this p. 613.

- <sup>27</sup> See Evan Mawdsley, 'Stalin: Victors Are Not Judged', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 2006, pp. 705-726. Also Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1945*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2007).
- <sup>28</sup> Major General N. Talenskiy, 'The Development of Operational Art According To The Experience of Recent Warfare,' (N. Talenskiy, *Razvitiye operativnogo iskusstva po orytu poslednikh voyn, Voyennaya Mysl'* [Military Thought] 6, 7 (June, July 1945) pp. 15-30 in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. 1, Operational Art, 1927-1964, pp. 151-152.
- <sup>29</sup> Lieutenant General V. Zlobin and Major General A. Vetoshnikov, 'Concerning Soviet Operational Art,' (V. Zlobin and L. Vetoshnikov, 'Ob operativnom iskusstve Sovetskoy Armii', *Voyennaya Mysl'* [Military Thought], 3 (1947), pp. 3-15 and 4 (1947), pp. 3-18 in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 197.
- <sup>30</sup> Major-General A. Vetoshnikov, 'Operational Art and its Place in Soviet Military Art,' (L. Vetoshnikov, 'Operativnoye iskusstva i yego mesto v sovetskom voyennom iskusstve' *Voyennaya Mysl'* [Military Thought], 11 (1949), pp. 3-12 in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. 1, op. cit. pp. 212-213.
- <sup>31</sup> Lieutenant General V. Zlobin, 'The Triumph of Soviet Operational Art in the Great Patriotic War,' V. Zlobin, "*Torzhество sovetskogo operativnogo iskusstva v Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny*," *Voyennaya mysl'* [Military Thought], 5 (1950), pp. 15-30 in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. 1. p. 219.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Lieutenant General V. Zlobin, 'The Triumph of Soviet Operational Art in the Great Patriotic War, op. cit. p. 236.
- <sup>35</sup> Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia*, (Penguin, 1997), p. 339.
- <sup>36</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (London, 1962), p. 741.
- <sup>37</sup> Malcolm Mackintosh, *Juggernaut : A History of the Soviet Armed Forces*, (London, Secker and Warburg, 1967), pp. 93-96 discusses the Purge, Khrushchev's speech and his mention of Rokossovskiy.
- <sup>38</sup> Brezhnev died in November 1982 but it might be argued that political, social, economic and cultural pattern established in this period was not overthrown until Gorbachev's period of glasnost, a process that did not really begin to have a substantial impact until 1987.
- <sup>39</sup> G. Isserson, 'Razvitiye Teorii Sovetskogo Operativnogo Iskusstva v 30-ye Godu,' (The Development of the Theory of Soviet Operational Art), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 1, January 1965, pp. 35- 46.
- <sup>40</sup> A.B. Kadishev, *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva v Sovetskikh Voyennykh Trudakh 1917-1940*, (Questions of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Works (Voyenizdat, Moscow, 1965).
- <sup>41</sup> M. Zakharov, *O Teorii Glubkoy Operatsii*, (On the Theory of Deep Operations), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 10, October 1970, pp. 10-20.
- <sup>42</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), pp. 139-140.
- <sup>43</sup> N.V. Ogarkov, 'Glubokaya Operatsiya', (Operation in Depth), *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1976), pp. 574-578.
- <sup>44</sup> V.G. Kulikov, 'Operativnoye Iskusstava', (Operational Art), *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 53-57.
- <sup>45</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), p. 487 has a fawning picture showing Brigade Commissar L.I. Brezhnev in action during September 1942.
- <sup>46</sup> Vasily I. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, ( Molodaya Gvardiya, Moscow, 1972)
- <sup>47</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (A Soldier's Duty), (Voyenizdat, Moscow, 1970).
- <sup>48</sup> Vasily I. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Molodaya Gvardiya, Moscow, 1980).
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-40.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-102.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 103-152.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 178-180.
- <sup>53</sup> See David M. Glantz, 'Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)', Part II, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2000, pp. 172-237, p. 199 for more information on the Dukhovshchina Operation of 17<sup>th</sup> August-8<sup>th</sup> September 1941.
- <sup>54</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 173-177.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 166.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-69.

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- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 180-181.
- <sup>58</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 191.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 196.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 204.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 203.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 212-215. See also C. Bellamy, *Absolute War*, op. cit. pp. 306-308.
- <sup>63</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 257.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 261.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 267.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 345.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 359-360.
- <sup>69</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 296-298.
- <sup>70</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 279.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 316-317.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 346-347.
- <sup>73</sup> Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Georgi Zhukov*, pp. 348-355 and Richard Overy, *Ivan Konev*, pp. 356-363 in ed. Andrew Roberts, *The Art of War, Great Commanders of the Modern World*, (Quercus, 2008).
- <sup>74</sup> Richard Overy, *Ivan Konev*, op. cit. p. 356.
- <sup>75</sup> R. Holmes, ed., *The Oxford Companion To Military History*, (Oxford University Press, 2001)
- <sup>76</sup> Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War*, op. cit.
- <sup>77</sup> Constantine Pleshakov, *Stalin's Folly*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2005).
- <sup>78</sup> Otto Chaney, *Zhukov*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996)
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 292.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 190.
- <sup>81</sup> Op. cit. note 12.
- <sup>82</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 177.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 178.
- <sup>84</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 183.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 180-181.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>87</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 186.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 190.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 192-193.
- <sup>90</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 177.
- <sup>91</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag*, (Allen Lane, 2003), p. 250.
- <sup>92</sup> Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War*, op. cit. p. 85.
- <sup>93</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, p. 181.
- <sup>94</sup> A. Beevor, *Stalingrad*, (Viking, 1998), p. 23.
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- <sup>99</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 2, (Voyenizdat, 1963), p. 237.
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- <sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-106.
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- <sup>113</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz*, op. cit. pp. 57-58.
- <sup>114</sup> *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1976), p. 46.
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- <sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 502 and p. 505.
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- <sup>143</sup> *The Battle For Kursk 1943*, The Soviet General Staff Study, Translated and Edited by David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, (Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 11-17/
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- <sup>152</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz*, Vol. 3, op. cit. p. 281.
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- <sup>167</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 8, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 454-456.
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- <sup>279</sup> David M. Glantz, 'Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945), Part 7: The Summer Campaign (12 May-18 November 1942): Voronezh, July 1942', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* Vol. 14, No. 3, September 2001, pp. 150-220 discusses the Bryansk Front attacks between 15<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> July 1942, pp. 203-206. See also Marshal M.E. Katukov, *Na Ostriye Glavnogo Udara*, (At the Spearhead of the Main Blow), (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1974), pp. 163-165.
- <sup>280</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol.III, The Summer Campaign, (12 May- 18 November 1942), 2000, pp. 11-74 covers three operations in which the Bryansk Front took part.
- <sup>281</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 143. l. 241,242 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 214. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30209 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Bryanskogo Fronta Ob Uprazhnenii Bryanskogo I Obrazovanii Pribaltiyskogo Fronta' (Stavka VGK Directive No:30209 To The Commander Of The Bryansk Front Concerning The Abolition Of The Bryansk Front And Formation Of The 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front).
- <sup>282</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 143. l. 239,240 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 213. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30208 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta Na Razgrom Zhlobinsko-Bobruiskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika i Ovladeniye Minskom' (Stavka VGK Directive No:30208 To The Commander Of The Central Front On The Destruction Of The Enemy Zhlobin-Bobruisk Grouping And Taking Minsk).
- <sup>283</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Fall Campaign, (1 July-31 December 1943), Part Two, 2000, pp. 574-603.
- <sup>284</sup> V. Frolov, 'Udar na Chernigov', (Shock at Chernigov), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 9, September 1975, pp. 85-91 has a very detailed account of 13<sup>th</sup> Army's actions in crossing the Dnepr but makes no mention of the fierce German counter-attacks.
- <sup>285</sup> G. Belov, 'Kavaleristy Forsiruyut Dnepr', (Cavalry Force the Dnepr), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 4, April 1967, pp. 67-70 is a terse detailed account of 61<sup>st</sup> Army's crossing of the Dnepr.
- <sup>286</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Fall Campaign, (1 July-31 December 1943), Part Two, 2000, pp. 583-590 gives a detailed narrative of these events.
- <sup>287</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Fall Campaign, (1 July-31 December 1943), Part One, 2000, pp. 273-274.
- <sup>288</sup> P. Batov, 'Na Gomelskom Napravleniye', (On the Gomel Direction), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.12, December 1968, pp. 78-83, this pp. 80-83.
- <sup>289</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Fall Campaign, (1 July-31 December 1943), Part One, 2000, p. 309.
- <sup>290</sup> P. Batov, 'Na Gomelskom Napravleniye', (On the Gomel Direction), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 12, December 1968, pp. 78-83, stops the discussion of active operations on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943.
- <sup>291</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Fall Campaign, (1 July-31 December 1943), Part One, 2000, p. 310.
- <sup>292</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. p. 311.
- <sup>293</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. V, Part One, op. cit. p. 295.
- <sup>294</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 310.
- <sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 311.
- <sup>296</sup> P. Batov, '65-ya Armiya v Boyakh za Belorussii,' (65<sup>th</sup> Army in the Battles for Belorussia), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 9, September 1970, pp. 65-72.
- <sup>297</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 192.
- <sup>298</sup> K. Telegin, *Boyakh Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii*, (The Battles to Liberate Belorussia), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 6, June 1969, pp. 82-91 makes no mention of the extended autumn 1943 operations or the 1944 operations. He was the senior political commissar of the Belorussian Front and in a position to know. He was also arrested and tortured after the war.

- <sup>299</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, (24 December 1943-April 1944), Part Two: The Western Axis, 2004, pp. 513-707 gives a detailed narrative of these operations, with an extensive complement of maps.
- <sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 543.
- <sup>301</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. presents an extended narrative of the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation using the unit history of the 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps which took part in the operation.
- <sup>302</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 561.
- <sup>303</sup> P. Batov, '65-ya Armiya v Boyakh za Belorussii,' (65<sup>th</sup> Army in the Battles for Belorussia), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 9, September 1970, pp. 70-71 mentions receiving orders to conduct the Kalinkovichi Operation and records attack in passing that 65<sup>th</sup> Army established control of Mozyr.
- <sup>304</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg* 1997, (Moscow, 1997), p. 459.
- <sup>305</sup> M.S. Dokuchaev, *V boi shli eskadrony: Boevoi put 7-go gvardeiskogo kavaleriiskogo Brandenburgskogo ordena Lenina, Krasnoznamennogo, ordena Suvorogo korpusa v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (The Squadrons went into battle: The Combat Path of the 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Brandenburg, order of Lenin, Red Banner, and order of Suvorov Cavalry Corps), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1984) cited in David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI. The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 580.
- <sup>306</sup> M. Panov, 'V Boyakh za Kalinikovichi,' (In the Battles for Kalinkovichi), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 5, May, 1978, p. 46.
- <sup>307</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter War, op. cit. pp. 592-629.
- <sup>308</sup> P. Batov, '65-ya Armiya v Boyakh v Belorussii,' (The 65<sup>th</sup> Army in the Battles for Belorussia), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 9, September 1970, pp. 65-72, this p. 71. This article is a detailed narrative of the autumn 1943 battles in Belorussia. It also included brief references to the operations around Mozyr, Kalinkovichi and Ozarichi without examining them in detail. See also P. Batov, '65-ya Armiya v Boyakh v Belorussii' (The 65<sup>th</sup> Army in the Battles for Belorussia), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.10, October 1970, pp. 64-70. This article deals with the events of summer 1944 in Belorussia on the Bobruisk-Brest direction and does not cover the vanished spring battles.
- <sup>309</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-45)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 594.
- <sup>310</sup> Ibid., pp. 636-668.
- <sup>311</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 636.
- <sup>312</sup> Ibid., p. 655.
- <sup>313</sup> Ibid., p. 652.
- <sup>314</sup> Op. cit. p. 664.
- <sup>315</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 189.
- <sup>316</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (Moscow, 1997), p. 459.
- <sup>317</sup> A.V. Gorbатов, *Gody i Voyny*, (Years and War), (Moscow, 1965), pp. 270-275.
- <sup>318</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 678-688.
- <sup>319</sup> Ibid., p. 688.
- <sup>320</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI. The Winter Campaign, op. cit. pp. 701-707.
- <sup>321</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad To Berlin*, (US Center of Military History, Washington D.C., p. 195
- <sup>322</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Fall Campaign, (1 July- 31 December 1943), Part One, 2000, pp. 221-263.
- <sup>323</sup> Ibid., p. 250.
- <sup>324</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. V, The Summer-Falls, Part One, 2000, pp. 386-405 covers these battles.
- <sup>325</sup> Stavka V GK Order No. 220076, 12 April 1944, cited in David M. Glantz in *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 486.
- <sup>326</sup> M.A. Gareyev, 'O neudachnykh nastupatel'nykh operatsiyakh Sovetskikh voisk v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny. Po neopublikovannym dokumentam GKO (About the unsuccessful operations of Soviet forces in the Great Patriotic War. According to unpublished State Defense Committee

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documents), *Novaiia i noveishaia istoriia* (New and recent history, No. 1 (January 1994), p. 10 cited in David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 721.

<sup>327</sup> M.A. Gareyev, 'O nedachnykh nastupatel'nykh operatsiiakh,' op. cit. pp. 14-29 cited in David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. pp. 486-502.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., p. 498.

<sup>329</sup> Op. cit. p. 501.

<sup>330</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 499.

<sup>331</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), pp. 436-437.

<sup>332</sup> David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 722.

<sup>333</sup> See V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv : Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (1), *Stavka VGK, Dokumenty i Materialny, 1941 God*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1996). V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942 God*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1996). See also V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943 God*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1999). Finally, V.A. Zolotarev, *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, Dokumenty i Materialny, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1999) These volumes deal with *Stavka* directives from the Great Patriotic War.

<sup>334</sup> See V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 23-12 (4), *Generalnyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001).

<sup>335</sup> V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1997).

<sup>336</sup> David M. Glantz, *After Stalingrad*, (Helion, 2008)

<sup>337</sup> V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1997).

<sup>338</sup> V.A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 'TERRA', *Knizhnyi Klyb*, 2001).

<sup>339</sup> V.A. Zolotarev, ed. *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 'TERRA', 1997).

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **ROKOSSOVSKIY'S STYLE OF LEADERSHIP**

This chapter analyses the historical image of the Red Army, its leadership culture and authoritarian traditions, before discussing the main schools of leadership theory that have emerged during the last century. It will then move to a sustained analysis of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership. The hallmarks of his leadership are examined, in order to identify his own 'natural' leadership style, the traits he demonstrated, and, the extent to which he anticipated or reflected aspects of leadership that, while not perhaps leadership styles or theories, in themselves, have become integral themes in the study of leadership. It will argue that probably the greatest contrast between Rokossovskiy and his fellow senior commanders was his style of leadership.

#### **The Nature of Leadership**

In the course of history, all armies, regardless of ideology and nationality, have been interested in leadership. However, at the same time, leadership, although it is a continual source of public fascination,<sup>1</sup> remains an elusive, indeed often downright puzzling phenomenon. This, in itself, is hardly surprising, for leadership is an intangible matter, involving humans, not machines. There is no infallible formula that guarantees success as a leader. Equally, after decades of research, there seems to be no leadership style for all seasons, situations and people, military or civilian. Leadership is easily discussed, but notoriously difficult to pin down. There are many lists of desirable qualities,<sup>2</sup> many books to read and courses to attend. However, it is a fact, that many individuals, throughout history, have proved outstanding leaders, yet have never actively studied it,<sup>3</sup> although they may have reflected upon it to refine or develop their 'natural' abilities.

## **The Study of Leadership**

The twentieth century witnessed an explosion of inquiry, academic, business, military, political and popular into the notion of leadership. In the opinion of Ott, Parkes and Simpson it “is one of the most magnetic words in the English language”<sup>4</sup> and there seems little reason to doubt that “it is a highly valued phenomenon that is very complex.”<sup>5</sup> In the eyes of Northouse, leadership is a process of interaction between leaders and followers.<sup>6</sup> To Grint, a leader is out in front, the real question is whether he is pulling or is being pushed.<sup>7</sup> To de Vries “it seems that more and more has been studied about less and less, to end up ironically with a group of researchers studying everything about everything and nothing.”<sup>8</sup> For Gemill and Oakley, the whole notion of leadership is a contrived social myth and “belief in hierarchy and the necessity of leaders represents an unrecognised ideology”<sup>9</sup> something “that induces massed learned helplessness among members of a social system.”<sup>10</sup> In summary, according to Hosking, “the terms ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ are much used, but poorly understood.”<sup>11</sup>

## **Theories of Leadership**

The research literature on leadership reveals a wide variety of theories. These seek to explain the essence of leadership, to identify different types and styles of leadership and make recommendations for the exercise of leadership, in pursuit of the holy grail: a universal theory that explains the nature and conduct of leadership. Indeed, according to one commentator, Stogdill, there are nearly as many different definitions of leadership as those who have tried to define it.<sup>12</sup>

## **The ‘Great Man’ and Trait School**

The ‘great man’ theories of the nineteenth century were “based on the belief that leaders are exceptional people, born with innate qualities, destined to lead.”<sup>13</sup> In short, it was the destiny of Cromwell, Marlborough and Wellington, amongst others, to lead. According to Bolden, Gosling, Marturans and Denson it was a short step from the ‘great man’ concept to the trait school.<sup>14</sup> The trait school of thought, according to Ott, dominated the study of leadership until the middle of

the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> It still exerts considerable influence, explicit and implicit, upon society, civil and military, in the current era. It is in tune with the popular notion that leadership is exercised by those with special innate qualities that manifest themselves in overt leadership from the front, heroic individuals, with firmness of purpose and strident tone.

It revolved around the idea that some individuals, because of their traits, the product of personality and genes, are born leaders. In effect, according to Grint, “there is no hope for those of us not born with certain gifts or talents for leadership.”<sup>16</sup> It is assumed that because of who you are, what you are, not your skills and expertise, you will be able to adapt, regardless of the situation, or environment, and provide leadership. The trait approach was, according to Northouse, the “first systematic attempt to study leadership”<sup>17</sup> and is focused on the leader. It pays little attention to followers, as they are assumed to lack the traits leaders possess. It is thus, by its nature, an elitist concept of leadership.

The trait school aims to identify the qualities that leaders possess, in order to find and select those who display such leadership qualities, those who are natural leaders.<sup>18</sup> The trait school has succeeded in identifying many traits of leadership, but is less successful in pinning down which are more important than others, especially the intangible qualities of human nature, such as confidence, honesty and integrity.

In the wake of the Second World War, until the late 1980's, trait theory was unfashionable. Stogdill's finding in 1948, that “an individual with leadership traits who was a leader in one situation might not be a leader in another situation”<sup>19</sup> was a significant challenge to trait theory. However, in recent years, the trait school has seen a revival. It has been argued that personality traits can identify leaders and followers, regardless of the situation.<sup>20</sup> Equally, “it is unequivocally clear that leaders are not like other people.”<sup>21</sup> Trait theory has evolved: it is now linked with Transformational Leadership<sup>22</sup>, charisma, Emotional Intelligence<sup>23</sup> and the interaction of environment, as well as nurture.



Equally, while critics of trait theory appear content to identify traits not commonly associated with leadership, they seem less willing to discuss traits that a considerable body of research suggests<sup>24</sup> are linked with leadership and command. It is a legitimate school of thought, one that has contributed much to the debate about leadership.

In the opinion of Northouse, the trait school has several strengths. It appeals to the easily understood idea that leaders are people who dominate and lead the way. It gives people faith that their leaders are imbued with significant gifts that mark them out as special people capable of achieving remarkable things. The trait school also has several decades of research to support the basic idea that certain personality traits play an important role in leadership. It has established beyond reasonable doubt, over the course of many decades of research that intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability are key personal qualities in leadership.<sup>25</sup> This gives people a clear set of yardsticks by which to assess leaders and leadership.<sup>26</sup>

However, it also has weaknesses. The trait school body of research has identified an extensive list of qualities that are perceived to be important in leadership. However, it has not defined which are the most important. Furthermore, the trait school does not satisfactorily address the situational context in which leadership is exercised. It does not appear to accept that while one type of leadership may be appropriate in one situation, that does not mean it will be suitable in another scenario. Finally, in the opinion of Northouse many of the traits identified as important are susceptible to subjectivity. Equally, because it is based on inherent personality traits it is difficult to use the trait model for training in the skills of leadership.<sup>27</sup>

## **The Skills Approach**

The skills approach to leadership was developed in the 1950s. The Second World War had demonstrated that millions, not an elite few, appeared to possess the ability and skills to lead. In the 1950s,<sup>28</sup> Katz argued that leadership revolved around three broad skills: technical, human and conceptual, of which human and conceptual skills were the most significant for a senior leader such as Rokossovskiy. Human skills, in which Rokossovskiy excelled, were vital in generating a positive and creative atmosphere. The conceptual level reflected the ability to develop ideas and translate conceptual thought into practical planning and execution.<sup>29</sup> In the Red Army it was called operational art.



**Figure 56: Rokossovskiy in consultation.**

(Kardashov, 1980)

During the 1990s the skills approach became a prominent aspect of leadership theory and practice. The skills approach, like trait theory, is based on the leader, but argues that leadership is not an inherent aspect of personality, but a set of identifiable skills,<sup>30</sup> that can be learned, developed and improved through knowledge. In short, it is not possessed by a gifted few, but a process, open to all, with skills that can be nurtured and refined through practice.<sup>31</sup> This is a considerable strength of the skills approach. Yet, presumably the skills approach accepts that due to natural ability, some will practice these skills with a higher degree of competence. The skills may be identifiable and available, but without natural talent it is difficult to see how the skills approach can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Yet, others who never studied it, such as Rokossovskiy, excel.

In a positive sense the skills model focuses on abilities rather than inherent, arguably elitist traits. It proposes skills that can be learned, practised and developed in a manner that appears, at least in theory, to make leadership available to the majority, not the minority.<sup>32</sup> In a more negative sense, the skills approach claims to be different from the trait school, but “the individual attributes

component of the skills model is trait driven.”<sup>33</sup> The skills identified as central to effective leadership, are heavily dependent upon personality traits, both rational and emotional. Ironically, perhaps the key attribute of the skills approach is its ability to enhance and nurture the leadership potential of those with the “right” qualities or traits, enabling them to make the most of their abilities. In addition, critics argue that in many respects the skills approach is too broad and vague. It makes it difficult to predict how such personal competencies will lead to more effective performance.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Style Approach**

The trait school emphasised the personal qualities of leaders and the skills approach focused on capabilities, but the style approach broke new ground by focusing on the behaviour of leaders.<sup>35</sup> The style approach concentrated on what leaders actually did, not who they were or what key skills they needed to exercise effective leadership.<sup>36</sup> The aim of the style approach was to discover how leaders behaved in pursuit of goals or objectives. Two massive research programmes, carried out by Ohio State and Michigan University in the 1950s and 1960s, represent landmarks in the style approach and the study of leadership.

The research programmes established that the behaviour of leaders generally fell into two categories: task behaviour and relationship behaviour. As a result “the central purpose of the style approach is to explain how leaders combine these two kinds of behaviour to influence subordinates in their efforts to reach a goal.”<sup>37</sup>

There was some inconclusive evidence that leaders capable of both task and relationship behaviour demonstrated particularly effective forms of leadership.<sup>38</sup>

This thesis will argue that this was a distinct, singular quality of Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership that set him apart from other Soviet commanders who focused almost exclusively on the task.

A key strength of the style approach was that it was not an elaborate complex theory, nor was it prescriptive in its recommendations. Furthermore, by analysing the behaviour of leaders and identifying the concepts of task and relationship

behaviour, the style approach made an enduring contribution to the study of leadership. It shone a light on the nature of leadership, and leaders, that retains its relevance to this day. It was a major development in the conceptual study of leadership, applicable to most leaders, past or present, including Rokossovskiy. It gave people a simple but broad vehicle through which to understand the nature of leadership, not a narrow prescription for how it should be done<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, the style approach contains a weakness in that, although it devised a manner by which the style of leaders can be assessed, it has not established how these insights lead directly to improvements in performance and the achievement of objectives. Equally, despite its declared intentions the style approach has not managed to find a definitive, comprehensive and universal theory of leadership. However, despite these weaknesses,<sup>40</sup>

“the significance of this idea is not to be understated. Whenever, leadership occurs, the leader is acting out both task and relationship behaviours: the key to being an effective leader often rests on how the leader balances these two behaviours. Together, they form the core of the leadership process.”<sup>41</sup>

### **The Situational Approach**

The situational approach to leadership was developed by Hersey and Blanchard.<sup>42</sup> It is based on the idea that different situations require different types of leadership.<sup>43</sup> In short, no one person, whatever their personal qualities or traits, and no single style of leadership, can cope with all the potential situations, civil or military, that require leadership. This is a key strength of the situational approach, namely that flexibility is built into the approach. The essence of situational leadership is the ability to assess the nature of the situation<sup>44</sup> and match it with a suitable form of leadership. It is an intellectually demanding theory that requires great judgement and a flexible “repertoire of styles to suit the particular situation.”<sup>45</sup> It also involves a degree of versatility that is perhaps as unrealistic as the trait idea that innate qualities enable certain individuals to lead in all situations. Yet, the basic idea, that different situations need different leadership,

is a powerful and enduring one, a strength that confers significant credibility on the theory of situational leadership.<sup>46</sup>

Situational leadership also requires a leader to assess the situation in terms of their subordinates' capabilities, in relation to the task. Naturally, most leaders make decisions, instinctive or considered, on whether a subordinate is qualified to achieve a certain task. In one sense the prescriptive procedures for matching subordinates to appropriate situations are an important strength enabling leaders to make informed decisions and delegate in an appropriate manner to the right people. Yet, the system of directive and supportive behaviours in the situational approach<sup>47</sup> is complex and formulaic. The procedures appear mechanical and time consuming with subordinates strictly categorized.<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to see how this could be managed in a flexible manner in a dynamic, fast changing environment such as war. It seems at odds with the principle of flexibility, otherwise inherent in situational leadership. Finally, there is a sense in which situational leadership is permanently stuck in the present, assessing subordinates from a series of quick snapshots.

### **The Contingency Theory**

Situational theory involves flexible adaptation to the situation. However, the contingency theory<sup>49</sup> seeks to match leaders to situations that suit their style of leadership. It believes it is easier to change leader in response to the situation, rather than a leader repeatedly altering their style.<sup>50</sup> In short, "it is called contingency because it suggests that a leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context."<sup>51</sup> Contingency theory also incorporates aspects of the trait school and the style approach. It is concerned with the inherent personal qualities of leaders, because it accepts the notion that a leader's behaviour is influenced by whether leaders are primarily task motivated or relationship motivated. Similarly, contingency theory believes a leader's motivation is determined by the nature of their personality.

The personality of a leader and thus their attitude to leadership is determined by a test designed to assess their Least Preferred Coworker (LPC).<sup>52</sup> Individuals are classed as high LPC or low LPC: those classified as low LPC tend to be task motivated, dominated by the need to achieve objectives. Conversely, those marked as high LPC are inclined to see the development of good relationships as the key to effective leadership and the achievement of tasks.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Middle LPC's are more independent, both of objectives and relationships, more autonomous in character, less driven by goals and less concerned by the opinion of others.<sup>54</sup>

The exercise of leadership is also influenced by how leaders and followers relate to each other, their exchanges, the structure of the task and the formal power conferred, or otherwise, by the leader's position.<sup>55</sup> The contingency approach is a complex theory, based on a simple idea. According to Northhouse an important strength of contingency theory is that it is backed up by a considerable body of research that confers significant credibility upon it as a theory of leadership. In addition, it has widened professional and popular understanding of the impact of situations and context in the exercise of leadership. Furthermore, it can be argued that a key strength of contingency theory is that it has proposed a more realistic understanding of the fact that individual leaders cannot hope to be equally effective in all situations.<sup>56</sup>

However, it is argued that while there is evidence that contingency theory works it struggles to explain why certain styles of leadership work in certain situations and others do not.<sup>57</sup> In addition, it is reliant on the accuracy of the LPC scale to match leaders with situations. It might be argued that this requires constant situational and leadership engineering. It is difficult to see in a military context how units could change leaders in response to different situations. In summary, according to Northhouse "it is a leader-match theory that emphasizes the importance of matching a leader's style with the demands of a situation."<sup>58</sup>

## **Path-Goal Theory**

Path-goal theory<sup>59</sup> advocated by House and Mitchell was the first leadership programme that overtly examined the relationship between leaders and followers. It investigated how leaders motivated their subordinates in pursuit of objectives and challenged leaders to find styles of leadership that responded to their subordinates' motivation.<sup>60</sup> Therefore,

“in contrast to the situational approach, which suggests that a leader must adapt to the developmental level of subordinates and unlike contingency theory which emphasizes the match between the leader's style and specific situational variables, path-goal theory emphasizes the relationship between the leader's style and the characteristics of the subordinates and the work setting.”<sup>61</sup>

Path-goal theory was broken down into four main categories of leadership.<sup>62</sup>

Directive leadership engages a leader in overt command, identifying and allocating tasks, how they are to be completed, the standards expected and setting deadlines. The second element of path-goal theory involved supportive leadership. It suggested that leaders should make a concerted effort to create a harmonious working atmosphere, cater for subordinates' human needs and treat them as equals. The third strand of path-goal was participative leadership, in which leaders actively involve their staff in the decision making process by inviting their opinions, encouraging them to be creative in their problem solving.

The final strand was achievement-orientated leadership. This form of leadership is the hallmark of leaders with high standards and high expectations and who demand continuous improvement.<sup>63</sup> However, rather than being tyrannical martinets with unrealistic expectations, path-goal theory points out that such leaders also demonstrate confidence in their subordinates and understand that excellence will not materialise overnight. Path-goal theory also makes it clear that a leader must know his subordinates,<sup>64</sup> not just know of them. A leader must understand them, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their overt and underlying motivations, their character and aspirations. This thesis will argue that

Rokossovskiy incorporated many aspects of what later became known as path-goal theory in his leadership during the war.

According to Northouse one of the strengths of path-goal theory is that it provides a clear framework on which to base leadership. Secondly, by placing motivation at the centre of the theory it helps leaders to develop a greater understanding of their subordinates, leading to more informed leaders who can develop their subordinates. On the negative side, Northouse suggests that it is also a very broad and complex theory. It is almost too comprehensive to make it practical. Secondly, although path-goal is a cogent and intellectually coherent theory of leadership, it has not developed a clear body of evidence that indicates a direct link between its ideas and effective leadership. Finally, although path-goal is concerned with the motivation of subordinates it remains, in the end, a theory centred around leaders and what they can do for subordinates.<sup>65</sup>

In summary, path-goal theory argued that leaders can and should display one or all of these four styles, or aspects of them, when dealing with different subordinates, at different stages in order to achieve the objective.<sup>66</sup> The key issue is judgement and awareness of one's subordinates. Nevertheless, although path-goal theory was the first major theory to focus on the motivation of subordinates it remained a leader centric concept.

### **Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)**

Northouse argues that “before LMX theory, researchers treated leadership as something leaders did toward all of their followers.”<sup>67</sup> However, he argued “LMX theory takes still another approach and conceptualises leadership as a process that is centred on the *interactions* between leaders and followers.”<sup>68</sup> The origins of LMX theory lay in the 1970's and have been regularly revised during subsequent decades. The basic idea of LMX theory is that leadership is a process of influence,<sup>69</sup> but rather than being a uni-dimensional process, it is a dynamic exchange of influence, direct and indirect, conscious and unconscious, between leaders and followers. As leaders and their subordinates get to know each other in



a professional and personal capacity, an 'in' and 'out' group develop, with one group close to the leader, trusted, valued, committed and full of initiative with a close personal identification between individual, leader and team.

The out-group is distant and formally correct, in both their relations with the leader, and in carrying out their responsibilities. There is less personal association and enthusiastic commitment, nor do they feel trusted, or inclined to be creative and dynamic as they do not feel their efforts will be appreciated.<sup>70</sup> A complex phase of social interactions, influenced by many intangible and unquantifiable factors, determines the composition of both groups. These take place over three phases: the stranger phase, the acquaintance phase and the mature partnership phase.<sup>71</sup> There is an instinctive recognition that these ideas seem to be a fact of life, a natural aspect of the human condition.<sup>72</sup>

An important strength of LMX theory is that it provides a sharp and clear insight into the human aspects of the leadership process. Secondly, it makes the interactive relationship between leaders and subordinates the focal point of the leadership process in a way that other theories of leadership do not. Thirdly, it reveals in a very effective manner, the importance and breadth of communication, in the broadest sense, involved in the leadership process. Fourth, it has proved an effective guide to getting things done and achieving objectives. Fifth, it reminds us that in the end leadership and the achievement of objectives is heavily influenced by intangible human factors.<sup>73</sup>

In a more negative light, advocacy of generating 'in' and 'out' groups, purely on the basis that they are effective, challenges basic principles and values of fairness.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, if the existence of 'in' and 'out' groups is clear, this can undermine leadership in some areas while appearing to make it more effective in others. Thirdly, although the aim might be to build an 'in' crowd that is as wide as possible, this is extremely difficult because of the intricacies and complexities of human nature. Finally, according to Northouse the model of LMX theory

suggests that effective leadership can be developed by building trust, respect and commitment but does not indicate how this can be done.<sup>75</sup>

### **Transformational Leadership**

Since the 1980s, transformational leadership has been a dynamic area of research in leadership. Indeed, to some, it is part of a ‘new leadership’ paradigm.<sup>76</sup> The term ‘transformational leadership’ was first employed in 1973<sup>77</sup> but came to prominence in 1978, through the work of James McGregor Burns.<sup>78</sup>

Transformational leadership is concerned primarily with the human and emotional dimensions of leadership, not the dry mechanisms of process, acquisition of skills and capabilities. It responds to the perceived human need for inspiration, to feel part of something greater than themselves. Leaders are required to galvanise, inspire and nourish followers, implanting the idea of outstanding achievement through personal development and hard work. In summary,

“as its name implies, transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings.”<sup>79</sup>

It is therefore closely connected with, but not the same as charismatic leadership.

In his original concept, Burns was at pains to distinguish between transformational and transactional leadership. The former was concerned with inspiring personal transformation to induce a commitment to excellence based purely on the value of what they were trying to achieve, that the process and objective were intrinsically valuable.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, for Burns, there was a distinct moral theme to transformational leadership, in that it was both a force for good and beneficial in itself, thus disassociating it with the kind of charismatic and transformational leadership displayed by Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot.<sup>81</sup> In contrast, transactional leadership is based on the idea that in return for completing a task or achieving your objectives, you will receive a reward, be it financial, prestigious, professional or social.<sup>82</sup> In short, transactional and transformational are entirely different leadership philosophies.

The idea of transformational leadership is an appealing one with many strengths. Firstly, it has been the subject of extensive research from several different perspectives that confer credibility upon its basic message. Secondly, it is an instinctively powerful idea. It is in tune with popular contemporary imagery: a transformational leader is out in front, a dynamic force for change pursuing a clear vision. Thirdly, its emphasis that transformational leadership is an interaction between leaders and led, with an emphasis on the moral value of the process, as well as the objectives, is a seductive and genuinely inspirational vision for many.<sup>83</sup> Advocates of transformational leadership such as Burns and Bass<sup>84</sup> are well aware that characteristics associated with transformational leadership have been used in the past by ruthless, charismatic but amoral leaders, for appalling ends. The emphasis on values, morals and more than just self-interest is a strong, attractive message that dilutes negative associations with the past. Finally, there is also considerable evidence that not only is transformational leadership spiritually beneficial, but that it works. In short, it is an effective form of leadership as well as an attractive one.<sup>85</sup>

In a more negative sense some critics argue that while transformational leadership is visionary it lacks clarity. It is heavily dependent upon intangible human traits such as vision, motivation, change, inspiration, trust, selflessness and altruism. How are such characteristics generated, sustained, nurtured or developed if they are not already present? Second, it has been argued that transformational leadership is simply charismatic leadership, with all its attendant concerns, under a new name, a charge rejected by Bass, who argues that charisma is only one aspect of transformational leadership.<sup>86</sup> Yet, there is no doubt that Bass considers charisma to be essential to effective transformational leadership. He argues that, “attaining charisma in the eyes of one’s employees is central to succeeding as a transformational leader. Charismatic leaders have great power and influence. Employees want to identify with them, and they have a high degree of trust and confidence in them. Charismatic leaders inspire and

excite their employees with the idea that they may be able to accomplish great things with extra effort.”<sup>87</sup>

Third, it is argued that in reality transformational leadership believes leadership is driven by personal traits. Is it advocated by people with a natural inclination to display and value the kind of dynamic, motivational leadership that leads them to believe they can transform others? In short, it might be argued that transformational leadership is an intellectualisation of the subjectivity and occasional prejudice that allegedly infected the trait school. Fourth, in a related point some claim that like the trait school, transformational leadership produces dominant leaders who engage in relatively little genuine interaction with followers. Bass and Avolio argue that transformational leadership does not suffer from a ‘heroic leadership’ bias and is equally compatible with other styles of leadership such as democratic, participative, directive and authoritarian.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand Bass claims that “Napoleon declared that an army of rabbits commanded by a lion could do better than an army of lions commanded by a rabbit. He was not far from the truth.”<sup>89</sup> Critics argue that whatever the formal intentions of transformational theory, it has a natural tendency to develop ‘messianic’ leaders.<sup>90</sup>

The process of identifying transformational leadership with charismatic leadership gathered pace in the 1980s.<sup>91</sup> Charismatic leadership is traditionally associated with exceptional, almost mystical gifts, of oratory, motivation and presence. Northouse cites the German, Max Weber, in 1947: Weber believed that charisma was almost a superhuman, divine phenomenon given to very few.<sup>92</sup> These leaders tend to be dominant individuals with a strong desire to influence events, confident in the wisdom of their own beliefs and with strong values. Charisma is perhaps best described as a kind of personal aura, visible in an arresting presence and compelling eyes and/or voice. It can move individuals to transcend themselves, inspiring, in the best examples, extraordinary levels of personal endeavour, sacrifice and achievement, in the worst, the corruption of the individual

conscience in the pursuit of power, renown or a wider cause such as Nazism or Stalinism.

In the modern era, charismatic leadership is much sought after, rarely seen and frequently over-rated. Indeed, western society seems obsessed with it. Charisma is often a less than objective assessment in the eyes of the beholder, perhaps more accurately described as hero worship or the triumph of blind faith over reason. Charismatic individuals, such as Hitler, are frequently erratic, egotistical individuals, inspiring and capable of great feats, but also nihilistic mayhem if frustrated in their cherished, frequently apocalyptic vision. Transformational and charismatic leadership is closely associated with visionary thinking, and securing commitment to their vision is the main aim of such leaders.<sup>93</sup> In summary, genuinely charismatic and transformational leaders are rare, and, usually combine charisma with other important attributes of leadership.

By May 1945, Rokossovskiy had a remarkable string of victories to his credit, historic operations in the defeat of Nazi Germany.<sup>94</sup> However, charisma was not central to Rokossovskiy's leadership style. Rokossovskiy sought glory, but was generally considered a modest individual. If Rokossovskiy's reputation was touched by charisma, it was an attribute cast upon him by his achievements, not his leadership style or any cult of personality.

### **Democratic Leadership**

The idea of democratic leadership is an instinctively attractive notion for some and a contradiction in terms for others. It is a term that is frequently referred to but inadequately defined. Indeed, one authority has openly lamented the fact that "there is no clear and well-developed definition of the term within academia."<sup>95</sup> It is often proposed as an alternative to others forms of leadership, but without great definitional clarity, or any real concrete proposals as to how it should work, other than a general commitment towards participation, free discussion and open, collegiate decision-making. This conceptual ambiguity has created a situation in which,

“literally hundreds of authors have not so much described as *advocated* democratic, participatory, and similar ‘alternative’ styles of leadership, contrasting them with authoritarian, supervisory, charismatic, and other conventional modes of leadership.”<sup>96</sup>

In terms of its aspirations, democratic leadership does involve open discussion, the exchange of ideas, creativity, distribution of responsibility, consultation<sup>97</sup> and the constructive participation of others in the formation of objectives and plans, if not in their execution. Yet, it is also the case that one does not have to be a practising advocate of democratic leadership to incorporate these elements in to one’s style of leadership. Rokossovskiy was not an advocate of democratic leadership, but his style was, in many ways, surprisingly democratic, certainly by the standards of the Red Army.

Democratic leadership has a poor popular image. It conjures up notions of leadership by committee, endless discussions, paralysis by analysis instead of decisions.<sup>98</sup> It should not mean individuals avoid responsibility, nor does it mean that conflicting views are suppressed to find an artificial consensus. Indeed, in the hands of a skilled commander or leader, democratic leadership encourages a sense of duty and the acceptance of responsibility. Subordinates are encouraged to be creative, use their initiative and think in an inventive and open manner while retaining a disciplined focus on the task. Equally, a democratic style of leadership that emphasises merit rather than conformity, rank pulling and posturing, can make full use of all the talents available. In Rokossovskiy’s command, the able, inventive and quietly efficient found a place alongside the talented and forceful.

In contrast, to authoritarian leadership, confident and effective democratic leadership tolerates mistakes, rather than searching for scapegoats. It encourages risk taking, not a stifling conformity. Equally, effective democratic leadership can encourage the honest appraisal of reality, rather than wishful thinking.

Rokossovskiy was not a democratic leader: he was basically an authoritative leader who used a range of styles. Yet, his style of leadership also contained many elements that might be described as democratic, open and participatory.

### **Goleman's Theory of Leadership**

In an extended version of '*Leadership That Gets Results*' printed in the *Harvard Business Review*<sup>99</sup> Goleman elaborated upon his theory of six leadership styles. The six leadership styles were coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter and coaching.<sup>100</sup> In Goleman's view authoritative leadership is the "most strongly positive"<sup>101</sup> because its innate qualities enable it to straddle and incorporate many of the more positive qualities associated with the other styles of leadership. Goleman argues that while authoritative leadership is highly desirable and effective, truly impressive leadership demands leaders move between styles in relation to the nature of the task and their subordinates. It is related to situation leadership. Goleman is fully aware that personal qualities influence the nature and style of leadership exercised by all leaders. Indeed, he has convincingly argued that all leadership styles are influenced by underlying issues of emotional intelligence, personal qualities, characteristics or traits that make up the personality of an individual.<sup>102</sup>

Coercive or authoritarian leaders demand instant obedience. They are dominated by the need to achieve, the use of personal initiative and self control. Coercive leadership is also characterised by an attitude that reflects a temperamental inclination to instruct and dominate. Authoritarian commanders are decisive, ruthless and aggressive. They are often brilliant individuals, but, while they exercise command easily, their style of leadership is frequently too authoritarian. Authoritarians tend to extract obedience, neither inspiring, or taking the time to discover, willing compliance. In both an implicit and explicit sense leadership is imposed by power and fear of retribution. Authoritarian leaders and commanders are wary of discussion, presenting issues in black and white terms, with debate seen as a waste of time or, worse, an act of insubordination.

Coercive leaders are suspicious of thinkers, uncomfortable with introspection, the creative and unorthodox. Naturally, authoritarian leaders are intolerant of failure,<sup>103</sup> demanding, as in the case of Zhukov, nothing less than perfection, from themselves and everyone else.<sup>104</sup> The authoritarian leader is a famous character in

the pages of Russian and Soviet history, both civil and military, as well as many other countries. There is little doubt that leading commanders such as Zhukov, Konev, Sokolovskiy, Yeremenko and Malinovskiy were, in almost every sense of the word, authoritarian in their leadership style. Equally, it is fair to say that such commanders found a natural home in Stalin's Red Army.

In extremis, this style of leadership encourages excessive caution and conformity, something the Red Army was inclined towards, and, perhaps something many of its commanders were more comfortable with. The paranoid conformists of 1941, whether authoritarian by instinct, or not, were unused to, unwilling to, or unable to switch on the moral and intellectual talents to deal with the fast moving operations imposed on them by the Wehrmacht. Naturally, conformity inhibited creativity and, in the absence of orders or simply permission from Moscow, undermined the residual talents of the Red Army's officers. In Goleman's opinion the coercive or authoritarian style of leadership works in a crisis but its overall impact is negative.<sup>105</sup> Ironically, the underlying authoritarianism of Soviet society and the Red Army probably helped Rokossovskiy to develop and sustain a more imaginative and less coercive style of leadership. In this army and society habits of obedience and compliance were deeply ingrained. Rokossovskiy used this as a platform from which to encourage greater creativity and initiative as part of an authoritative not authoritarian style of leadership.

Authoritative leaders create a sense of vision that brings their subordinates<sup>106</sup> with them by inspiring a sense of mission. In this sense it is related to transformational leadership. This can act as a dynamic force for change in a leadership culture, particularly when the need for change is acknowledged either implicitly or explicitly by those that are led.<sup>107</sup> Authoritative leaders are self confident with an astute understanding of their subordinates as well as the tasks of leadership. It is their ability to reconcile the two that acts a powerful catalyst for sustainable change. Authoritative leaders define the standards expected in the fulfilment of individual tasks as part of an overall vision but give subordinates flexibility, the chance to use their initiative. In short, "authoritative leaders give people the freedom to innovate, experiment, and take calculated risks."<sup>108</sup> The historical evidence will demonstrate that judged by this definition Rokossovskiy



was a highly impressive authoritative leader, who nurtured, encouraged and developed the talents of his senior officers in a manner that was distinctly unusual within the Red Army.

Affiliative leadership places people first and is based up the idea that content subordinates are enthusiastic and committed. In combination with ability this enhances the capacity to achieve goals but in harmony with others not at their expense.

Affiliative leaders strive to create strong leadership groups bound by fierce loyalty<sup>109</sup> and friendship. A sense of belonging<sup>110</sup> and being valued creates trust that encourages open discussion and the exchange of ideas because subordinates work together for the group rather than in ruthless competition for the leader's favour. In simple terms if people like and trust each other they will communicate in a free and uninhibited way. This atmosphere engenders natural risk taking and innovation.<sup>111</sup>

According to Goleman affiliative leadership is particularly appropriate in response to a group damaged by lack of trust and integrity among leaders. It is also beneficial in dangerous environments such as war when leaders and subordinates need trust and an affinity for and with each other. However, in Goleman's eyes affiliative leadership should not be used on its own as its focus on praise, friendship and loyalty can lead to poor performance with standards neglected in favour of cordiality. This can permit a creeping mediocrity to intrude upon the organisation, leading ultimately to failure. Goleman argues that a combination of authoritative and affiliative leadership is a highly effective mix.<sup>112</sup>

To Goleman democratic leadership encourages participation and the exchange of ideas between leaders and subordinates. He suggests true consensus can be highly effective in creating trust and commitment.<sup>113</sup> However, it often takes time, can be used to avoid decision making and should never be used in a crisis.<sup>114</sup> It was inappropriate for the repeated crises that Rokossovskiy encountered especially during 1941 and in the actual conduct of operations. However, if used intelligently with judgement in an appropriate manner Goleman argues democratic leadership can have a distinctly positive impact.

The fifth style of leadership assessed by Goleman is pacesetting. In Goleman's eyes a pacesetter has demanding standards encapsulated in the notion of "do as I do, now."<sup>115</sup> These leaders are perfectionists "obsessive about doing things better and faster" judging themselves and others severely. There is an assumption and expectation that exceptional performance is normal. Task is everything and those deemed responsible for failure are cast aside. Pacesetters have a highly developed sense of duty, with a visible and distinctly overt leadership style, that demands instant compliance, combined with unstinting application to duty. In many respects, such men or women are what society and the individual themselves call natural leaders. They tend to be impatient and brusque, with a keen sense of hierarchy and power.

In Goleman's research despite its natural affinity to popular notions of leadership the impact of pacesetting leadership was generally negative.<sup>116</sup> As well as extracting and imposing high standards, it was also associated with the fear of failure and<sup>117</sup> punishment. In the longer term pacesetting creates a culture where initiative and imagination are squashed in the race to comply. It also encourages micromanagement rather than delegation with leaders inclined to prescribe how something should be done as well as what should be done in order to retain control and ward off the lurking anxiety of failure. However, Goleman acknowledged that pacesetting is also a highly effective leadership tool if used intelligently with the right people, in particular highly motivated subordinates that are capable and efficient.<sup>118</sup>

The coaching style of leadership is associated with the nurturing of talent for the future. It is more experimental<sup>119</sup> and less directly concerned with results. It is a strategic form of leadership and Goleman argues that although its impact is generally positive it is uncommon because even peacetime leaders are dominated by time and the tyranny of tangible results.<sup>120</sup> Yet, there is clear evidence following the maelstrom of survival in the period June 1941-March 1942 that Rokossovskiy established a culture that identified and developed leaders at all levels of command. In the circumstances of the Great Patriotic War and Stalin's Red Army this was a truly radical and impressive piece of leadership.

In summary, Goleman discusses six styles of leadership that are related and overlap but are distinct. There is a natural connection between the coercive and pacesetter forms of leadership as there is between democratic, affiliative and coaching styles of leadership. In the opinion of this author Goleman's theory is held together by a master principle which is actually more of a quality than a theory of leadership, namely judgment. Judgement is an intangible matter; "at the lowest levels, judgement is a matter of common sense tempered by military experience. As responsibility increases, greater judgement is required of commanders, which is largely a function of knowledge and intellect."<sup>121</sup> Therefore, at Rokossovskiy's rank, a refined intellectual judgement was of critical importance. It was a key characteristic of his leadership and operational command.

### **Authoritarian Leaders and the Red Army Leadership Culture**

The historical image of the Red Army's leadership style is a complex one. It is dominated<sup>122</sup> by images of politically reliable and ruthless commanders, driving on their troops, regardless of casualties. There is some truth in this image. As Hastings observed "Konev is sometimes described as 'ruthless'. This adjective seems superfluous in speaking of any Soviet commander. None could hold his rank or perform the tasks demanded of the Red Army without possessing a contempt for life unusual even in the ranks of the Waffen SS."<sup>123</sup>



**Figure 57: I. Konev**  
(en.wikipedia.com)

The Red Army's commanders have been portrayed, almost without exception, as callous disciplinarians, representatives of a brutal Stalinist state, who ruthlessly wielded the immense human and material resources of the Red Army.

It is rare for a Soviet commander to be presented as anything other than authoritarian in his style of leadership, although occasionally 'tragic' heroes such as Tukhachevskiy are presented as charismatic autocrats.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, "there is no biographical evidence to suggest that Stalin's marshals possessed either cultural refinement or humanitarian scruple, that any was, in truth, much more than a militarily gifted brute."<sup>125</sup> It is rare for a Soviet commander to be presented as an

intelligent general, a master of the art of war, capable of out-thinking their opponents. It is even more unusual for history to contemplate the possibility that a leading Red Army commander may have possessed a discerning, thoughtful style of leadership.

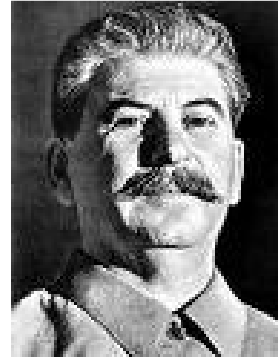
At the same time there is recognition of the talents of senior commanders. Indeed, as Hastings concedes,

“at the highest level, Soviet generalship was much more imaginative than that of the Western armies. Zhukov was the outstanding allied commander of the Second World War, more effective than his Anglo-American counterparts, master of the grand envelopment. Several other Soviet marshals – Vasilevsky,(sic) Konev, Chernyhakhovsky,(sic) Rokossovsky(sic) - displayed the highest gifts.”<sup>126</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of World War Two, many German officers thought “the higher echelons of the Russian command proved capable from the very beginning of the war and learned a great deal more during its course. They were flexible, full of initiative, and energetic.”<sup>127</sup> Yet, there is always a caveat: that they were almost inhuman in their ruthless use of the immense, hapless numbers at their disposal. German commanders believed “the large number of troop units that were available gave the Soviet command an advantage over the Germans.....In addition, the low valuation placed on human life freed the Soviet high command from moral inhibitions.”<sup>128</sup> During the Cold War, western historiography tended to ignore the positive assessments and judge the Red Army by the negative.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the entire leadership culture of Soviet society was brutal and callous. Stalin’s attitude to losses was complete indifference.

“For him only the goal mattered. He was never tormented by conscience or grief at the enormous losses. News that large numbers of divisions, or corps or armies had been destroyed would alarm him, but there is not a single document in Staff HQ archives showing his concern about the number of lives lost. He was oblivious of the fundamental principle of military art, namely, that the objective should be gained at minimal cost in human life. He believed that both victories and defeats inevitably reaped a bitter harvest, that it was an inescapable fact of modern warfare.....Given such vast military strength and a well-organized system of reserves, it seemed to Stalin quite unnecessary to make the attainment of strategic targets dependent on the scale of losses.”<sup>129</sup>



**Figure 58: Stalin**  
(mishalov.com)

Therefore, Stalin’s marshals were men of their times, a reflection of a cruel political system that placed no value on individual life. The fact that “Stalin knew that Zhukov conceded nothing to him in toughness of character” is to be damned by appalling faint praise.<sup>130</sup> During the war, according to Khrushchev, if a commander complained about incompetence, Stalin would often ask if the commander had punched the offender, and if he had not, to do so in the future.<sup>131</sup>

In the early days of Barbarossa, in the absence of effective communications, this punitive, authoritarian culture left able commanders paralysed, caught between the Wehrmacht, Stalin’s NKVD and political commissars. In 1941-42, authoritarian conformists of little talent, or able men intimidated into abject submission, were not what the Red Army needed to overcome the Wehrmacht. Stalin’s authoritarian and vindictive instincts ensured that, at least initially, he sought to manage the crisis by institutionalising authoritarian conformity, rather than promoting those of a more imaginative, but potentially independent outlook. It is perhaps a credit to Stalin’s intellect, that in the end, this most natural and cruel autocrat, realised that the Soviet Union’s survival depended on at least a

temporary relaxation of the mental shackles, that did so much to consolidate his own political power.

### **Rokossovskiy and the Encouragement of Initiative**

Once the Red Army had established its consensus about the dominance of the operational level it was imperative that commanders fused all tactical units into one coherent operational whole. In the context of operational synchronisation this had quite significant implications for the relative importance of tactical and operational initiative. In 1924, Tukhachevskiy argued,

“any suggestion of the exercise of independent command by junior commanders is unacceptable. Not knowing the general situation, junior commanders are always liable to take decisions incompatible with it and this may engender a catastrophe. It may cause a boldly conceived and executed operation, requiring precise co-operation between its component parts, to start coming apart at the seams.”<sup>132</sup>

This became the general model of wartime practice, although Rokossovskiy was more inclined to encourage initiative than Tukhachevskiy and many wartime commanders. The degree of operational centralisation practised by the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War has often provoked discussion about the relative lack of creative initiative displayed by Soviet tactical commanders. German officers frequently claimed that Soviet tactical commanders carried out the plan regardless of the tactical circumstances that confronted them in battle. In contrast, the Germans acknowledged that operational commanders such as Rokossovskiy were highly imaginative.

By autumn 1942, the test of war had removed politically reliable but militarily incompetent figures such as Voroshilov<sup>133</sup> and Budenny.<sup>134</sup> They were replaced by professionals such as Zhukov, Vasilveskiy, Rokossovskiy, Konev and Vatutin, supported by capable army commanders, staff officers and mobile group commanders. However, the disparity in creativity between operational and



**Figure 59: M. Tukhachevskiy**  
(istorya.ru)

tactical commanders reflected the Red Army's doctrinal belief that tactical success was fleeting, while operational success was decisive. Soviet tactical command was defined by the wider operational plan, not individual tactical success. The Red Army constantly urged its tactical commanders to display initiative in battle, but the Russian word *initsiatiava* did not, and does not mean the same as the western word initiative. Soviet *initsiatiava* was about executing your tactical mission as effectively and rapidly as possible. It was simply one piece in an overall operational picture, one step in a sequence of leaps designed to achieve the objective. There was no place for unscripted, individual tactical initiative.

Soviet tactical commanders did display considerable tactical wit, native cunning and ingenuity in surmounting the obstacles to an advance, but genuinely creative tactical flair was frequently subordinated to wider operational interests. Equally, it is true to say that many Soviet tactical commanders showed little tactical imagination, were slavishly subservient to the letter of the plan and got their men slaughtered. In effect, the Red Army curtailed tactical creativity in order to ensure operational coherence; without it operational synchronisation would have been more or less impossible, despite the fact that it was considered essential.

Since the 1980's the British Army and the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have developed a philosophy of leadership and command known as mission command. The British Army argues that "mission command is a philosophy of decentralized command intended for situations which are complex, dynamic and adversarial."<sup>135</sup> Mission command is based around the idea that a leader and commander's responsibility, at all levels within the chain of command, is to inform his subordinates of what is required, namely the mission, but refrain from instructing them on how it should be done. In short, the commander outlines his intentions, or intent, and then delegates responsibility, relying on subordinates' ability, initiative, creativity and will to accomplish the mission.

It is the senior commander's responsibility to define the parameters of the mission thus conveying a clear framework of understanding within which subordinates are encouraged to use their initiative and imagination. In essence, "the commander's intent binds the activities of a dispersed force into a whole while maximising his subordinates authority to act."<sup>136</sup> Mission command formally delegates authority and power to subordinates but clarifies, directs and restrains their actions by emphasising the need to act in accordance with the commander's intent. In short, mission command does not confer complete independence of command because it recognises that unregulated individual initiative will produce chaos rather than flexible unity of effort in pursuit of the objective.

As a philosophy, mission command has several strengths. It encourages the acceptance of responsibility from the earliest stages of an individual's career. By advocating the tolerance of well-intentioned mistakes, officers are given the opportunity to practice and refine their habits of decision making and judgement, marrying them with experience and intellect. Furthermore, by allowing subordinates to exercise their initiative commanders are able to acquire a more informed and realistic understanding of their subordinates' capabilities rather than observing a choreographed rendition of a well scripted performance. In a similar way, subordinates acquire a more realistic understanding of their own role, that of others and a greater awareness and understanding of what is and what is not possible. In theory, mission command fosters a culture infused with natural flexibility, creative imagination, risk taking, decisiveness and confident self-reliance. It becomes a way of thinking, not simply a formal method of command. As a result operations are conducted in a dynamic and flexible manner that saves time and instills natural speed and tempo into a unified effort to achieve the mission.

Nevertheless, mission command also contains potential weaknesses which are not necessarily systemic but a product of the variables of human nature. If the commander's intent is unclear, poorly expressed, inadequately understood or unrealistic, then confusion and disunity of effort can result as subordinates



interpret their missions differently in relation to their perception of the commander's intent. Equally, undisciplined and egotistical subordinates can subvert the inherent flexibility within mission command. This corrodes trust, a key element of mission command, and risks a situation where individual initiative is not exercised in pursuit of the commander's intent. Naturally, unscripted, ill-disciplined individual initiative can seriously undermine unity of effort. Mission command is a philosophy that encourages the use of individual initiative within defined parameters to achieve the objective. In short, the use of initiative is a means to an end but there is a danger that individuals will see independence of command and decision making as a right in itself.

In World War Two, German commanders were often highly creative in fashioning encirclements and the German concept of *auftragstaktik* made a virtue out of improvised tactical creativity.<sup>137</sup> *Auftragstaktik* was a German command method begun in the period of reform initiated by Scharnhorst and Gneisenau between 1806-1813 following the catastrophic Prussian defeat inflicted by Napoleon at Jena-Auerstadt in October 1806. It was a response to the growing scale of the battlefield and to the shocking, lethargic performance of the Prussian officer corps. It was a key German command principle throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

It is widely believed to have been a key factor in Prussia's victory over Austria in 1866 and in the Prussian/German victory over France in 1870. The concept of *auftragstaktik* reached its apogee during the inter-war years<sup>138</sup> and was refined by Hans von Seeckt, the head of the Reichswehr (1919-1926). Seeckt considered it to be essential that leaders on the spot made quick decisions based on instinct.<sup>139</sup> Soldiers and junior officers were to be "independent thinkers."<sup>140</sup> Yet Seeckt also emphasised the key quality of judgment, stressing the need to "understand when to act independently and when to wait for orders."<sup>141</sup>

The concept of mission command is often seen as an evolution of the historic and contemporary German notion of *auftragstaktik*. In the sense that both

philosophies of leadership and command incorporate, either through choice or necessity, the ideas of delegation, they are clearly related. However, recent historical opinion has questioned the extent to which mission command is a direct product of *auftragstaktik*. In his recent, comprehensive historical study of *The German Way of War* Robert M. Citino<sup>142</sup> has challenged contemporary Anglo-American assumptions concerning *auftragstaktik*. He argues,

“it is customary today, in U.S. military circles for example, to use the term *Auftragstaktik* to describe the German doctrine of command. According to the common explanation, the supreme commander (typically the Chief of the General Staff) devised a mission (*Auftrag*), but left the methods and the means of achieving it to the officer on the spot. They could handle their commands as they saw fit, as long as they were acting within the mission defined by the supreme commander. Analysts typically see this flexible command system as one of the secrets to German battlefield success. In fact, defined in that way, *Auftragstaktik* is completely mythological. The Germans hardly ever used the term when discussing issues of command. Rather, they spoke of ‘the independence of subordinate commanders,’ which is a very different thing.”<sup>143</sup>

There is clear evidence that many Prussian and German commanders understood *auftragstaktik*’s primary meaning as independence of *their* command, namely that the field commander had the right, even the duty, to make independent decisions, even if this, as it frequently did, undermined overall operational cohesion in pursuit of strategic objectives, precisely the point outlined by Tukhachevskiy in 1924. In effect, many German field commanders appeared to reject the idea that their right to exercise initiative was bound and confined by the modern contemporary concept of the commander’s intent. On occasions, senior Prussian and German commanders interpretations of *auftragstaktik* very nearly induced German defeat rather than victory. The stubborn independence exercised by commanders often directly contradicted and regularly subverted the overall commander’s intent. In 1866, the activities of Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia, commanding 1<sup>st</sup> Prussian Army, and General Albrecht von Manstein, a

divisional commander who claimed he didn't know Moltke, the supreme commander and ignored his instructions, severely threatened Moltke's overall intent. In short,

“the Bohemian campaign was an example of *Auftragstaktik* only if having subordinate commanders ignore your directives, march south when you've distinctly ordered them to march east, and treat you with barely disguised contempt are truly a form of 'flexible command.' Frederick Charles of the 1st Army, for example, had no understanding at all of Moltke's strategy, didn't much like the parts he did understand, and was loath to follow anything but a direct order from his uncle, the king.”<sup>144</sup>

Similarly, in 1870, the Prussian 1<sup>st</sup> Army's commander, General Karl von Steinmetz engaged in an entirely unauthorised southward advance so he could fight the enemy where he had found them, regardless of the fact that he was directly contradicting von Moltke's orders and nearly destroyed the entire operational plan.<sup>145</sup> Likewise in August 1914, a solo eastward advance by corps commander, General Hermann von Francois, part of the 8th Prussian Army under General von Prittwitz, compromised the whole scheme of operations. As his single corps engaged the Russians, Francois ignored Prittwitz's orders to break off the battle. Francois replied that he would break off, more or less, in his own good time when he had defeated the Russians.<sup>146</sup>

The explanation for this apparently gross insubordination by such senior commanders is that they considered themselves to be following what they believed to be the single, dominant characteristic of the Prussian/German way of warfare, one they assumed almost without thinking was the commander's intent, indeed the whole point of a war.<sup>147</sup> Namely, that victory in war is achieved through the destruction of the enemy force in the field. Senior commanders such as Moltke, understood that in pursuit of destroying the enemy in the field one required an overall plan in order to determine where, when and why one fought an enemy in order to maximise the chances of inflicting a massive defeat on an opponent. In short, some battles were and are more important than others.

However, other German commanders, seem to have believed that one fought the enemy wherever you found them. In their eyes this was why independence of command existed, to give field commanders the freedom and speed to find the enemy and destroy him.

Clausewitz had repeatedly emphasised that “direct annihilation of the enemy’s forces must be the dominant consideration” in a war.<sup>148</sup> In Citino’s words “this was the Clausewitz that most German officers knew, rather than the sage who wrote that ‘war is the continuation of policy by other means’.”<sup>149</sup> In the period 1866-1945, the German Army was obsessed with achieving the Clausewitzian ideal of the destruction of the enemy army in the field, through encirclement and annihilation or the *kesselschlacht*. If armies were bigger, then axiomatically, encirclements had to be larger. This scaling up of tactical principles reached its apogee, or nadir, with the Schlieffen Plan of August 1914, a war plan to encircle and annihilate more or less the entire French armed forces in a matter of weeks.

In the Great Patriotic War, the Germans often appeared to sacrifice operational coherence on the altar of tactical creativity, with unity of effort loosely maintained by the idea of the *kesselschlacht*, the equivalent of the commander’s intent. To the Soviets constant tactical improvisation was bad planning, not a military virtue, indicative of a lack of creative foresight. Improvisation was a method of crisis management, not a standard operating procedure. To the Germans, it was an acknowledgement of the chaotic nature of war. The Germans expected tactical creativity during an operation in order to adapt and overcome, whereas the Soviets expected creative foresight to foresee and avoid. In practice the polarised nature of these positions was significantly amended by the realities of fighting and Rokossovskiy certainly encouraged his junior officers to show more creativity than was customary in the course of an operation. Nevertheless, the Germans and Soviets did have a different philosophical approach to the question of where, when, how, by whom and why creative initiative was exercised.

The size of Rokossovskiy's commands, the need for timely decisions and the Red Army's authoritarian leadership culture meant that Rokossovskiy's style of leadership was confined to a limited numbers of senior officers, but it was very different from that of his contemporaries and succeeded in creating a different leadership culture. In the contemporary era this might be classified or at least acknowledged as related to the idea of transformational leadership. In his memoirs Rokossovskiy constantly remarks upon the need for creative thinking, trust, risk taking and the intelligent use of initiative.<sup>150</sup> The evidence of the Great Patriotic War suggests that Rokossovskiy's ideas were a genuine reflection of his actions, rather than a retrospective justification of a reality that had never existed.

In contrast to Vatutin, who, by his own admission, allowed his staff officer training to persuade him of the need to do everything himself,<sup>151</sup> Rokossovskiy exploited his officers by granting them freedom to use their initiative. Batov, 65<sup>th</sup> Army's commander declared "from the summer of 1942 until the end of the war I served under the command of this outstanding general"<sup>152</sup> who

"encouraged in every possible way the use of initiative and the showing of quick wit in battle. He demanded talented people and students all of the time. For the capable ones who had distinguished themselves in battle were created Front courses for junior officers and second lieutenants: they prepared our platoon and company commanders."<sup>153</sup>



**Figure 60: P.I. Batov**  
([www.coldwar.hu](http://www.coldwar.hu))

In an army and state, notorious before and during the war, for discouraging the use of initiative, especially among junior officers, Rokossovskiy's commitment to the use of creativity and initiative, among all officers, not just the senior commanders, was particularly noteworthy. This is clear evidence of Rokossovskiy's commitment to an authoritative rather than authoritarian style of leadership. It was distinctly unusual and the closest that any senior Red Army commander got to the modern concept of mission command and the German idea

of *aufstragtaktik*. Rokossovskiy's impact on his junior officers was indirect, but he established the leadership and command culture in which they were trained and quite deliberately coached in order to nurture talent and ensure that it realised its full potential. In short, in keeping with the achievement orientated leadership of path-goal theory, as an authoritative leader Rokossovskiy laid down the standard and ensured that courses were set up to develop and exploit natural leadership talent.

The degree of personal initiative Rokossovskiy conferred on his senior commanders did contain certain perils. It occasionally undermined rather than engendered operational synchronisation. In February 1943, Kryukov's impetuosity led 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps into a difficult situation.<sup>154</sup> None could accuse Kryukov of lack of initiative, perhaps judgement, but Rokossovskiy was never a commander to penalise initiative even if it occasionally led to mistakes. Similarly, during the East Prussian Operation of January 1945, a small tank group broke into the Prussian town of Elbing and scattered its startled citizens by marching down the high street. However, it became isolated and later 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army had to launch a rescue operation. Rokossovskiy was not pleased but there were no repercussions as this was clearly misguided initiative.



**Figure 61: A.P. Panfilov**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

If Rokossovskiy had personal reservations, he was prepared to allow an enterprising commander to prove him wrong. In March 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front confronted the town of Stolp, in western Pomerania. After Stettin, Stolp was the second biggest town in the region. It was heavily fortified and when A.P. Panfilov, 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Corps' commander, claimed he could penetrate the town's defences in twenty-four hours, Rokossovskiy was highly sceptical. Nevertheless, in the wake of a clever tactical manoeuvre, Panfilov's troops deceived the defenders and burst into Stolp, followed by 19<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>155</sup>

In August 1943, the initiative of 60<sup>th</sup> Army's commander, Chernyakhovskiy, had rescued the faltering Cherigov-Pripyat Operation.

However, as the subsequent operation developed "Chernyakhovsky's insistence on advancing towards Kiev prevented the Army from widening the bridgehead. Several days were wasted on fruitless attacks."<sup>156</sup> Rokossovskiy was more irritated about this entirely unscripted activity because it was not, unlike Kryukov, done in pursuit of an objective set by Rokossovskiy. In



**Figure 62: I.D. Chernyakhovskiy**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

effect, Chernyakhovskiy, had established a small operation of his own. Naturally, this undermined the operational synchronisation of the Central Front, where Rokossovskiy was to establish as many sizeable bridgeheads across the Dnepr as possible. This was insubordination, not the misguided, but welcome, use of initiative that Rokossovskiy was invariably inclined to accept.

This style of leadership was very much in tune with the achievement-orientated strand of path-goal theory. The aim was to develop the performance of all officers in order to maximise the Front's fighting power. It is no accident that dynamic, creative and imaginative commanders like P.I. Batov (1897-1985),<sup>157</sup> I.D. Chernyakhovskiy (1906-1945),<sup>158</sup> N.P. Pukhov (1895-1958),<sup>159</sup> I.I. Fedyuninskiy (1900-1977),<sup>160</sup> and V.T. Volskiy (1897-1946)<sup>161</sup> flourished under Rokossovskiy. Old style Bolsheviks, full of ideological ardour, authoritarianism, but little wit or mental agility such as I.V. Boldin (1892-1965) and G.K. Kozlov (1902-1970)<sup>162</sup> did not thrive. Furthermore, by displaying confidence and trust in his senior commanders Rokossovskiy created time and space for critical operational decisions. In essence, and in sharp contrast with Vatutin, Rokossovskiy identified the decisions that mattered and was not unduly concerned with those that did not. These he left to Mikhail Sergeyevich Malinin, (1899-1960)<sup>163</sup> his Chief of Staff from August 1941-November 1944, who Rokossovskiy described as a "calm, pedantic man with full confidence in himself and his subordinates. One never doubted his ability to see that an order was carried out."<sup>164</sup> In short, Rokossovskiy

had a natural understanding of the difference between leadership and management, or command and staff work. Rokossovskiy led, Malinin managed.

### **Consultation In Planning Operations: The Encouragement of Initiative**

There is considerable evidence to suggest that Rokossovskiy's commitment to consulting his colleagues about the planning and subsequent conduct of forthcoming operations was more than just a rhetorical device deployed in his memoirs to preserve his reputation for posterity. Rokossovskiy always retained the ultimate power of decision, but involved senior officers in the planning of operations, as a matter of policy, not as an exception to the rule. Rokossovskiy displayed an openness to ideas that has now been confirmed as a key personality trait in leadership. The evidence suggests that such leaders tend to be informed, creative and insightful.<sup>165</sup>

Batov suggests that when difficult problems were anticipated or confronted, Rokossovskiy was open to advice, suggestions and alternative proposals.<sup>166</sup> In his opinion "this created a wonderful working atmosphere - neither constrained, nor apprehensive about speaking their minds, using their judgement."<sup>167</sup> It is easy to be sceptical of this statement but in Stalin's Red Army this was an extraordinary state of affairs entirely out of keeping with the wider culture of the Red Army. This evidence suggests that by the contemporary standards of the Red Army, Rokossovskiy might be considered as a genuinely transformational leader who created a truly distinct working atmosphere within his command. It was borne of his vision that army officers should be creative, imaginative, dynamic, decisive, with an almost vocational sense of duty, commitment to the highest standards and imbued with a desire to excel.

By instinct, Rokossovskiy was personally creative and innovative in military thinking. Indeed, the cultivation of ideas was central to his style of leadership. In the period August 1941-November 1944, many of these ideas came from Rokossovskiy's command group, made up of senior staff officers and army commander. At the end of July 1941, Group Rokossovskiy, the *ad hoc* force that



became 16<sup>th</sup> Army, was reinforced by the full strength 7<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps. It was the beginning of a long association for the staff of 7<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps remained with Rokossovskiy, in one form or another, until November 1944.

Rokossovskiy's senior commanders remained remarkably stable during the Great Patriotic War and this was undoubtedly a key factor in his operational success. In the course of the war, until they parted in November 1944, this group of officers, led by Rokossovskiy, endured a range of situations, crises, defeat, failure, triumph, improvisation, planning, defence, attack, exhaustion and euphoria. Rokossovskiy knew his senior commanders well and considered an effective senior command team an essential aspect of leadership and command. They were not simply the executors of his will, but a brains trust, men whose opinions he invited and considered, though it would be wrong to suggest they offered their thoughts as if it was their right. Rokossovskiy's style of leadership did contain participatory aspects, but it was not democratic leadership in its fullest sense.



**Figure 63: A.I. Proshlyakov**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

The importance of a genuine, senior command team was of central importance, not optional, to Rokossovskiy's authoritative style of leadership. On one occasion, Batov recalled Rokossovskiy saying to Malinin, his chief of artillery, Vasily Ivanovich Kazakov (1898-1968),<sup>168</sup> Proshlyakov, chief of engineers and Oryol, the armoured commander that he was glad to serve with them and they were his men.<sup>169</sup> In the contemporary era this would be termed affiliative leadership. In the period August 1941-May 1945, many of the senior command staff and the army commanders remained under Rokossovskiy's leadership for an unusually sustained period of time. Certainly, Rokossovskiy, whether for personal or professional reasons, seems to have been closer to some commanders and senior officers than others.

These men served with Rokossovskiy from August 1941-November 1944, in a partnership that survived and prospered, until 12<sup>th</sup> November 1944, when Stalin moved Rokossovskiy to 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. In the months and years from August 1941-November 1944, every time *Stavka* moved Rokossovskiy to another operational command, he always requested that this inner circle of officers went with him. These men, in conjunction with army commanders such as Batov, Fedyuninskiy who served with Rokossovskiy for prolonged periods of time, performed an important psychological as well as professional role. According to Batov, Rokossovskiy “did not like solitude, striving to work closely with his staff.”<sup>170</sup> In one sense, one might interpret this as a sign of extraversion, the tendency to be sociable and assertive that research suggests are a common trait of leaders.<sup>171</sup> However, it seems more likely that this was a considered aspect of Rokossovskiy’s leadership and an indication of the psychological horrors he endured in extended solitary confinement during the Purges.

In the absence of this team of trusted, competent officers, Rokossovskiy’s ‘in’ crowd, it is difficult to see how Rokossovskiy could have practised the authoritative, but in many respects surprisingly participatory and democratic style of leadership, that became his hallmark on the Eastern Front. In a contemporary context Rokossovskiy seems to have instinctively appreciated that in the Red Army, elements of affiliative and democratic leadership had considerable benefits in fusing task and relationship behaviour in order to get the military job done. It also seems reasonable to conclude that in the wake of the Purges of the 1930’s and the witchhunt for scapegoats in 1941, Rokossovskiy’s use of what is now termed affiliative leadership must have been a powerful psychological tool that created tremendous trust between him and his senior command team. In Stalin’s Soviet Union and Zhukov’s Red Army trust was a rare, one is tempted to say mythical and magical commodity that gave Rokossovskiy’s senior commanders the courage to use their initiative and speak their minds.

During the planning of Operation Kol’tso, in December 1942, “all the leading Front and Army command personnel, generals and officers with experience and

knowledge were drawn into this work.”<sup>172</sup> Of those senior officers, Rokossovskiy declared “what I liked best about them was their ability to uphold their views.”<sup>173</sup> During the preparations for Kursk, army commanders and staff officers were consulted extensively, while as a matter of principle, in his memoirs Rokossovskiy went out of his way to praise his senior officers, particularly unheralded ones, such as Proshlyakov, Chief of Engineers, whom Rokossovskiy singled out as having played a critical role in the defensive victory at Kursk.<sup>174</sup>

In November 1943, in preparation for the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation,

“the plan of the operation was the work of a large team. The initial estimates had been drawn up by the Front Headquarters.....later the tasks had been worked out in detail with the army commanders, who had been assembled at P.I. Batov’s C.P. This was a system of preparing for an operation that I always adhered to - time permitting of course.”<sup>175</sup>

In the summer of 1944, Rokossovskiy attributed much of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front’s success in Operation Bagration and the Lublin-Brest Operation to the fact that “with the army commanders we had drawn up a detailed plan of the operation, fixing the main zones of the attack and giving concrete tasks to every formation.”<sup>176</sup> This enabled Rokossovskiy to convey to his commanders a genuine understanding of the operational concept that underpinned his operational plans. In particular, it made his tactical commanders aware of their role in the overall operation.

Rokossovskiy’s sustained commitment to consultation and the encouragement of initiative in planning is borne out by the fact that he was still using it, indeed extending it further by the time of the East Prussian Operation, in January-February 1945.

“In all these preparations I employed the system of staff work which had served me so well in the past. The operation was prepared by the collective effort of the personnel. At headquarters we discussed the plans before taking final decisions, exchanged views on the utilisation and co-ordination of the various arms and services, and heard and discussed

reports by officers from various formations. We were thus able to avoid wasting time summoning department, arm and service chiefs, and listening to long, tiresome reports. Procedures that had seemed suitable in peacetime did not justify themselves in war.”<sup>177</sup>

The East Prussian Operation was particularly significant as Rokossovskiy was dealing with a different group of staff officers. In the aftermath of Stalin’s decision to remove him from 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, in favour of Zhukov, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1944, Rokossovskiy did not request that his usual group of staff officers should follow him to 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>178</sup>

It is interesting, that in January-March 1945, when conducting the East Prussian and East Pomeranian Operations with some different army commanders and especially staff officers, not of his own choice, with many ‘unschooled’ in his style of operations, Rokossovskiy was more authoritarian in his style of command, than at any stage, since the opening, chaotic weeks of the war. Nevertheless, in general Rokossovskiy’s style of command was marked by a commitment to work with senior officers in an authoritative style of leadership that also contained a substantial element of democratic leadership. These close, trusted colleagues enabled Rokossovskiy’s method of leadership and command to work better, but ultimately they were a symptom of a well thought out style of leadership, they were not its co-authors. It was highly successful and by the contemporary standards of the Red Army, a radical, bold, almost transformational style of leadership. In the words of Batov, “looking back everyone wanted to think more confidently, function more confidently.”<sup>179</sup>

The contrast between Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership and Sokolovskiy’s could hardly have been greater. In its 1944 report on Sokolovskiy’s Western Front the *Stavka* received information that,

“the *front* commander, Comrade Sokolovsky(sic), is separated from his closest assistants-the commanders of the forces branches and the chiefs of the services by many



**Figure 64: Sokolovskiy**  
(commons.wikipedia.org)

days, does not use them, and does not resolve their questions. Some of the deputy commanders did not know about the missions of their branch forces with regard to ongoing operations, to say nothing of the fact that they were not included in the preparation of the operations.”<sup>180</sup>

Rokossovskiy appreciated and understood the importance of senior officers speaking their mind and defending their judgement in a constructive exchange of views. The *Front*’s command staff were his brains trust and to be cultivated and exploited in the planning and conduct of operations. However, elsewhere,

“The Western Front staff did not perform its role. The staff is aloof and torn away from the *front* command and from vital missions resolved by its forces and, in essence, is some sort of statistical bureau, which only gathers information on the situation, and even this is late. Matters of planning operations, organizing battle, and controlling the commander’s decision on matters is withdrawn from the staff’s functions. During the course of 4 months, the chief of staff and the entire staff were located a distance of about 100 kilometers from the disposition of the *front* commander, and during this time the commander and the chief of staff met one another no more than 3-4 times.”<sup>181</sup>

This distant, detached style of leadership was not tolerated or practised by Rokossovskiy. Indeed, the evidence is that he would have found such leadership and command incomprehensible, a contradiction in terms.

### **Honest Reporting and Trust: The Encouragement of Ideas and Initiative**

Rokossovskiy’s officers did speak their mind rather than merely echo the thoughts



**Figure 65: N.I. Gusev**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

of their commander. On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1945, during a blizzard in a particularly intense phase of the East Prussian Operation, Rokossovskiy received an urgent message from N.I. Gusev (1897-1962),<sup>182</sup> 48<sup>th</sup> Army’s commander. Gusev warned that strong German forces were counter-attacking west. He doubted whether his own 48<sup>th</sup> Army

could hold them.

Therefore, “knowing Gusev only too well as an intelligent and experienced general, we realised that, once he had raised the alarm, the danger was real. We went into action at once, rushing a substantial portion of the forces of 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army, the 8<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps into the breach.”<sup>183</sup>

The wisdom of Gusev’s information was borne out by the subsequent actions of the General Staff in sending out a warning of the German counter-attack, with the possibility that Soviet forces might have to be rushed to East Prussia should the attack develop into a full blown counter-offensive.<sup>184</sup> This did not materialise but the benefits of mutual trust and honest reporting in the encouragement of initiative are clear from this episode. Rokossovskiy’s commitment to honest reporting ensured that he dealt with reality, not a fiction contrived by commanders fearful of being made a scapegoat for events beyond their control. This was not always the case with other Soviet commanders.

In April 1944, the *Stavka* report on Sokolovskiy’s Western Front during 1943-1944 in Belorussia indicated that it was consumed by a culture of dishonest reporting that seriously affected its combat performance. This dishonesty and incompetence permeated the entire Western Front’s command culture. In a specific section dealing with the *front* command, the report commented that in response to months of ineffective operations by the Western Front,

“the *front* command did not present a report to the *Stavka* concerning these deficiencies and the reasons for the failure of the operations and, furthermore, did not disclose either for itself or for the *Stavka* the reasons the *front* did not fulfil the missions assigned by the *Stavka*. In this instance the hushing up of the real reasons for the failure of the operations was nothing other than a form of deception of the *Stavka* by the *front* command.”<sup>185</sup>

Numerous officers were aware of the flaws in the Western Front but had not dealt them because they were too intimidated to raise them.<sup>186</sup>

In contrast, on several occasions Rokossovskiy placed considerable trust in the initiative and abilities of army commanders, such as 60<sup>th</sup> Army's Chernyakhovskiy and 65<sup>th</sup> Army's Batov. This confidence and trust occasionally persuaded Rokossovskiy to alter *Front* operational plans in order to exploit opportunities created by commanders reacting to or shaping events in the field. In August 1943, following 65<sup>th</sup> Army's disappointing performance as the main strike army,<sup>187</sup> Rokossovskiy ripped up the existing operational plan, to support 60<sup>th</sup> Army's unexpected breakthrough, in what had originally been designated as a holding sector.<sup>188</sup> The 60<sup>th</sup> Army smashed through the German defences.<sup>189</sup> In a matter of weeks the Central Front had crossed the Dnepr, split Army Groups Centre and South and seriously threatened Fourth Panzer Army and Second German Army.<sup>190</sup>

### **Delegation: The Encouragement of Ideas and Initiative**

Rokossovskiy was prepared to encourage risk taking and the use of initiative by delegating authority in a manner that is not usually associated with senior Red Army commanders. However, Rokossovskiy not only delegated tasks to his officers but genuinely empowered his officers to use their talents and initiative in achieving complex and significant missions, not just mundane tasks. On 10<sup>th</sup> November 1943, at the beginning of the Gomel Rechitsa Operation, Rokossovskiy decided that "since the main attack was in the 65<sup>th</sup> Army zone, I decided that the initial stages of the operation should be subordinated to the Army commander, P.I. Batov, thus giving him greater room for initiative."<sup>191</sup> In effect, Rokossovskiy was giving temporary control of the Front's deep operational assets to a tactical commander.

By 1944-45, such acts were more common among other Front commanders, but in autumn 1943, as well as delegating, Rokossovskiy was showing an unusual degree of trust and confidence in an army commander, his own judgement and his place within the Red Army high command. Indeed, earlier in the war, on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943, at the height of the German assault at Kursk, when giving orders for 2<sup>nd</sup>

Tank Army to counter-attack, Rokossovskiy delegated active tactical leadership of the combined assault to 13<sup>th</sup> Army's commander, Lieutenant General N.P. Pukhov.<sup>192</sup>

By late 1943, Stalin had curbed his inclination to sack, scapegoat and execute generals, but it still took a brave commander to delegate authority and deliberately empower his subordinates in this way. Nobody was under any illusions as to who would carry the ultimate responsibility for failure. In such a centralised state and society, delegation and the fostering of individual initiative was not a natural instinct. Rokossovskiy did not acquire his inclination to delegate from a Red Army system that was notoriously suspicious, not to say downright hostile, to such a command culture. Yet, because of his style of leadership, Rokossovskiy understood his senior commanders well. It was not a one off, but a habit, a style of command. He chose well: Batov distinguished himself, took Rechitsa and paved the way for the Belorussian Front to establish a bridgehead at Zhlobin, over the massive, soggy Berezina-Dnepr confluence.<sup>193</sup>

In his memoirs, Rokossovskiy gives an indication of his willingness to delegate and the confidence he was prepared to place in his commanders. By January 1945, Rokossovskiy was at 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front and "pleased with myself for not having succumbed to the temptation of taking my old colleagues with me."<sup>194</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> January 1945, the East Prussian Operation began,

"the mist grew denser and the snow came down thicker. A ceaseless rumble could be heard from the battlefield. The OP had communications with all the armies of the forward and second echelons, as well as with formations subordinated to the Front. We could receive all necessary information about the development of events at any time, but knowing from experience that in the initial stages of the fighting it is important not to distract the commanders from their task of troop control, I forbade anyone to call them, to telephone or telegraph. Besides, I was sure that if any commander needed help or had registered a major success he would call me up himself."<sup>195</sup>



The first three days of the East Prussian Operation did not go according to plan, but Rokossovskiy allowed his army commanders to sort out the problems. He made only small changes after discussions with his army commanders at the end of each day. Finally, after forty-eight hours as the German defences began to creak, he intervened decisively to complete the rupture<sup>196</sup> in the German line,

“reluctantly I was forced to throw the tank corps into action in the zone of 48<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Strike and 65<sup>th</sup> Army to accelerate the penetration of the enemy’s defence. The enemy, his strength sapped by counterattacks, collapsed under this blow.”<sup>197</sup>

The contrast with Zhukov’s ill-tempered ranting a few months later, in April 1945, on the Seelow Heights, east of Berlin, is considerable. <sup>198</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> April, Zhukov’s 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front began its Berlin Operation. The breakthrough battle on the Seelow Heights descended into a bitter attritional struggle with Soviet infantry units piled up and unable to break the German positions. In contrast to Rokossovskiy’s patient empowerment of his army commanders in East Prussia,

“fretting and fuming, Zhukov decided at noon that he could wait no longer and against the protest of the infantry commanders decided to call on both his tank armies.....in a transport of rage, with little to show for nine hours of infantry actions, Zhukov now intended to loose 1,337 tanks and SP guns- six armoured corps- in order to smash his way to the heights.”<sup>199</sup>

The original plan was abandoned and Zhukov, in stark contrast to Rokossovskiy took close authoritarian tactical control. Indeed, “on Zhukov’s express orders the attack continued by night, with more tanks crowding in, roaring and grinding towards the German positions, only to be met with point blank fire which sent them reeling and blazing out of control.”<sup>200</sup> No doubt, the officers of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, including Malinin and V.I. Kazakov who laboured under Zhukov’s lash, ruefully recalled the days of Rokossovskiy.



**Figure 66: G.K. Zhukov**  
(univer.omsk.su)

Rokossovskiy's delegation did not involve the abdication of his responsibilities. It was Rokossovskiy's conception, defined in modern British military doctrine as the commander's intent<sup>201</sup> that defined the parameters of all discussions right through the planning and execution of an operation. The senior command team and army commanders did not replace Rokossovskiy but worked with him and for him, in the planning of operations. Equally, in the conduct of operations while Rokossovskiy gave his senior commanders the opportunity to display their abilities it was in relation to specific objectives laid down by Rokossovskiy. In short, in keeping with the traditions of German *auftragstaktik* and mission command, Rokossovskiy outlined what was to be achieved but was not prescriptive about how it was to be done. The idea that a Soviet military commander might have possessed such a style of leadership and command is not a familiar theme in western historiography.

Similarly, although Rokossovskiy was not prescriptive in terms of tactical procedures he kept a close eye on his army commanders' habits to ensure they were professional and above all creative. In January 1944, Rokossovskiy admonished Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army for becoming predictable in their battle tactics. Indeed,

“on the evening of 10 January, the *front* commander held a short critique of the past combat with the formations' commanders and the branch chiefs at the 65<sup>th</sup> Army's command post. He said that the unsuccessful beginning of the operation (the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation) was the result of the forces' stereotypical actions.....General K.K. Rokossovsky(sic) advised a change in the tactics and the direction of the main attack.”<sup>202</sup>

Nobody was sacked, berated or publicly humiliated. The problem was identified and solved. It is a good example of an authoritative leader setting the standard but retaining confidence in the ability of his subordinates to achieve it, Rokossovskiy ordered 65<sup>th</sup> Army to use 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps in the breakthrough battle, rather than in an exploitation role in order to ensure Soviet infantry could neutralise German infantry who came out to fight after taking cover in prepared defences

during 65<sup>th</sup> Army's predictable artillery barrage. On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1944, 65<sup>th</sup> Army using the new, more integrated tactics, adapted by Rokossovskiy to meet the particular tactical problem broke the German line and surged towards Kalinkovichi.<sup>203</sup> In a similar way following 61<sup>st</sup> Army's failure to penetrate German defences east of Kalinkovichi, from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> January 1944, Rokossovskiy ordered 61<sup>st</sup> Army to be more imaginative. Furthermore, Rokossovskiy openly praised Gorbato's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army for its creative use of ski units in Belorussia.<sup>204</sup>

Army commanders who displayed initiative, energy, creativity and imagination under Rokossovskiy's command were given ample opportunity in both the planning and conduct of operations to share their ideas and display their talents. However, if standards fell Rokossovskiy was quick to intervene in a constructive authoritative manner that ensured delegation was not an excuse for lazy habits or inept tactical command. Rokossovskiy was not an authoritarian but he was an authoritative leader with the highest standards and expectations of his commanders.

Sokolovskiy was more authoritarian than Rokossovskiy but also practised an



**Figure 67: V. Sokolovskiy**  
(Photograph by Margaret Bourke-White, images.google.com)

'accidental' delegation that amounted to abdication.

The constructive teamwork led by Rokossovskiy was absent from the Western Front where in contrast, "the *front* staff was pushed aside from planning the operations and fixed only the course of events, which developed in accordance with the armies' plans. The *front* staff had no operational planning documents on the conduct of operations at all. All of the conducted operations were planned only in the armies and were

verbally approved by the *front* command. As a result, the *front* headquarters did not introduce its proposals to the command on the planning and conduct of the operations and did not exercise reliable control over the realization of the command's decisions."<sup>205</sup>

This is not to suggest that other Soviet officers were not popular and highly competent. Indeed, “unlike many commanders, Vatutin was also well thought of by his subordinates and soldiers.”<sup>206</sup> Nevertheless, Vatutin’s style of leadership was very different from Rokossovskiy’s. Alexander Werth relates the comments of Henry Shapiro, the United Press Correspondent in Moscow. Shapiro met Vatutin, in late November 1942. He recalled that,



**Figure 68: N.F. Vatutin**  
(corazzati.it)

“I saw General Vatutin in a dilapidated schoolhouse at Serafimovich for a few minutes at four in the morning.....He was terribly tired; he had not had a proper sleep for at least a fortnight, and kept rubbing his eyes and dozing off. For all that, he looked tough and determined, and was highly optimistic.”<sup>207</sup>

The main cause of Vatutin’s exhaustion was the responsibility of command in the Stalingrad area, but his particular style of leadership also made it more difficult to delegate and for subordinates to use their initiative.

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 1943, Rokossovskiy was ordered by *Stavka* to investigate why Vatutin’s 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front had made little or no progress since taking Kiev, on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1943.<sup>208</sup> It is possible that Stalin was playing off Rokossovskiy and Vatutin, in the way that he later played off Konev and Zhukov at Berlin. At virtually the same time, on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1943, *Stavka* transferred six divisions from Rokossovskiy’s Belorussian Front to Vatutin’s 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front<sup>209</sup> in the middle of Rokossovskiy’s drive on Mozyr and Kalinokovichi. There had been latent tension between Rokossovskiy and Vatutin on several occasions such as the plans for an attack on Voronezh in July 1942.<sup>210</sup> Similarly, Vatutin’s South-Western Front had played the main role in the Stalingrad counter-offensive, a role initially assigned to Rokossovskiy. In addition, there had been disagreements about different plans for defending the Kursk salient in May 1943 and most recently, in September 1943, when Rokossovskiy’s Central Front had been denied the chance to liberate Kiev, in favour of Vatutin’s 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front.

Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy was very uncomfortable with his new assignment, especially,

“as I was about to depart I was handed a telegram from the Supreme Commander with instructions to assume command of 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front if I deemed it necessary without seeking additional instructions. I must admit this order embarrassed me. Indeed, why should I have been selected to investigate the situation on 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front.”<sup>211</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front was a particularly volatile environment. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 1943, *Stavka* sacked Lieutenant General V.I. Kuznetsov (1894-1964)<sup>212</sup> as the commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Army, replacing him with Lieutenant General A.A. Grechko (1903-1976).<sup>213</sup> Simultaneously 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front’s leadership, in short, Vatutin, was ordered to sort out the mess under threat of court martial. This directive was also given to the commander of the Belorussian Front, namely Rokossovskiy.<sup>214</sup>

Rokossovskiy met Vatutin, west of Kiev, immediately informing him that he had no intention of taking command of 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian. Yet, unsurprisingly Vatutin was tetchy and defensive “making conversation more like a guilty subordinate reporting to his superior. I got impatient, and repeated that I had not come to conduct an investigation.”<sup>215</sup> Vatutin relaxed a little. Rokossovskiy suggested that Vatutin abandon his defensive stance and re-claim the initiative by counter-attacking the Germans. Once again, Vatutin enquired of Rokossovskiy, as to whether he was going to take command,

“I retorted that I had no intention of doing anything of the sort, that I considered him as good a Front commander as I, and in general I wished my stay here to be as short as possible as I had plenty of work of my own.”<sup>216</sup>

The air was cleared, a plan agreed. Yet, the episode clearly made an impression upon Rokossovskiy. The incident also reveals the extent to which leadership styles, as well as operational methods, varied dramatically between very senior Red Army commanders. In his memoirs Rokossovskiy commented, at length,

upon Vatutin's style of leadership, a commentary that provides a substantial insight into his own,

"I was somewhat surprised by the way that Vatutin organised his work. He personally edited all directives and orders and discussed questions by telephone and telegraph with the armies and headquarters. What then was the Chief of Staff doing? I found General Bogulyobov at the other end of the village. When I asked him why he permitted the Front commander to burden himself with staff work, Bogulyobov said there was nothing he could do about it, as the Front commander insisted on managing everything himself."<sup>217</sup>

Rokossovskiy told the Chief of Staff that it was not right, an assessment that Bogulyobov was in full accord with, but unsure about how to raise the delicate matter with Vatutin. Rokossovskiy did it for him and Vatutin acknowledged "it's all because I was a staff officer for so long.....I feel as though I must do everything myself."<sup>218</sup> In short, in some respects Rokossovskiy set the pace but tempered it with an inclination to listen, consult and delegate within a generally authoritative style of leadership. Vatutin was a pacesetter: able, daring but driven to be in control of all details of an operation not just the critical ones. In short, Rokossovskiy and Vatutin's styles of leadership were very different.

There was an ironic postscript to this episode. In January 1945, Bogulyobov found himself as Rokossovskiy's Chief of Staff, at 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. Furthermore, at least initially, he did not like Rokossovskiy's style of leadership any more than Vatutin's. According to Rokossovskiy, "General A.N. Bogulyobov, the Front Chief of Staff, a very pedantic man, as a good staff officer should be, frowned at our apparent violation of established procedures, but later conceded that my system was better suited to combat conditions."<sup>219</sup>

### **Rokossovskiy's Toleration of Mistakes and the Encouragement of Initiative**

Rokossovskiy seems to have appreciated that no commander will take risks and exercise initiative unless senior commanders are occasionally prepared to tolerate

mistakes. During the Great Patriotic War, Rokossovskiy tolerated honest mistakes in a way that Zhukov or Konev, to name but two Soviet commanders, either would not or could not, despite the fact that in comparison with Rokossovskiy, both made their own personal share of them.<sup>220</sup> Above all, Rokossovskiy demonstrated to his commanders, that he believed in them after they had made mistakes not just before them when they possessed unblemished records. In this sense he anticipated contemporary military thinking. In a passage that could have been written by Rokossovskiy, it is clear that,

“the bond of trust includes the tolerance of well-intentioned mistakes. If a subordinate cannot trust his superior to support him in such circumstances, the bond of trust will be eroded; the subordinate will not act on his own initiative; and the moral fabric of Mission Command will be destroyed.”<sup>221</sup>

In the period 1943-45, Rokossovskiy tolerated several mistakes by Batov. In December 1943, Batov lost the Parichi bridgehead in Belorussia to a German counter-attack. Rokossovskiy had warned Batov to strengthen his reconnaissance but carried away by the momentum of his advance Batov did not heed this advice. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1943, a German counter-attack smashed into both wings of the 65<sup>th</sup> Army, threatening to encircle and annihilate it. However, Batov’s desire to put matters right meant he delayed informing Rokossovskiy of the true gravity of the situation. Rokossovskiy knew anyway through the *Front’s* intelligence organs. He phoned Batov’s political commissar, Radetskiy, asking for the truth. Radetskiy replied that 65<sup>th</sup> Army was struggling to contain the Germans. A few minutes later Batov called Rokossovskiy. In a glacial voice Rokossovskiy asked, “Pavel Ivanovich, how long do you intend to move backwards?” Batov admitted his mistake and Rokossovskiy severely reprimanded him, not for his mistake, but for his failure to report the situation earlier. However, Rokossovskiy also gave Batov a rifle division and, if necessary, an entire artillery corps, to redeem the situation.<sup>222</sup>

Rokossovskiy did not sack Batov. Batov was a proven commander, energetic, dynamic and full of initiative. In short, the type of army commander that Rokossovskiy demanded in the conduct of operations. Batov had made a serious



**Figure 69: P.I. Batov**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

mistake but one driven by a desire to strike deep into the German position. It was probably this that saved Batov's job. If the German counter-attack had thrived due to laziness or unprofessionalism in the course of duty, almost certainly Batov would have been sacked. These were matters that Rokossovskiy would not tolerate. Batov was lucky to survive. It was an object lesson for him, one that he never forgot.<sup>223</sup> By 27<sup>th</sup>

December 1943, Batov had stopped the German drive but the Belorussian Front had lost the key Parichi zone: an excellent springboard for further assaults on German positions in south-eastern Belorussia, Bobruisk. In June 1944, Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army was entrusted with the responsibility of making a breakthrough in the Parichi sector. In the opening days of Operation Bagration, 65<sup>th</sup> Army distinguished itself and created the conditions for 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's destruction of Ninth German Army.

Similarly, in October 1944, again despite Rokossovskiy's warnings, Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army was taken by surprise and found itself in bitter fighting to retain a bridgehead over the Narev, north of Warsaw. Rokossovskiy discussed the problem with Batov and made a reserve available to him "but the actual manner in which it would be used was left to the Army commander's discretion."<sup>224</sup> Batov was fortunate in having Rokossovskiy as his boss. It is difficult to see any other Soviet commander being so lenient. Batov was definitely part of Rokossovskiy's in-crowd.<sup>225</sup> Yet, it was not just an exchange of emotion, between men who became close friends. Batov was a tough, dynamic, imaginative commander, who had repeatedly performed well, more than well, in the past and would do so again in the future. In short, Rokossovskiy had confidence in his proven abilities. In October 1944, Batov smashed the German counter-attack and the Narev bridgehead was held.



In July 1942, in the Zhizdra-Bolkhov Operation despite misgivings, Rokossovskiy acceded to Malinin, his chief of staff's request, that, as a tank man, along with the armoured commander, Oryol, he be allowed to plan the commitment of the second echelon armoured corps.<sup>226</sup> It was a detailed plan, indeed Rokossovskiy claimed it was "a schedule detailed down to the last hour and minute."<sup>227</sup> Rokossovskiy was concerned about this and a line of departure that was nearly 20 kilometres away, but "assured that every contingency had been provided for.....shelving my misgivings, I accepted their plan."<sup>228</sup>



**Figure 70: G.N. Oryol**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

The infantry and artillery attack, planned by Rokossovskiy, broke the German line but the 10<sup>th</sup> Armoured Corps was unable to capitalise as it was stuck in marshland.<sup>229</sup> "The commanders had not reconnoitred the terrain before drawing up the plan, the result being a delay that tipped the scales against a successfully launched operation. This unfortunate event taught us all a good lesson for the future."<sup>230</sup> Malinin and Oryol, served with Rokossovskiy, in a very distinguished way, until November 1944, men who became experts in their jobs, consulted by Rokossovskiy in the planning of virtually every operation. In short, his faith was more than repaid.

In a similar way, Rokossovskiy tolerated mistakes by Kryukov, the dashing commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, whose reckless headlong charge in February 1943 exposed his men and the Central Front, to a powerful German counter-attack. "On 12<sup>th</sup> March six tank and mechanised divisions attacked from the north and south flanks and tried to cut off 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Corps-they withdrew on foot to Sevsk."<sup>231</sup> The rescue diverted a considerable portion of the Central Front's fighting power as "defences on the eastern bank of the river Sev were to be occupied immediately."<sup>232</sup> A serious crisis was averted, largely because the Germans main priorities were further south, in the Khar'kov region. However, after a major board of inquiry,<sup>233</sup> Kryukov, although reprimanded, continued to

serve under Rokossovskiy, until November 1944.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, in his memoirs Rokossovskiy, an old cavalryman, recalled almost fondly that the old warhorse had got the bit between his teeth.<sup>235</sup>

Finally, in January 1945, in the middle of the East Prussia Operation, Rokossovskiy admitted,

“I was rather worried about the enemy force locked up in Torn. According to a report from the 70<sup>th</sup> Army Commander, V.S. Popov, they were some 5,000 strong, and they had refused to surrender. When I learned that the city was besieged by only one division - and by then our divisions were sadly undermanned - I advised Popov to treat the enemy with caution.

Torn was already some distance in our rear and this hornets’ nest had to be got rid of.”<sup>236</sup>

A few hours later, a chastened Lieutenant General Vasily Stepanovich Popov (1893-1967)<sup>237</sup> informed Rokossovskiy that the Torn garrison had broken out and was advancing on the Vistula crossing at Graudenz, still held by German troops. As 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front was stretched across East Prussia and fighting on both sides of the Vistula, this German force was a distinct threat. After several days fighting, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front finally stopped the Torn group just ten kilometres from the Vistula. It numbered 30,000, not 5,000. A mortified Popov, painfully aware of his miscalculation, expected the sack. He was reprieved and remained with Rokossovskiy until May 1945.

In summary, Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership was marked by a distinctly unusual willingness to tolerate mistakes, in a way that challenges the traditional image of authoritarian commanders, passing ruthless judgement upon subordinates for fear of being judged themselves by an intolerant and ruthless political system. Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership tolerated commanders of proven creativity, initiative and daring, men who were calm under pressure, even if they made mistakes. It is difficult to imagine Zhukov, Konev, Sokolovskiy, Yermenko and Chuikov doing the same but then they possessed a different, authoritarian and coercive style of leadership. Rokossovskiy did not.

## **A Soft Touch?**

Rokossovskiy was not some benevolent, paternal figure, but his willingness to tolerate occasional mistakes was so at odds with the prevailing leadership culture of the Red Army, that the question of the standard he set, a key aspect of leadership, regardless of style, is a pertinent one. Commanders who made serious errors, were incompetent and displayed little creativity were not indulged. Similarly, those of an authoritarian, but pedestrian style of leadership, inclined to intimidate their subordinates, were not tolerated. In short, Rokossovskiy accepted mistakes from those with the ability and qualities he desired. Others were cast aside.

In fact, far from being an indulgent leader, Rokossovskiy had very high personal and professional standards. Indeed, in some respects he demonstrated many of the positive qualities of a pacesetter leader that has much in common with the authoritative leader's inclination to set the standard but have faith in his subordinates ability to achieve it. Rokossovskiy was ruthless in the face of



**Figure 71: I.V. Boldin**  
(generals.dk)

sloppiness or any dereliction of duty. On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1943, Rokossovskiy sacked Lieutenant General G.F. Tarasov, after a board of inquiry<sup>238</sup> found Tarasov, 70<sup>th</sup> Army's commander, guilty of incompetence.<sup>239</sup> In February 1945, Rokossovskiy sacked Lieutenant General I.V. Boldin, hero of the defence of Moscow. Boldin's failure to detect a German withdrawal from the Augustow Canal, for 48 hours, into solid defensive positions, produced instant dismissal.<sup>240</sup> He had been set a specific task which through negligence, he had failed to fulfil.<sup>241</sup> Similarly, in February 1945, G. K. Kozlov's failure to exploit an opportunity created for 19<sup>th</sup> Army, when it advanced only 25 kilometres in forty-eight hours, meant his replacement with Vladimir Zakharovich Romanovskiy (1896-1967).<sup>242</sup>



**Figure 72: V.Z. Romanovskiy**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

Any theory or quality of leadership is influenced by personality and Rokossovskiy was no exception. A strong sense of honour and pride in the profession of arms played an important role in his leadership. Rokossovskiy could not abide dishonourable abdication in the face of duty. In June 1941 he was enraged by a colonel's casual rejection of the duty to lead. Rokossovskiy was so infuriated by the officer's sullen insolence that, in Rokossovskiy's words, he literally blew up, drew his weapon and held it to the man's head.<sup>243</sup> Similarly, in October 1941, when an old veteran of World War One asked Rokossovskiy why the Red Army was retreating and not protecting the people, Rokossovskiy was deeply ashamed. It was an episode that he never forgot.<sup>244</sup>

Rokossovskiy's career suggests an almost vocational approach to being an officer. He combined very demanding standards with an absolute refusal to admit defeat, an attitude that survived, and enabled him to survive, the Purges, solitary confinement and the challenges of 1941. It is worth bearing in mind that Rokossovskiy's memoirs carried the title of *Soldatskiy Dolg, A Soldier's Duty*. To Rokossovskiy, any deliberate dereliction or abdication of duty in the face of hardship was a scandalous mockery of an officer's responsibility, especially in wartime.

As Rokossovskiy acknowledged in his memoirs he ordered the execution of deserters in June 1941 and rounded up malingerers abdicating their duty. Pleshakhov suggests this was driven by Rokossovskiy's desire to be seen doing his own duty.<sup>245</sup> As a former inmate of the Gulag, Rokossovskiy was bound to reflect upon the consequences of being seen to tolerate deserters and saboteurs, but the general pattern of his career makes it possible to argue that he was also genuinely enraged by the readiness to give up, the incompetence, the dereliction of duty. A man who had endured and survived the Purge was unlikely to be charitable about abject defeatism and surrender just hours into the German invasion. Similarly, Rokossovskiy was utterly scathing about Kirponos' abdication of duty because "he was simply refusing to face the facts"<sup>246</sup> rather than because he thought "its commander, Kirponos, was just a shallow upstart

completely unfit to command larger units - a person of ego but with no knowledge or intuition.”<sup>247</sup> Rokossovskiy may well have thought Kirponos an upstart, but professional standards mattered as much as personal enmity.



**Figure 73: Rokossovskiy**  
(theeasternfront.co.uk)

At times, Rokossovskiy was harsh and demanding because often the Great Patriotic War demanded no less. However, such occasions were usually a reflection of poor performance and standards of leadership by subordinates not a habitual, daily method of command.

Rokossovskiy found coarse, crude behaviour demeaning and insulting whether directed at him or others. A powerfully built athletic officer, Rokossovskiy had all the physical attributes to intimidate, threaten and beat up others in an authoritarian style of leadership. The fact that he *chose* not to ‘lead’ in this way is indicative of his personality and marks him down as a distinctly unusual Red Army commander. In contrast, the consequences of Rokossovskiy’s displeasure were usually glacial and concise rather than volatile and prolonged. This personal example of leadership influenced his army commanders in a powerful way. It set the standard.

There is no evidence to suggest that Rokossovskiy, unlike many Soviet officers, ever ranted, raged, threatened or physically beat officers, senior or junior. Indeed, quite the opposite, virtually all who served under Rokossovskiy comment upon his *kulturnost*, civility, ability to listen and calmness, especially when under pressure. Rokossovskiy was an authoritative leader, not an authoritarian commander, but possessed a fierce sense of duty. He would not tolerate abdication of duty, incompetence or lack of professionalism. He was a career soldier and officer, who



**Figure 74: Rokossovskiy and Batov, 1944**  
(Kardashov, 1980)

maintained the highest standards, set a personal example to those in close

proximity to him and expected other senior officers to do the same. It was his vocation and their duty.

If Rokossovskiy felt operations were not being conducted professionally he could, on isolated occasions, be harsh. On 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943, Rokossovskiy made it clear in unambiguous tones that he was distinctly unimpressed with the performance of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Army. He noted the enemy was withdrawing and that despite favourable terrain, his orders from the previous three days had not been fulfilled and that operations had been poorly executed. In future, any uncoordinated and isolated attacks would no be tolerated. He categorically demanded fulfilment of their mission and that anyone guilty of poorly conducted operations would be in front of a military tribunal.<sup>248</sup>

Equally, on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy instructed all his army commanders at Kursk to remind their troops of Stalin's Order No:227 that demanded not a step back. It was mentioned three times in a short directive urging all to do their duty in the face of the massive German onslaught.<sup>249</sup>

Rokossovskiy had high standards and expectations but for him, if not other Soviet commanders, this was an unusual style of leadership. In short, he could mix and match his styles of leadership according to his judgement of the situation. The authoritarian style was not his normal method of leadership but it was a weapon to be used if he felt it was necessary.



**Figure 75: R.Y. Malinovskiy**  
(www.ets.ru)

Rokossovskiy's insistence on high standards of personal conduct by all officers, regardless of rank, was revealed in late September 1942. As the newly appointed commander of the Don Front, Rokossovskiy arranged to meet with Lieutenant-General Rodion Yakovlevich Malinovskiy (1898-1967),<sup>250</sup> 66<sup>th</sup> Army's commander. Rokossovskiy

“was somewhat surprised that the Army Commander had chosen to go visiting the troops when he knew that I was due to arrive.”<sup>251</sup> Rokossovskiy searched for Malinovskiy,

“I visited the divisional and regimental command posts, worked my way down to the battalion CP, but still could not locate the Army Commander. He was with one of the companies, they told me. That day plenty of artillery and mortar fire was being exchanged. To all appearances the enemy was preparing a sally to repay the attack carried out by the Army the previous day. I decided to visit the company out of sheer curiosity and see what the Army commander was doing. Now walking full height along communication passages, now half crawling along crumbling trenches, I finally reached the frontline. There I saw a short, stocky general.”<sup>252</sup>

It was Malinovskiy and Rokossovskiy had made his point. Rokossovskiy was by instinct an authoritative, not an authoritarian leader, but although he was prepared to tolerate mistakes, encourage initiative and listen to the views of others, this was a matter of considered choice, not emotional necessity. In short, despite being an unusually thoughtful and restrained commander by the standards of the Red Army, he was no soft touch.

### **Command By Committee**

Rokossovskiy's style of leadership contained many democratic elements and his commitment to consult his senior officers, as well as delegate, is beyond question, but this was not command by committee, nor was he simply *primus inter pares*. Rokossovskiy chose to invite his commanders to give their opinion, they were not entitled to give them or foist them upon him. It was a considered piece of authoritative leadership, not the passing of responsibility, or a symptom of a clever but weak leader. On 17<sup>th</sup> January 1943, during Operation Kol'tso, several army commanders requested an operational pause. Rokossovskiy immediately intervened: “there will be no pause, it is only with that condition that I am prepared to continue the discussion.”<sup>253</sup> He was content to encourage a free

discussion about the best way to continue the assault, as long as everyone understood that the attack would continue, without a pause.

At first sight, Rokossovskiy's intervention appears authoritarian, but upon closer examination, it reveals Rokossovskiy's authoritative style of leadership, as well as his perception of the realities of operational, not tactical command. Operation Kol'tso, repeatedly delayed, was planned as a seamless, crushing operation, designed to capitalise upon the physical and moral duress of freezing, starving German troops. Rokossovskiy knew that the Wehrmacht had effectively abandoned Sixth Army in order to pin down Soviet forces, namely his Don Front, that could be used elsewhere on the Eastern Front.<sup>254</sup> No doubt aware of Moscow's strategic priorities, Rokossovskiy intervened to maintain the operational integrity of Operation Kol'tso, dismissing the mainly tactical considerations of his army commanders.

In short, a tactical pause risked making Kol'tso two successive operations, instead of one crushing blow. It was the commander's decision: a fundamental decision that shaped the character of Kol'tso because it set out the operational path. Rokossovskiy was content to grant his senior officers considerable tactical discretion in the execution of his operational plan. Rokossovskiy was an authoritative, occasionally democratic leader, because he chose to be, not because he was compelled to be. None who served under him was in any doubt about who was in charge. Furthermore, it is unlikely that any commander, who defied Zhukov in November 1941 and who, in May 1944, thrice defied Stalin, in public, in front of witnesses, over the planning of Operation Bagration, was an unwitting victim of command by committee.



## **Rokossovskiy and Zhukov: Authoritative and Authoritarian Leadership**

In terms of their birth, age and experience, Rokossovskiy and Zhukov were remarkably similar: both were born in December 1896, both served for a similar length of time, in a similarly distinguished manner during World War One, both



**Figure 76: Rokossovskiy and Zhukov, 1944**

(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

were cavalrymen and both joined the Red Army at roughly the same time, although their paths did not cross during the Russian Civil War. However, for all their superficial similarities, their manner, character, operational methods and above all, their leadership styles could not have been more different. As mutual acquaintances, in 1924, Rokossovskiy and Zhukov had both attended the Higher Command Cavalry Course in Leningrad, while Rokossovskiy had been Zhukov's commanding officer, from 1930-1932, at 7<sup>th</sup> Samara Cavalry Division. Indeed, although direct contemporaries, until the Purge of 1937

Rokossovskiy had always outranked Zhukov.

It is partly for this reason that during the Great Patriotic War, Rokossovskiy and Zhukov had a rather strained personal relationship. Rokossovskiy's imprisonment of August 1937-March 1940 witnessed Zhukov's rapid rise. In August 1937, Rokossovskiy was a corps commander, Zhukov a divisional commander. In March 1940, when Rokossovskiy was released and resumed command of 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps, in the Ukraine, Zhukov was now the commander of the Kiev Special Military District, hero of Khalkin-Gol in August 1939, and soon, in January 1941, to be Chief of the General Staff.

Naturally, the personality of an individual influences his or her style of leadership and Rokossovskiy and Zhukov were no exception to this rule. Indeed, it is in the nature of their personalities that we find the origins of the vast contrast between the leadership styles of Rokossovskiy and Zhukov. Zhukov was, by instinct, an authoritarian leader, a brutal, yet able commander, and utterly merciless about casualties. Zhukov had plenty of ability, but used his rank and abrasive



**Figure 77: G.K. Zhukov**  
(t2w.com.br)

personality to intimidate and threaten. He was feared as well as respected, grudgingly admired for his relentless dedication, but not for his callous, ruthless leadership. Zhukov was notoriously abrupt and profane with subordinates, indeed, habitually unjust. A physically powerful and impatient individual, Zhukov did not spare himself or anybody else, leaving subordinates, senior and junior, in no doubt as to what was required:

excellence, unstinting effort and unquestioning compliance or face the consequences of his displeasure.

Zhukov was an authoritarian leader who set a relentless pace that subordinates complied with and matched unless they were prepared to face the consequences of his wrath. On 17<sup>th</sup> September 1941, as commander of the Leningrad Front, Zhukov issued Order No. 0064, which stated that “all commanders, political officers and rank and file who leave the line of defence without prior written instruction of the Front or Military Council are to be shot on sight.”<sup>255</sup> In summary,

“Zhukov was an energetic but stubborn commander. He approached war with dogged determination. His force of will, tempered with occasional ruthlessness and utter disregard for casualties, carried Soviet forces through their trials in the initial period of the war and ultimately to victory.....He demanded and received absolute obedience to orders, he identified and protected key subordinates, and, at times, he stood up to and incurred the wrath of Stalin. There was little finesse in his operations, and he skilfully used the Red Army as the club it was to its full operational effect. His

temperament was perfectly suited to the nature of the war on the Soviet-German front, and Stalin knew it.”<sup>256</sup>

Rokossovskiy, at least Zhukov’s equal as a field commander, practised an entirely different style of leadership, one that cultivated, rather than intimidated the scarce talent around him. As an authoritative leader Rokossovskiy set high standards but used personal example, ability and character to establish a deep, genuine authority over his fellow officers. As an authoritarian leader Zhukov used his power to extract every ounce of commitment from his subordinates and troops, but they were expendable, assets to be directed, used and discarded in pursuit of victory. In the words of one commentator,

“he had a reputation for utter determination and ruthlessness in achieving his objectives, regardless of the cost in human lives, and for demanding instant and absolute obedience to orders.”<sup>257</sup>

In late November 1941, during the defence of Moscow, Rokossovskiy and Zhukov had an infamous row when Rokossovskiy subverted the chain of command by appealing over Zhukov’s head, to Shaposhnikov, the Chief of the



**Figure 78: B.M. Shaposhnikov**  
(wpcontent.answers.com)

General Staff, for permission to carry out a limited tactical withdrawal to the Istra reservoir, north-west of Moscow. Rokossovskiy’s aim was to incorporate the reservoir into the line in order to create depth and reserves. It was an act of remarkable temerity and insubordination by Rokossovskiy. A few hours later, Rokossovskiy received permission, and, “knowing Marshal Shaposhnikov from my service before the war, I was quite sure that his reply had been cleared with

the Supreme Commander, or at the very least he had been informed of it.”<sup>258</sup>

Marshal M.E. Katukov, at that time commanding 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Brigade under Rokossovskiy, confirmed that on the night of 26<sup>th</sup> November 1941, Rokossovskiy

ordered his brigade to withdraw to the eastern bank of the River Istra and to establish a second echelon in order to give 16<sup>th</sup> Army some tactical depth.<sup>259</sup> In response, Zhukov sent Rokossovskiy a livid, raging telegram: “I am the Front Commander! I countermand the order to withdraw to the Istra Reservoir and order you to defend the lines you occupy without retreating one more step. General of the Army Zhukov.”<sup>260</sup> Rokossovskiy obeyed the order.

It is likely that their awkward personal relationship and incidents such as Istra were partly the product of Rokossovskiy’s personal jealousy and a pronounced desire for autonomy. They were also the product of Zhukov’s irascible and proud personality,<sup>261</sup> as well as mutual exhaustion, at a time of extraordinary stress. Yet, their cool, formal relationship was also influenced by a more basic, fundamental clash of personalities and leadership styles that would have caused friction between them, regardless of their complex personal history.<sup>262</sup>

Historical attention has emphasised the overt clash at Istra, between Rokossovskiy and Zhukov, but in doing so it has perhaps over-shadowed the significance of Rokossovskiy’s personal commentary upon the episode. In his memoirs, Rokossovskiy wrote, “believe an old soldier: there is nothing a man prizes more than the realization that he is trusted, believed, relied upon. Unfortunately, the commander of the Western Front did not always take this into account.”<sup>263</sup> Rokossovskiy records his respect for Zhukov’s abilities, before acknowledging that there was friction between them. In Rokossovskiy’s opinion, “the crux of the matter, apparently, was that we had different views on the extent to which a commander should assert his will and the manner in which he should do it.”<sup>264</sup> These passages represent the difference between Rokossovskiy, an authoritative leader and Zhukov, an authoritarian commander, the difference between Rokossovskiy’s philosophy of leadership and command with the wider culture of Stalin’s Red Army, personified in the shape of Zhukov. Two of the Red Army’s leading commanders had very different styles of leadership.

Zhukov was frequently unjust in his condemnations of field officers, of any rank, either in person or by telephone. Indeed, Rokossovskiy wrote that,

“wishful thinking is never enough for success in battle. However, during the battle of Moscow, Zhukov himself often forgot this. Insistence on the highest standards is an important and essential trait for any leader. But it is equally essential for him to combine an iron will with tactfulness, respect for subordinates and the ability to rely on their intelligence and initiative. In those grim days our Front commander did not always follow this rule. He could also be unfair in a fit of temper.”<sup>265</sup>

This passage tells us as much, in fact more about Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership than it does of Zhukov. One might be inclined to explain away Zhukov’s crude, authoritarian style, as the product of the immense pressure he was under, but he was equally brutal under more benign circumstances.

In June 1944, accompanied by Rokossovskiy, Zhukov visited 65<sup>th</sup> Army’s frontline as it was preparing for Operation Bagration. A corps commander, given insufficient warning, was late in arriving to brief Zhukov. After he arrived, Zhukov simply ignored his explanation and abused him, before marching off to 44<sup>th</sup> Guards Division’s sector “under the command of Colonel P.G. Petrov, a skilful and competent officer but a man with a difficult past.....yet now, in the presence of the Marshal, Petrov lost his aplomb somewhat. His report on the situation was confused.”<sup>266</sup> After further humiliations, Zhukov peremptorily ordered that the corps commander be removed and Petrov sent to a penal battalion, virtually a death sentence. In Batov’s words, “finally at Rokossovskii’s(sic) insistence, he agreed to lower the punishment: I.I. Ivanov was sharply reprimanded and the division commander was relieved of his duties. P.G. Petrov left us the following day.”<sup>267</sup> A few weeks later, Petrov was killed leading 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, part of Rokossovskiy’s 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, over the River Drut. He was posthumously made a Hero of the Soviet Union. However, Zhukov was far from finished with Batov.

By early July 1944, the Belorussian Operation was moving well and Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army had distinguished itself in 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's Bobruisk Operation (24<sup>th</sup>-29th June 1944). Its new objective was Baranovichi, a significant rail and road junction. Now "for the first time in several days we were able to take care of our personal appearance. We had just managed to shave and clean our shoes when some cars screeched to a stop in front of our hut."<sup>268</sup> Zhukov, instead of congratulating Batov on 65<sup>th</sup> Army's outstanding performance in Operation Bagration, tore into Batov and his chief political officer Radetskiy, berating them for shaving with aftershave with Baranovichi not taken. The tirade was relentless and Zhukov refused to listen to any information that did not suit his ugly mood, ripping into those who reported it. Finally, "this intolerable scene ended with Zhukov ordering Radetskii(sic) to go into Baranovichi and not come back until the town was captured. Kicking the stool out of his way, Zhukov left, slamming the door behind him."<sup>269</sup>

This incident does not present Zhukov in a favourable light and Batov was not exactly an objective witness, but it bears all the hallmarks of Zhukov's personality and style of leadership. It had absolutely nothing in common with Rokossovskiy's style of leadership, something that contributed to Batov's dismay. Batov a tough, well-respected officer in command of 65<sup>th</sup> Army was shocked by Zhukov's behaviour because he was used to an entirely different style of leadership. In response to Zhukov's desire to sack Ivanov, a veteran corps commander and more or less pass a death sentence on Petrov, by sending him to a penal battalion, Batov commented,

"there was a definite line of conduct followed in our Army: one does not dismiss a commander indiscriminately for an error; one tries to improve him. This line was firmly followed by the Army commander and members of the military council."<sup>270</sup>

It is unlikely that Batov, who served under Rokossovskiy's command between July 1942-May 1945, was pursuing a leadership policy dramatically at odds with the style of leadership and culture adopted by Rokossovskiy. Indeed, the whole

tone of the report and Rokossovskiy's persistent intervention with Zhukov on behalf of Ivanov and Petrov, suggest Batov's line was more or less the leadership culture he was accustomed to, not the one he was subjected to by Zhukov.



**Figure 79: Zhukov, Batov and Rokossovskiy, 1944**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

A shocked Batov remarked, “in all my long Army service I had never experienced such humiliation.”<sup>271</sup> Batov was a veteran of the Russian Civil War and the Spanish Civil War as well as the Eastern Front. He was a tough, resilient and imaginative officer, but he was disturbed by Zhukov's ranting antics. “I was left alone. The troops did not worry me. Combat operations were proceeding normally. I couldn't find peace of mind, though. Was this the type of leadership that we army commanders expected from a major military leader.”<sup>272</sup>



**Figure 80: I. Konev**  
(commons.wikimedia.org))

In a similar way Konev “was often harsh with subordinates, vain and prone to jealousy of his peers”<sup>273</sup> while Grigorenko relates that “those who fought under him all commented upon his temper.”<sup>274</sup> Few subordinates ever complained about Rokossovskiy, in the same way as they did about Konev or Zhukov. Indeed, “one gains the impression from numerous memoirs that Rokossovskii(sic) was one of the most respected and liked senior officers in

the Red Army. The way in which dozens of memoirists recall with sympathy their service or their encounters with Rokossovskii has a warmth that seldom

appears in descriptions of other military leaders. What apparently impressed them first and foremost was Rokossovskii's 'kul'ternost'-culture, good manners, civility - a relatively rare commodity among senior officers during the war.”<sup>275</sup>

The contrast with Zhukov and Konev's intemperate rages and the general culture of the Red Army's leadership is quite stark: Rokossovskiy was a different kind of leader, with a different style of leadership. Naturally, Rokossovskiy's long association with many senior officers greatly facilitated his style of leadership and their bond with him, but Rokossovskiy's personal example also impressed those of relatively short acquaintance who were clearly used to a very different style and culture. In 1965, Rokossovskiy was given a remarkable testimonial by Mikhail I. Kazakov,<sup>276</sup> a senior staff officer, in the Voronezh and Bryansk Fronts as well as commander of 10<sup>th</sup> Guards Army in 1944. In June-July 1942, Kazakov observed with dismay, the ritual search for scapegoats, following the initial German successes in Operation Blau.

“At the time of all this confusion I was still with the Briansk Army Group. Its commander at the time was Lieutenant-General K.K. Rokossovskii. I worked under Konstantin Konstantinovich for a very short time, but I remember those eight or ten days in which I had the opportunity to be close to him. What particularly impressed the generals and officers of Army Group Headquarters was the attention he paid to the views of his subordinates. A highly civilized man, he knew how to listen patiently to everyone. He recognised instantly the essential point of ideas expressed by others and utilized the knowledge and experience of the collective as a whole in the common cause. It can truly be said that in a very short period Rokossovskii was able to win over all his new officers. We liked his calm efficiency very much.”<sup>277</sup>



Kazakov's view of the inter-relationship between Rokossovskiy's authoritative civility and professional competence was endorsed by Ivan M. Christiyakov, 21<sup>st</sup> Army's commander at Stalingrad and in the February 1943 offensive. In his memoirs Christiyakov commented as follows,

"In general, one must say that every time I met with Rokossovsky,(sic) I felt a sense of enthusiasm. Konstantin Konstantinovich always listened to his colleagues with great attentiveness and was demanding but just. He never demeaned the dignity of his subordinates and never raised his voice. It is understandable that not all people possessed that quality."<sup>278</sup>



**Figure 81: I.M. Christiyakov**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

This endorses Batov's summary of Rokossovskiy as thoughtful, considerate, sociable and unpretentious<sup>279</sup> as well as a highly demanding professional. Rokossovskiy was a self-contained man, correct and polite in his dealings with others, although, if necessary his demeanour was glacial. Rokossovskiy detested crude hot-headed behaviour, would not condone it in his own officers and found it unbecoming in any officer. In short, he could not have been more different from Zhukov and Konev.

### **Calmness Under Pressure**

Rokossovskiy was blessed with a remarkably even temperament, in a way that Zhukov, for all his considerable talent, was not. A calm demeanour, and above all, calmness under pressure were among the most abiding characteristics of Rokossovskiy's style of leadership. It is he not Zhukov or Konev that meets Clausewitz's notion "that strength of character does not consist solely in having powerful feelings but in maintaining one's balance in spite of them."<sup>280</sup> In recent years, emotional intelligence and its relationship with effective leadership has become an area of substantial research.<sup>281</sup> It is argued "that the most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence."<sup>282</sup> According to Goleman emotional intelligence is associated with five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

Firstly, self-awareness is the capacity to understand your emotions and their impact on other individuals. It is associated with those who are self-confident, but not arrogant.<sup>283</sup>

In short, they are confident in their own abilities but not unduly narcissistic. Personal conduct, a considered aspect of Rokossovskiy's leadership, was enhanced by his professional appearance. At 6' 4",<sup>284</sup> physically fit and impeccably turned out Rokossovskiy looked the part and played the part, but it was not an act. As his experiences in World War One, the Russian Civil War, the Purge, Barbarossa and the defence of Moscow indicate Rokossovskiy was an extremely tough, resilient soldier.



**Figure 82: Rokossovskiy**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

Rokossovskiy's pride in his own appearance and vocation did not mean he was particularly vain. By all accounts he was a modest, personable individual who disliked ostentatious display or conceited self-importance. In February 1943, Rokossovskiy was distinctly unimpressed with new uniforms adorned with gold braided shoulder straps in place of collar tabs. It was designed to bolster the dignity and standing of the Red Army officer. One has the impression Rokossovskiy thought this a matter of who you were, what you did, the decisions you made and how you conducted yourself, rather than what you wore. A triumph of style had little meaning if there was no substance.<sup>285</sup>

Rokossovskiy felt 3<sup>rd</sup> Army's Lieutenant-General Aleksandr V. Gorbatov "led a Spartan life and, like Suvorov, spurned comfort and took his meals from the



**Figure 83: A.V. Gorbatov**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1985)

ranks' kitchen. His Suvorov principles served him well in combat, but on occasion he took them too literally."<sup>286</sup> Gorbatov had also been in the Gulag and, like Rokossovskiy, "he believed above all in suddenness, speed and far-reaching thrusts into the enemy flank or rear."<sup>287</sup> Yet, Rokossovskiy and Gorbatov had a curious relationship, professional but

distant, tinged with antagonism. In autumn 1943, Gorbатов complained to Rokossovskiy and *Stavka* that his 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was not being used properly on secondary lines of attack in Belorussia.<sup>288</sup> It is difficult to say whether this confirmed or created Rokossovskiy's opinions of Gorbатов, but between the lines, one has the feeling that Rokossovskiy thought Gorbатов precious and ostentatious in his Suvorian purity. Conversely, Rokossovskiy was mightily unimpressed by one of his officers kitting out field quarters in a lavish manner, replete with carpets and furniture at Kursk. Rokossovskiy kicked him out to teach him the meaning of humility and service.<sup>289</sup>

Rokossovskiy would not have used the term 'emotional intelligence' but he possessed considerable emotional intelligence and deployed such skills, instinctively, as a natural part of his leadership style. Firstly, in terms of self-awareness, Rokossovskiy wanted glory and honour but he was not irrationally narcissistic. Furthermore, Rokossovskiy retained the self-confidence to use his own judgement, regardless of the poisonous environment of command, created by the Purges, political commissars in 1941-43 and SMERSH. In preparing for the German invasion, his first encounter with the Wehrmacht in the Ukraine, challenging Zhukov in November 1941,<sup>290</sup> pre-empting the Germans at Kursk in July 1943 and defying Stalin in May 1944, Rokossovskiy repeatedly demonstrated the self-confidence to maintain the courage of his convictions.

Secondly, such individuals display a high degree of self-regulation. They are calm and controlled with the capacity to manage their emotions. They are trustworthy characters of considerable integrity, flexible and open to change. This is clearly a characteristic that can be associated with Rokossovskiy's style of leadership. Rokossovskiy's calmness under pressure was remarkable and significantly influenced those under his command. Rokossovskiy's restrained manner meant he was a cool, even aloof decision maker, who accepted the death of thousands of men as the price of victory and the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Yet, he did not slaughter his men in a careless, callous manner. He did not exercise command through fear, although naturally, his position gave him considerable power,

but in an authoritative, restrained manner. If a decision had to be taken quickly, it would be taken, if the situation permitted a more considered approach, it would be utilised, with opinions sought, noted and considered. This established the highest standards of personal conduct for his officers. Marshal V.I. Kazakov, Rokossovskiy's long serving artillery chief from August 1941-November 1944 felt,

“this was the great merit of K.K. Rokossovskii(sic), who in the most difficult situations did not lose his presence of mind, invariably remained unperturbed and remarkably cold-blooded. Those around him were infected by his calm and felt themselves assured. In his presence it was perfectly impossible to manifest signs of disquiet, or even worse, loss of bearing. One would simply have been ashamed.”<sup>291</sup>

Thirdly, motivation is the natural inclination to pursue objectives with a determination and persistence that goes beyond status or financial reward. It is driven by the desire to achieve and a belief in the inherent value of the activity. Individuals cast in this mode are extremely resilient in the face of setbacks. The connection with Rokossovskiy's personal resilience in 1918-1919, the Purges, 1941, especially the battle of Moscow, is indicative of the fact that for Rokossovskiy personal honour, stoicism in the face of adversity and commitment to the duties of a professional soldier were central elements of his personality, and his style of leadership. He was deeply ashamed in October 1941 when forced to leave behind an old man in order to escape encirclement.<sup>292</sup>

In 1917, as the Tsarist Empire approached the knackers' yard of history, these sentiments, Rokossovskiy's personality and dislike of ostentation meant that in a world where choices had to be made, he chose the Reds. In simple terms, he had more in common with them and there was little attraction in the Whites for Rokossovskiy. These factors combined throughout his career with ambition, resilience, and determination to make a formidable Soviet military leader. Rokossovskiy does not appear to have been a fervent party member in the same overt way as Konev,<sup>293</sup> Malinovskiy<sup>294</sup> or Sokolovskiy.<sup>295</sup> Yet, he clearly sympathised with the Red cause, and committed himself to it, for better or worse. In a civil war notorious for mass desertion, Rokossovskiy remained loyal to the Red Army, in very, very trying

circumstances and was thought sufficiently reliable in the mid 1920's to be a dual commander-commissar.

Rokossovskiy's refusal to abandon 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in December 1918-January 1919 is indicative of several themes. Although Rokossovskiy was a soldier first and party man second, his allegiance to the Reds was not merely a matter of opportunism, or simply wanting to be on the winning side. Rokossovskiy's remarkable physical and mental resilience in the face of appalling conditions and apparent catastrophe. As a testimony to, and reward for, exemplary service, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1919, Rokossovskiy was permitted to officially join the Communist party.<sup>296</sup> Rokossovskiy's loyalty in the most trying circumstances, in 1918-1919, rather highlights the shattering absurdity of his arrest in 1937. It was the Party that abandoned him.

Fourthly, leaders with high emotional intelligence are naturally empathetic, in that they understand the emotional characteristics of others and amend their leadership accordingly. It makes them experts at creating and leading balanced teams in a constructive, creative manner. Rokossovskiy seems to have instinctively understood that good officers and soldiers would grasp the opportunity to show their abilities and revel in the trust conferred on them. Indeed, it was a major difference between his style of leadership and that of Zhukov. This was a radical philosophy in a Red Army reeling from the physical and psychological impact of the Purges.

Finally, emotionally intelligent leaders have excellent social skills. They are naturally adept at all forms of communication, in the broadest sense of the word, making them persuasive and authoritative in their leadership. Rokossovskiy's refined social skills, in contrast to the harsh, brutalising approach of Stalin, Zhukov and Konev have been well documented. In summary, Rokossovskiy's ability to create and sustain such an effective senior command team was at the heart of his leadership style. Rokossovskiy's high personal standards did not inhibit a sense of humour that possessed a sense of the ridiculous. In December 1942, during an attack on the outer ring of German encirclement at Stalingrad, Rokossovskiy asked Batov how 65<sup>th</sup> Army's troops were progressing. On all fours, Batov replied. Rokossovskiy felt "disappointing though the

report was, I was struck by the Army Commander's wry humour."<sup>297</sup> Rokossovskiy ordered Batov to suspend the assault, assume the defensive and keep the Germans on their toes by raiding.

In late June 1943, Rokossovskiy was nearly killed by a Luftwaffe air raid. The small cottage Rokossovskiy used as his headquarters was destroyed and his sentry killed. By pure chance, Rokossovskiy had gone to eat in the senior officers' mess. Rokossovskiy noticed Orel, his armoured commander wandering around looking dazed and confused, observing the wrecked trench in which he should have taken cover.<sup>298</sup> Rokossovskiy asked him with a grin, why he was not where he should be. Orel replied the trench was freezing and felt like a grave, so if the Luftwaffe were going to kill him, he might as well be warm.<sup>299</sup>

In July 1945, Field Marshal Montgomery made Rokossovskiy a Knight of the Bath and presented him with the Order of the British Empire. In an informal photograph taken in Berlin, just after the ceremony, a smiling Marshal Sir Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, KB, OBE, Hero of the Soviet Union, Order of Lenin, is saluting the insignia of the Knight of the Bath, aware, no doubt, of the irony of a Bolshevik, Red Army commander being honoured by King George VI in this way.



**Figure 84: Zhukov, Rokossovskiy, Sokolovskiy and Vasilevskiy at the awards ceremony in Berlin, 1945**  
(Bellamy, 2007)

In summary, Rokossovskiy had definite values that informed his style of leadership. In the end, like all leaders, he had to get results; the task had to be achieved. However, Rokossovskiy's behaviour and the standards he demanded indicate that he had a wider understanding than many Soviet commanders of the interaction between tasks, relationships, values, personal example and leadership. In the words of Marshal Katukov writing of the time he served under Rokossovskiy at Moscow in November 1941,

“I have reflected many times on why all who knew Rokossovskiy in one way or another had unlimited regard and respect for him. And only one answer suggests itself: reserved, demanding, Konstantin Konstantinovich respected people regardless of their rank and status. This was the main thing that drew people to him.”<sup>300</sup>

### **Dynamism and Vitality: Leading From The Front**

Rokossovskiy set a personal example that strongly influenced his senior officers. However, it did not involve obvious, but unnecessary, displays of personal bravery at the front. Indeed, Rokossovskiy had firm views on the subject. He declared, “I am no advocate of bravado or senseless bravery. They serve no purpose and fall short of the code of behaviour of any self-respecting commander.”<sup>301</sup> If necessary, Rokossovskiy would lead from the front. During the Yartsevo battles of July 1941, Rokossovskiy and his artillery chief, General Ivan Kamera, stopped a panic stricken rout by standing full height, in the trenches, firing at German aircraft.<sup>302</sup> A man with Rokossovskiy's fighting record and decorations for bravery did not need to prove his courage, but during 1941 there was distinct pressure on commanders to display overt proletarian Socialist bravery in the face of the enemy, such was the psychological environment of command.

Rokossovskiy fought with all his heart, but mainly with a calm, detached head. Rokossovskiy wanted his commanders to use their discretion, and show that they had the ability to do their job. Army commanders of initiative and imagination, willing to take risks such as Batov, Chernyakhovskiy, Pukhov, and Fedyuninskiy thrived under Rokossovskiy's command. Old school Bolsheviks and stolid, authoritarian

commanders who did everything by the book, squashed initiative and slaughtered their troops did not.

One should not assume Rokossovskiy's calm nature meant he was less effective in getting things done. Rokossovskiy was capable of dynamic, aggressive command if the situation demanded it. In short, as at Yartsevo in July 1941, he had the ability to adapt to circumstances as he found them.<sup>303</sup> It prevented the Germans from encircling Smolensk.<sup>304</sup> So, although Rokossovskiy preferred time to prepare an



**Figure 85: I.I. Fedyuninskiy**  
(samsv.narod.ru)

operation, as Yartsevo and Moscow demonstrated, he was more than capable of highly energetic, improvised leadership. Indeed, from July-November 1941, Rokossovskiy did little more than improvise defensive operations in the face of overwhelming German combat power. Furthermore, in comparison with many senior commanders, especially Vatutin, Rokossovskiy's intelligent use of his staff and his confidence in the ability of his chief of staff and field commanders to get things done, meant Rokossovskiy's operational command was highly efficient. It was this, in combination with delegation and the judicious use of initiative that instilled the dynamism and speed into Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations.

Rokossovskiy was calm, he was not casual. Bagramyan<sup>305</sup> suggests that Stalin



**Figure 86: F. Dzerzhinskiy**  
(imageforum2.afp.com)

described Rokossovskiy as a real Felix, a reference to Feliks Dzerzhinsky (1877-1926)<sup>306</sup> the original head of the Cheka, and, ironically, a man with Polish connections. Stalin's comparison of Rokossovskiy with Dzerzhinsky seems bizarre, even malicious, given Rokossovskiy's experiences with the Cheka's bastard child, the NKVD. Yet, upon closer inspection, it is possible that Stalin's reference to Dzerzhinsky was not uncomplimentary. In comparison with his odious successors, Genrikh Yagoda,

Nikolay Yezhov and Lavrentia Beria, Dzerzhinsky was a paragon of ruthless but dedicated Bolshevik endeavour, a man who had helped to save the Revolution when it



was weak and surrounded by predatory Capitalist enemies. In the wake of his death, in July 1926, Dzerzhinskiy was eulogised in glowing terms. In short,

“Dzerzhinsky displayed superhuman energy: day and night, night and day, without sleep, without food, and without the slightest rest he stayed at his post of duty. Hated by the enemies of the workers, he won even their respect. His princely figure, his personal bravery, his penetrating comprehension, his directness, and his exceptional nobility, invested him with great authority.”<sup>307</sup>

During and after the Great Patriotic War, until his death in August 1968, Rokossovskiy's personal reputation soared. In 1956, Khrushchev singled him out as having been unjustly treated in the Purges.<sup>308</sup> Certainly, in 1941, particularly during the battle of Moscow, Rokossovskiy was tested to the point of utter exhaustion, but survived.<sup>309</sup> In some ways, Rokossovskiy, allowing for bombastic exaggeration, was regarded, like Dzerzhinsky, as a man of integrity, ability and honour. This, in turn, ‘invested him with great authority’ and gave him a moral, as well as very real, command over his subordinates, junior or senior. In the decades since the end of the Cold War, in the new Russia, Rokossovskiy star has continued to rise and he has been called *Narodny Marshal* ‘the People's Marshal.’<sup>310</sup>

### **Dignitas: The Source of Rokossovskiy's Authority**

The relationship between power and authority is a complex and interactive one, especially in relation to leadership. Indeed, according to a distinguished theorist of leadership theory, Peter G. Northouse “in discussions of leadership, it is not unusual for leaders to be described as wielders of power, as individuals who dominate others.”<sup>311</sup> Equally, there are two forms of leadership, commonly known as assigned and emergent leadership. In essence, some leaders draw power from the formal status of the position they hold, rather than the quality of leadership they display.<sup>312</sup> In contrast, an assigned leader may have far greater authority than the formal leader, because the quality of their leadership, and, crucially, the response of their followers, confers upon them the natural authority of a leader, without resort to formal power. Ironically, the actual power of a leader who emerges is often greater than those to whom power is formally assigned.

These issues are related to themes discussed in modern leadership theory, in particular the ideas of French and Raven, first raised in 1962<sup>313</sup> concerning the five sources of power. These were referent power, expert power, legitimate power, reward power and coercive power.<sup>314</sup> Referent power is based upon followers close identification with the leader<sup>315</sup> who is often perceived to have special, particularly admirable personal qualities.<sup>316</sup> A leader's expert power is derived from the perception of competence associated with a high degree of ability or knowledge.<sup>317</sup> Legitimate power is conferred with the formal status associated with rank or position.<sup>318</sup> It is a product of social conditioning and the habits developed from childhood which lead us to acknowledge the inherent authority of certain individuals.<sup>319</sup> The notion of reward power is drawn from leaders having the opportunity to directly reward or withhold recognition of subordinates.<sup>320</sup> It is an important source of direct and indirect power if the perceived reward is valuable.<sup>321</sup> The fifth source of power is coercive power. Coercive power is generated from a leader's ability to punish others.<sup>322</sup> It is also argued that, "*coercive power* stems from the capacity to produce fear in others."<sup>323</sup>

During the Great Patriotic War, the senior commanders of the Red Army were constantly mindful of the pernicious influence of political commissars and later SMERSH. Yet, at the same time, especially in the wake of Stalin's abolition of dual command between political commissar and military profession, on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1942, high ranking commanders, such as Rokossovskiy, enjoyed considerable power as a result of their position and rank. It was well known that high rank was a powerful indicator of Stalin's favour, particularly in the period 1942-44, when Stalin was more inclined to listen to his military commanders. Naturally, all senior commanders knew the fragility of their position vis-à-vis Stalin, but many, in particular Zhukov, Sokolovskiy and Konev exploited the authoritarian culture of Stalin's state and Red Army, to dispense leadership, based almost exclusively on coercive power, supported by a harsh interpretation of legitimate power, although in Konev and Zhukov's case this was at least bolstered by high degree of ruthless professional expertise or expert power. This is not a mitigating caveat one can apply to Sokolovskiy.

Yet, this was not true of Rokossovskiy. Rokossovskiy's style of leadership was not dependent on the brutal exercise of power, but his authority, his reputation. In essence, Rokossovskiy leadership and power was based primarily on referent and expert power endorsed by the formal status of his rank and ability to reward subordinates for outstanding performance. It is also clear that while Rokossovskiy was far from a 'soft touch' and a demanding military professional, coercive power was not the dominant characteristic of his style of leadership. It is this contrast that marks out Rokossovskiy from his contemporaries and the prevailing leadership culture of the Red Army. In short, Rokossovskiy's style of leadership had what the Romans called 'dignitas.'

The dignitas of a Roman aristocrat concerned his personal standing among his peers and community, reflecting the perceived worth of his ability, deeds and character, both martial and civic. Naturally, such issues were and are intangible, but also very real, then as now.<sup>324</sup> There is little doubt that Rokossovskiy had great dignitas and standing within the Red Army. In December 1942, when asked to choose between Rokossovskiy and Yeremenko, as to who would command Operation Kol'tso and accomplish the destruction of the Sixth German Army at Stalingrad, Stalin chose Rokossovskiy, because he felt Rokossovskiy had greater authority than Yeremenko.<sup>325</sup>

Batov viewed Rokossovskiy as considerate, thoughtful, sociable and unpretentious, but also a brilliant general who always encouraged initiative and quick wit. Marshal of Aviation Aleksandr Yevgen'evich Golovanov (1904-1975)<sup>326</sup> considered Rokossovskiy the brightest general in the Red Army, V.I. Kazakov remarked upon the power of Rokossovskiy's personal example, while M.I. Kazakov, noted his unusual ability to listen, a commander of civility, who could incisively analyse his subordinates' ideas. Bagramyan acknowledged him as a master of tactics. In conjunction with Shaposhnikov's 1937 endorsement, it is clear Rokossovskiy was seen, by his contemporaries, as an outstanding commander.

In summary, Rokossovskiy had great dignitas and standing within the Red Army. There was a powerfully interactive relationship between Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and his dignitas. The style of leadership Rokossovskiy adopted built upon his dignitas,

which in turn bolstered his style of leadership. It was Rokossovskiy's dignitas, his reputation, borne of his character, ability and outstanding record as a field commander that enabled him to practise a style of leadership, as unusual as it was effective, in Stalin's Red Army. It was his dignitas, and perhaps above all, his ability to communicate what it meant to be a senior officer that gave Rokossovskiy considerable moral authority over his subordinates.

### **Caring For The Men and Getting the Job Done: Casualties**

It is a fact that many Soviet commanders shared Stalin's callous attitude towards casualties. Soldiers were expendable assets to be utilised in achieving tactical and operational goals in pursuit of strategic objectives. The end justified the means. Rokossovskiy's forces suffered shocking casualties, but he did not earn a reputation as a commander who slaughtered his own troops, with equanimity, in order to attain the victor's laurels. On the contrary,

“as the analysis of the documents, publications, and memoirs demonstrate, a considerable number of senior commanders, including the well-known G.K. Zhukov, I.S. Konev, N.F. Vatutin, F.I. Golikov, A.I. Eremenko, G.I. Kulik, S.M. Budenny, K.E. Voroshilov, S.K. Timoshenko, R.Ia. Malinovsky, V.D. Sokolovsky, V.I. Chuikov and some of lower ranks, who considered soldiers as ‘cannon fodder’ fought with maximum losses. On the other hand, K.K. Rokossovskiy, A.A. Grechko, A.V. Gorbатов, E.I. Petrov, I.D. Cherniakhovsky, and several others fought with minimum casualties but still at the required professional level. Unfortunately, the latter were in a minority.”<sup>327</sup>

Therefore, among the truly senior commanders, of the Great Patriotic War, Rokossovskiy is singled out. In November 1941, Rokossovskiy was ordered by Western Front to attack the German forces in Volokalamsk. He “was unable to fathom the Commander's reasoning in issuing the order. Our strength was minimal, and the enemy himself was poised for the attack.”<sup>328</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> November 1941, Rokossovskiy was remarkably frank with his staff about their orders but also aware of the operational thinking behind it. Rokossovskiy told them that,

“Seriously speaking, we are, of course, not in a position to advance attacking.....In the Staff of the Front this is perfectly understood. However, it is necessary to hold...while the operational-strategic reserves are in the process of preparation. This is the point of the counterstrike against Volokalamsk.”<sup>329</sup>

The attack on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1941 was initially successful, but subsequently 44<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, suffered heavy casualties. In April 1943, Rokossovskiy recommended 70<sup>th</sup> Army’s commander Tarasov be sacked and other senior commanders warned as a result of a failed attack, which suffered massive casualties, especially officer casualties. One regiment, the 278<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiment, lost all its battalion commanders, political deputies and the majority of its company and platoon commanders, because its commander, Colonel Sedlovskiy, had ordered the regiment’s entire officer corps, virtually without exception, into the frontline.<sup>330</sup> It was effectively decapitated and rendered leaderless, in one battle.

A successful field commander is always a determined commander, but it is difficult to envisage Rokossovskiy accepting the stubborn, bloody-minded slaughter that Zhukov and Konev tolerated in Operation Mars, the failed attempt to destroy German Army Group Centre, in November 1942, or that Zhukov demanded on the Seelow Heights, in April 1945. In September 1941, Zhukov was heavily criticised by *Stavka* for his conduct of the Yel’nia Operation. It reveals Zhukov’s callous strength of will. Zhukov was exceptionally intolerant of the mistakes of others but less than perfect in his own conduct of operations. The *Stavka* directive, written by Shaposhnikov, commented as follows, “the recent 24<sup>th</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Armies’ offensive did not provide completely positive results and led only to excessive losses both in personnel and in equipment.”<sup>331</sup>

Rokossovskiy believed that, “one must fight to the death and die intelligently only when this achieves a major goal and only in the event that this, the death of a few which prevents the loss of the majority, ensures overall success.”<sup>332</sup> It is difficult to see the man who twice offered Sixth German Army honourable surrender at Stalingrad,<sup>333</sup> enjoying the spectacle of Cossacks slaughtering and mutilating German troops with

sabres, as Konev tolerated at Korsun, in February 1944. Similarly, it is hard to imagine Rokossovskiy conducting Operation Suvorov, in October 1943, with the slaughter bereft of imagination that Sokolovskiy enforced as commander of the Western Front.<sup>334</sup> Nor, is it easy to see Rokossovskiy grinding his way through Budapest, in January 1945, with the same blind stubbornness of Malinovskiy.<sup>335</sup>

In early October 1942, as the Don Front's commander, Rokossovskiy found himself in the Stalingrad region, north-west of the city. Rokossovskiy was ordered by *Stavka* to prepare an operation against German forces north of Stalingrad, in the Orlovka salient. In his report of 9<sup>th</sup> October 1942, Rokossovskiy clearly indicated that he did not consider the operation a good idea. The Germans had deep defences that they had occupied for several weeks and held high ground that enabled them to observe Soviet preparations. Furthermore, the divisions of 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Army, 24<sup>th</sup> Army and 66<sup>th</sup> Army, earmarked for the attack were severely depleted after months of fighting. In Rokossovskiy's opinion they did not have the strength or fighting spirit to achieve the breakthrough. He concluded that unless substantial reinforcements were allocated the operation was not sustainable, before dutifully laying out an operational timetable.<sup>336</sup> In October 1942, this was a remarkably candid document for a Soviet operational commander to write. Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy was ordered to prepare an operation and submitted his operational plan on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1942. The operation was scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942.<sup>337</sup> It failed, as Rokossovskiy had predicted.<sup>338</sup>

Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy was fortunate in that he never faced a situation where he had few alternatives but a ghastly pyrrhic victory. He was not cornered in Leningrad, trapped in Stalingrad or Budapest, nor confronted with the massive defences encountered by 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front, in East Prussia, especially around Konigsberg. Nor was Rokossovskiy ever confronted with an objective like Berlin. Yet, Rokossovskiy endured fierce engagements, in terrible weather on dreadful terrain, and in the Belorussian marshes he did not get dragged into a protracted attritional and positional struggle. Rokossovskiy did not waste lives through a bloody-minded refusal to accept that his operational plan had not worked. Nor did Rokossovskiy value attrition as a weapon for its own sake.

Rokossovskiy was not cut from the same savage hue as Stalin, Zhukov and Konev, merciless and virtually without compassion. If the demands of the military situation did not require it, Rokossovskiy did not revel in revenge and slaughter. According to Richard Woff,

“there were times during the war when, amid the destructive urge for bestial vengeance on both sides, Rokossovskiy displayed humanity and compassion for the suffering of the once powerful adversary, and the hapless German population.”<sup>339</sup>

Equally, although there is no evidence that Rokossovskiy approved of penal battalions, he did not openly disapprove of them, and although he was dismayed at the wastefulness of Stalin’s Red Army, unlike the equally talented, but ill-fated Vlasov, Rokossovskiy did not take an open stand. It would not have been successful.

Rokossovskiy was more humane than many other Soviet commanders, but he should not be seen as some kind of chivalric Bolshevik. He had no qualms, on



**Figure 87: Rokossovskiy, 1944**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, in unleashing the entire 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army, on a pocket of encircled German troops, near Bobruisk. Similarly, he unleashed Don Front’s artillery on German troops who refused to surrender at Stalingrad. Equally, there is also the question of East Prussia. In January-February 1945, Red Army soldiers in Rokossovskiy’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front, as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian

Front, unleashed mayhem upon the German population. The conduct of 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps in East Prussia is reputed to have been appalling but militarily, on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1945, it smashed the key German defensive zone, south-eastern Prussia, at Allenstein. Rokossovskiy specifically commended its performance to *Stavka*.<sup>340</sup> However, there seems very little evidence in Rokossovskiy’s character and conduct to support the notion that rape happened in East Prussia because “in Rokossovskiy’s mob, Rokossovskiy permitted it.”<sup>341</sup>

Rokossovskiy's life and career had exposed him to tragedy, savagery and the sheer havoc that war and revolution had inflicted upon millions of people. In East Prussia, Rokossovskiy understood the rage of the Red Army's soldiers and probably he thought that retribution had a higher moral authority than a planned systematic, racial war of annihilation. In the East Prussian Operation, on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1945, Rokossovskiy's forces liberated some 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war.<sup>342</sup> It is almost certain that their conditions and health were truly ghastly. This does not mean that he approved of or condoned some of the appalling depravity displayed by some Soviet troops. In fact, even though the extent of the mayhem was well known among senior commanders, political and military, in Moscow and East Prussia, Rokossovskiy was the only commander who even attempted to do something about the carnage. He issued Order 006, instructing Soviet troops to turn their anger on German troops not civilians.<sup>343</sup> If



**Figure 88: A.M. Vasilevskiy**  
(ets.ru)

Rokossovskiy did relatively little to actively enforce it, given his primary operational responsibility to destroy the German forces in East Prussia, at least he did something. In contrast, when informed that Soviet soldiers were committing terrible crimes Vasilevskiy responded with "I don't give a fuck. It is now time for our soldiers to issue their own justice."<sup>344</sup>

Naturally, in a national struggle for survival, Rokossovskiy was primarily motivated by the military task of destroying the enemy. Rokossovskiy was a professional officer with the highest possible standards, who demanded an absolute commitment to duty. Of course, he was prepared to pay the butcher's bill of death, in order to achieve objectives and he could be harsh, in the face of incompetence. Yet, the historical record demonstrates that Rokossovskiy had a natural awareness of the importance of effective relationships in achieving military objectives.

In short, more than any other leading Soviet commander, Rokossovskiy instinctively understood the interactive relationship between caring for the men



and getting the job done. Rokossovskiy knew that effective relationships characterised by trust, delegation and confidence made it more likely, not less, that the task would be achieved. It was this that made his style of leadership so unusual by the standards of a Soviet political and military leadership that had little use for anything other than task fulfilment, regardless of the cost. It is perhaps ironic, that indirectly, it was Zhukov, of all people, who confirmed that Rokossovskiy had the ability to care for the men and get the job done. According to Kardashov citing Zhukov,

“Rokossovskiy was a very good boss. A brilliant knowledge of the military life he had a clear mission, sensible and tactically proven in executing his orders. To subordinates he showed concern, was consistently loyal and polite, but nobody else valued or was as skilled in developing units and subordinates under his command. To many he gave valuable time to study, to learn. I have not yet spoken about his unusual sincerity - they all knew his reputation and they were few who didn't want to serve under his command.”<sup>345</sup>

### **The Warsaw Uprising**

However, one cannot avoid the fact that on the face of it, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front appeared, in August-September 1944, to acquiesce in the horrific annihilation of the Warsaw Uprising. The Warsaw Uprising began on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1944 and ended on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1944, in scenes of terrible destruction. The people and the city were massacred, while Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front watched from the eastern bank of the Vistula, unable they claimed, unwilling said others, to end the bloodletting. In response to accusations that the Red Army rested, while the Warsaw insurgents were slaughtered, the Soviet official history of the Great Patriotic War argued,

“on August 1<sup>st</sup>, troops of the left flank of the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front approached Warsaw from the south-east. In approaching Praga, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army met with fierce enemy resistance; the approaches to Praga had been heavily fortified.....it was also here that the Germans concentrated a heavy striking force of one infantry and four Panzer divisions, which

struck out at the beginning of August and drove the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army away from Praga, before the bulk of our troops had time to approach this Warsaw suburb.”<sup>346</sup>

Yet, even if the Red Army and, more specifically, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front had been in excellent condition, Stalin would not have allowed it to intervene on behalf of the insurgents. Stalin was never going to allow Bor-Komarowski and the London Poles to present themselves as the heroic liberators of Warsaw. Stalin and Rokossovskiy understood that without the Red Army’s support, the uprising was probably doomed; without it the rising would succeed. If it succeeded, the prestige of the London Poles would present Stalin, who had his own plans for Poland, with a serious political problem.

If one is to sustain an argument that Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership was not as savage or inured to casualties as the likes of Zhukov and Konev, then his attitude to the uprising and the validity of his arguments, justifying the inability, not the refusal, of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front to intervene, is of considerable influence. In the opinion of one commentator, “in his memoirs Rokossovskiy (sic) adopted a laconic, at times derisive attitude towards the uprising.”<sup>347</sup> Rokossovskiy did regard the timing of the uprising as an act of gross, irresponsible stupidity: “frankly speaking, the timing of the uprising was just about the worst possible in the circumstances. It was as though its leaders had deliberately chosen a time that would ensure its defeat.”<sup>348</sup>

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1944, after official celebrations in Lublin, a city that on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1944, Stalin explicitly stated that he wanted captured for purely political reasons,<sup>349</sup> Rokossovskiy gave an interview to the British journalist, Alexander Werth. Rokossovskiy criticised the timing of the uprising, and its leaders, while seeking to explain that 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was in no position to intervene. Werth pointed out that on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1944, Pravda had given the distinct impression that the fall of Warsaw was inevitable and that “the talk in Moscow

was that Rokossovskiy was going to capture Warsaw on August 9 or 10.”<sup>350</sup>

Rokossovskiy told Werth,

“let’s be serious. An armed insurrection in a place like Warsaw could only have succeeded if it had been carefully co-ordinated with the Red Army. The question of timing was of the utmost importance. The Warsaw insurgents are badly armed, and the rising would have made sense only if we were already on the point of entering Warsaw. That point *had not been reached at any stage*, and I’ll admit that some Soviet correspondents were much too optimistic on the 1<sup>st</sup> August. We were pushed back.”<sup>351</sup>

Rokossovskiy was unusually scathing about the irresponsibility, as he saw it, of the uprising’s leaders.

“Bor-Komarowski and the people around him have butted in *kak ryzhy v tsirke* - like the clown in the circus who pops up at the wrong moment and only gets rolled up in the carpet.....if it were only a piece of clowning it wouldn’t matter, but the political stunt is going to cost Poland hundreds of thousands of lives. It is an appalling tragedy and now they are trying to put the blame on us.”<sup>352</sup>

After this somewhat ritualistic denunciation of Bor-Komarowski and London, Rokossovskiy defended the Red Army’s inaction on purely military grounds. He was very annoyed by suggestions that 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was refusing to intervene, rather than being incapable of an assault, across the Vistula. Naturally, Rokossovskiy had a vested interest in protecting his reputation, but in operational terms as Alexander Werth observed, “the really crucial question is whether the Russians could have forced the Vistula at Warsaw in either August or September.”<sup>353</sup>

It is around this matter that Rokossovskiy’s reputation and integrity revolve. On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1944, Rokossovskiy told Werth that “after several weeks’ heavy fighting in Belorussia and eastern Poland we finally reached the outskirts of Praga about the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. The Germans, at this point, threw in four armoured divisions, and we were driven back.”<sup>354</sup> He claimed that 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian had been driven back nearly 100 kilometres. In 1944, he argued “the military situation east

of the Vistula is much more complicated than you realise. And we just don't want any British or American planes mucking around here at the moment.”<sup>355</sup>

The historical evidence does support Rokossovskiy's arguments.<sup>356</sup> The operational situation, east of the Vistula, was a delicate one. Norman Davies, who cannot be considered a sympathetic commentator, acknowledges,

“the German counter-attack east of the Vistula by four *panzer* divisions had proved surprisingly effective. When launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, it was conceived as a last minute move to staunch the gaping wound caused by Operation Bagration and the collapse of Army Group Centre. But instead it made headway, and Rokossovskiy, who had literally been within sight of Warsaw, was pushed halfway back to the Bug.”<sup>357</sup>

The German counter-attack complicated an already dynamic operational situation. On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1944, 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army suffered heavy casualties in attempting to cross the Vistula at Pulawy. It was clinging on. Furthermore, less well known but equally significant, one hundred kilometres east of Warsaw, 65<sup>th</sup> Army was fighting through a major German tactical ambush in the Belorussian forest.<sup>358</sup>

Equally, the right-wing of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front had been in action since 24<sup>th</sup> June 1944, and was still heavily engaged. It was struggling to support the left-wing and thus spread German combat power. The left-wing had only been in action since 18<sup>th</sup> July 1944, but on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, its spearhead, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was thumped, east of Warsaw.<sup>359</sup> Simultaneously, 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army was engaged in a bitter struggle for the Magnuszew bridgehead, upon which future combat operations in Poland were vital. In short, the military situation was complicated. As Rokossovskiy commented “if the Germans had not thrown in all that armour, we could have taken Warsaw, though not in a frontal attack; but it was never more than a 50-50 chance.”<sup>360</sup>

Werth conceded Rokossovskiy's argument that 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian was in no position to bounce the Vistula, enter Warsaw and defeat the Germans in a major urban battle. Similarly, Davies agrees that “in the first week of August there was little

chance that Rokossovskiy could have easily crossed the Vistula in force.”<sup>361</sup> It is perhaps ironic that the most authentic confirmation of the veracity of Rokossovskiy’s comments came from the German high command. General von Tippelskirch declared, “the Warsaw Rising started on August 1<sup>st</sup>, at a time when the strength of the Russian blow had exhausted itself.”<sup>362</sup> In a similar vein, Werth quotes Guderian as reporting, “the German 9<sup>th</sup> Army had the impression, on August 8<sup>th</sup> that the Russian attempt to seize Warsaw by a coup de main had been defeated by our defence, despite the Polish uprising, and that the latter had, from the enemy’s point of view, begun too soon.”<sup>363</sup> In short, after six weeks of fighting, Rokossovskiy’s 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was in no position to force the Vistula and fight an urban battle for Warsaw against a prepared enemy. It was not an act of indifference by Rokossovskiy, but an enforced operational pause.

There seems little doubt that Stalin cynically exploited 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front’s operational difficulties in order to secure the destruction of the Polish insurgents. However, as early as 8<sup>th</sup> August 1944, Rokossovskiy submitted an operational plan for the invasion and liberation of Poland.<sup>364</sup> The plan endorsed by Zhukov, proposed to drive the Germans from Poland, liberating Warsaw in the process. It is clear evidence of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front’s relative recovery and Stalin’s true priorities. Yet, subsequently, Davies is critical, by implication, if nothing else, of Rokossovskiy’s failure to support 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army’s attempt to cross the Vistula. The battle of the Chernyakhov Bridgehead (15<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> September 1944) cost 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army 4,938 dead.<sup>365</sup> It was the closest the insurgents came to a physical link with the Red Army. The attack failed because there was no surprise, extensive German defences and 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army’s inexperience. The 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army had been under Rokossovskiy’s command since the spring of 1944 and had experienced problems, real or otherwise, in May 1944<sup>366</sup> and in June 1944<sup>367</sup> with its battle training and fitness for combat.

However, Davies implies that 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army might have succeeded if 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front had provided more support. It is implied that the scale of Soviet artillery, sapper and air support<sup>368</sup> indicates that this was not a rogue Polish

operation, borne of national sentiment, but one launched with the tacit approval of Rokossovskiy, and by implication Stalin. Nevertheless, “Rokossovskiy did not attempt to use any Soviet combat troops and the First Byelorussian Front did not alter the essential defensive stance which it had been ordered to assume in late August.”<sup>369</sup> As Davies indicates the origins of such political and military tokenism lay, no doubt, in the Kremlin. However, while acknowledging the reality of Rokossovskiy’s impotence in the face of Stalin, SMERSH and the NKVD, he virtually implicated Rokossovskiy as guilty by association, a man who either lacked the courage of his own convictions, or the courage of his Polish antecedents, who fought for Polish freedom in the nineteenth century. In Davies’ words, “why at a time when no other major fighting was in progress, did Rokossovskiy not put a greater share of his massive resources at Bering’s disposal? One cannot know, but certainly much more could have been done.”<sup>370</sup>

Can the implication that Rokossovskiy simply sat on his hands, while Warsaw burned, be justified? As Davies acknowledges, one cannot know. Similarly, by his own account, Stalin kept his commanders on a tight rein. In such a delicate political situation, the penalties for open insubordination or tolerance of an incremental Soviet military involvement, by Rokossovskiy, would have been severe. No sane man could have been expected to run such a risk, nevermind one with Rokossovskiy’s Polish and Gulag background. Indeed, Davies himself suggests that Lieutenant-General Serov of the NKVD, “though a mere lieutenant general, he could have obtained the authority to arrest Marshal Rokossovskiy at any time. Rokossovskiy could never have ordered the arrest of a senior political officer.”<sup>371</sup> Rokossovskiy’s operational plan of 8<sup>th</sup> August 1944 had already placed him in a vulnerable position.<sup>372</sup> Its potential implications cannot have been lost on Stalin. It is impossible to know if Rokossovskiy’s plan was aimed at helping the rebels, or, whether any benefit to Warsaw was just incidental, if helpful to the plan’s success. Certainly, it was not a specific objective. Nevertheless, it was the only attempt to reconcile Soviet military strategic and operational interests, with those of Warsaw.

The dormant proximity of Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front as the fighters of Warsaw were slaughtered has tarnished Rokossovskiy's reputation. However, the historical record does support Rokossovskiy's claim that, in early August 1944, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was in no condition to intervene on behalf of the rebels. It is of course true, that fresh or tattered, Stalin's policy would have prevented 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's intervention. In a sense, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's operational exhaustion saved Rokossovskiy from an appalling moral dilemma. If 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front had been fresh, then Rokossovskiy, whose Polish links were well known, may have faced a confrontation with his conscience, or Stalin. As Rokossovskiy's defiance of Stalin over the planning, in May 1944, of Operation Bagration, indicate, Rokossovskiy was no sycophantic apparatchik, but from a personal perspective, one must conclude that he was fortunate in the exhaustion of his troops.

### **Summary**

Rokossovskiy was not a scholar of military leadership. He received no formal officer training, of any kind, until 1928-29.<sup>373</sup> There is little to suggest that he saw himself as anything other than a "natural" leader. Yet, he had a wealth of knowledge and experience. It is the argument of this thesis that Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and command was genuinely distinctive in character. It was very different from that of his leading Red Army contemporaries. Indeed, Rokossovskiy's style of leadership implicitly rejected the prevailing authoritarian leadership culture of Stalin's Red Army. This made him a very radical exception to the rule.

Rokossovskiy was an authoritative, not authoritarian commander, a man who could switch between different leadership styles by instinct and considered reflection, not the contrived application of method, regardless of the situation. Rokossovskiy's style of leadership was flexible, imaginative, creative and occasionally democratic. It encouraged delegation, the use of initiative, team leadership, consultation and discussion in the preparation and execution of operations. It is a fact that Rokossovskiy tolerated mistakes, to encourage

creativity and initiative, in a way that Zhukov,<sup>374</sup> Konev,<sup>375</sup> Sokolovskiy,<sup>376</sup> Yeremenko<sup>377</sup> and Malinovskiy.<sup>378</sup> either could not or would not.

Rokossovskiy was a very senior commander, in charge of huge formations. There was a limit to his direct influence on all his subordinates. Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy thought carefully about what he wanted from senior officers. In a Stalinist political and army culture, where initiative and independent thinking had been murderously suppressed, Rokossovskiy understood that good officers thrived on confidence and trust, namely, the chance to use their initiative and professional expertise. By the standards of Stalin's Red Army, Rokossovskiy was an unusual, quietly unorthodox, senior officer. He was adept in both leadership and command, but rejected the authoritarian style of leadership that was common to other senior commanders. This made him a distinct, quietly uncompromising exception to the rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, (Sage, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Grint, ed., *Leadership Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*, (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Grint, ed., op. cit. p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> J. Steven Ott, Sandra J. Parkes, Richard B. Simpson, *Classic Readings In Organizational Behaviour*, (Thomson, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Grint, ed, *Leadership Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*, op. cit. p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, *The Leadership Myth*, in Grint, ed., op. cit. p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> Gary Gemmill and Judith Oakley, *Leadership: An Alienating Social Myth*, in Grint, ed., op. cit. p. 250.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Dian Marie Hosking, *Organizing, Leadership and Skilful Process*, in Grint, ed. op. cit. p. 293.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Bolden, R., Gosling, J, Marturans. A and Denson, P, *A Review of Leadership Theory And Competence Frameworks*, (University of Exeter, Centre For Leadership Studies, June 2003), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> J. Steven Ott et al., *Classic Reading in Organizational Behaviour*, op. cit. p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> Keith Grint, ed., op. cit. p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Bolden, R. et al., *A Review of Leadership Theory and Competence Frameworks*, op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> Lord et al., cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Kirkpatrick and Locke, cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard M. Bass, 'From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision,' in ed., Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2007), pp. 302-317, gives a good general introduction to transformational leadership. See also Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 175-206.

<sup>23</sup> Goleman, Daniel, *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, 1999

<sup>24</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 35.



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- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 24-25.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 35.
- <sup>28</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 40.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-42.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-53. Northouse gives an excellent synthesis of the skills and competencies put forward by advocates of the skills approach.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 54.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 67.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 67.
- <sup>35</sup> Bolder, R. et al. *A Review of Leadership Theory and Competence Frameworks*, op. cit. p. 6. Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 69.
- <sup>36</sup> Northouse, op. cit. p. 87.
- <sup>37</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 69.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 1.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 78.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 79.
- <sup>41</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 78.
- <sup>42</sup> P. Hersey & K.H. Blanchard, 'Life-Cycle Theory of Leadership,' *Training and Developmental Journal*, (Vol. 23, 1969), pp. 26-34. P. Hersey & K.H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1969). K.H. Blanchard, *SL II: A Situational Approach To Managing People*, (Escondido, CA, Blanchard Training and Development, 1985). K. Blanchard, P. Zigarmi & D. Zigarmi, 'Situational Leadership After 25 Years: A Retrospective,' *Journal of Leadership Studies*, (Vol. 1, No. 1), pp. 22-36. C.L. Graef, 'The Situational Leadership Theory: A Critical View,' *Academy of Management Review*, (Vol. 8, 1983), pp. 285-291. C. L. Graef, 'Evolution of the Situational Leadership Theory: A Critical Review,' *Leadership Quarterly*, (Vol. 8, No. 2, 1997), pp. 153-170. Cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 111.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 91. Bolder, R. et al., *A Review of Leadership Theory and Competence Frameworks*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>44</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, 'Situational Leadership Theory : An Examination of a Prescriptive Theory,' in ed., Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, Second Edition, (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame , Indiana, 2007), pp. 318-334 is a good overview of situational leadership.
- <sup>45</sup> Grint ed., *Leadership Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*, op. cit. p. 5.
- <sup>46</sup> Bolder, R. et al. *A Review of Leadership Theory and Competence Frameworks*, op. cit. p.8.
- <sup>47</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 93-94 gives a summary.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 96-97.
- <sup>49</sup> Roya Ayman, Martin M. Chemers and Fred Fiedler, 'The Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness : Its Level of Analysis,' in ed. Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, op. cit. pp. 335-360 has a comprehensive overview of contingency theory.
- <sup>50</sup> Fred E. Fiedler, 'The Contingency Model: A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness,' in J. Steven Ott, Sandra J. Parkes and Richard B. Simpson, *Classic Readings In Organizational Behaviour*, (Thomson, 2008), pp. 55-63.
- <sup>51</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 113.
- <sup>52</sup> Roya Ayman, Martin M. Chemers and Fred Fiedler, 'The Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness : Its Level of Analysis,' in ed., Robert P. Vecchio, op. cit. pp. 338-344 presents an informed discussion on the LPC scale.
- <sup>53</sup> Northouse *Leadership* , op. cit. pp. 114.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 118.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 114.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 117.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 118.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> M.G. Evans, 'The Effects of Supervisory Behavior on the Path-Goal Relationship,' *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, (No.5, 1970) pp. 278-298. R.J. House, 'A Path-Goal Theory of

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- Leader Effectiveness,' *Administrative Science Quarterly*, (No.16. 1971), pp. 321-328. R.J. House & R.R. Mitchell, 'Path-Goal Theory of Leadership,' *Journal of Contemporary Business*, (No.3, 1974)pp. 81-97 are the intellectual bedrock of path-goal theory.
- <sup>60</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 128.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>62</sup> Robert J. House and Terence R. Mitchell, 'Path-Goal Theory of Leadership,' in ed. Robert P. Vecchio, '*Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*,' op. cit. pp. 241-254, this pp. 248-250 has a very clear description of the leadership methods involved in Path-Goal Theory.
- <sup>63</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 129-130.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 131-132.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 148.
- <sup>66</sup> R.J. House and R.R. Mitchell, 'Path-goal Theory of Leadership,' *Journal of Contemporary Business*, (No.3, 1974), pp. 81-97, cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. .p. 130.
- <sup>67</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 151.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> F. Dansereau, G.B. Graen & W. Haga, 'A Vertical Dyad Linkage Approach to Leadership in Formal Organizations,' *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, (Vol. 13, 1975), pp. 46-78. G.B. Graen, 'Role-Making Processes Within Complex Organizations,' in M.D. Dunnette, ed., *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, (Chicago, Rand McNally), pp. 1202-1245. G.B. Graen & J. Cashman, 'A Role-Making Model Of Leadership In Formal Organizations,' in J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson, eds, *Leadership Frontiers*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1975), pp. 143-166. G.B. Graen & M. Uhl-Bien, 'Relationship-Based Approach To Leadership: Development of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory of Leadership Over 25 Years: Applying A Multi-Level, Multi-Domain Perspective,' *Leadership Quarterly*, (Vol. 6, No. 2).pp. 219-247.
- <sup>70</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 152-154.
- <sup>71</sup> G.B. Graen & M. Uhl-Bien, 'The Transformation of Professionals In to Self-Managing And Partially Self-Designing Contributions: Toward A Theory Of Leadership Making,' *Journal of Management Systems*, (Vol. 3, No. 3), pp. 33-48, cited Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 155.
- <sup>72</sup> See Robert P. Vecchio, 'Are You *In* or *Out* with Your Boss?' in ed. Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, op. cit. pp. 255-258.
- <sup>73</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 171-172.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 172.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 177.
- <sup>76</sup> A. Bryman, *Charisma and Leadership In Organizations*, (London, Sage, 1992). Cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 175.
- <sup>77</sup> J.V. Downton, *Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma In A Revolutionary Process*, (New York, Free Press, 1973).
- <sup>78</sup> J.M. Burns, *Leadership*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1978). Cited in Northouse, op. cit. p. 176.
- <sup>79</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 175.
- <sup>80</sup> B.M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, (New York, Free Press, 1985), p. 20 cited in Northouse, op. cit. p. 180.
- <sup>81</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 176-177.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 176.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 191.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 193.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 192.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>87</sup> Bernard M. Bass, 'From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision,' in ed., Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, op. cit. pp. 302-317, this p. 304.
- <sup>88</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 193.
- <sup>89</sup> Bernard M. Bass, 'From Transactional to Transformational Leadership : Learning to Share the Vision,' in ed. Philip P. Vecchio, '*Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*,' op. cit. p. 302-317, this p. 308.
- <sup>90</sup> Northouse, *Leadership* op. cit. pp. 193-194.

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- <sup>91</sup> Keith Grint, ed., *Leadership Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*, (Oxford University Press, 1997,) p. 13. B.M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, (New York, Free Press, 1985). W.G. Bennis & B. Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies For Taking Charge*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1985). J.M. Kouzes & B.Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How To Get Extraordinary Things Done In Organizations*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass). Cited by Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 202 as key texts in the fusion of charismatic leadership with transformational leadership.
- <sup>92</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 178.
- <sup>93</sup> Keith Grint, ed., *Leadership Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*, op. cit. p. 14.
- <sup>94</sup> Makhmut Garyev, 'Marshal Rokossovskiy, Commander of the Victory Parade, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1945,' *Krasnaya Zvezda*, (27<sup>th</sup> June 2000), p. 1.
- <sup>95</sup> John Gastil, 'A Definition and Illustration of Democratic Leadership' in Keith Grint, ed., *Leadership Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*, op. cit. pp. 155-178, this p. 155.
- <sup>96</sup> Gastil, 'A Definition and Illustration of Democratic Leadership,' in Grint, ed., op. cit. p. 156.
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-163.
- <sup>98</sup> Daniel Goleman, 'Leadership That Gets Results,' *Harvard Business Review*, (March-April 2000), p. 85.
- <sup>99</sup> Daniel Goleman, 'Leadership That Gets Results,' *Harvard Business Review on What Makes a Leader* pp. 53-85, (Harvard Business School Press, 2001)
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 60.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>102</sup> Daniel Goleman, 'Leadership That Gets Results,' *Harvard Business Review on What Makes a Leader* pp. 80-82. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, 1999. Daniel Goleman, 'What Makes A Leader' in J. Steven Ott, Sandra J. Parkes, Richard B. Simpson in *Classic Readings In Organizational Behavior*, (Thomson, 2008), p. 82. Daniel Goleman, 'What Makes A Leader' in J. Steven Ott, Sandra J. Parkes, Richard B. Simpson in *Classic Readings In Organizational Behavior*, (Thomson, 2008), p. 82.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>104</sup> Anfilov, *Zhukov*, op. cit. pp. 351-352.
- <sup>105</sup> Daniel Goleman, 'Leadership That Gets Results,' *Harvard Business Review on What Makes a Leader* p. 60.
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 60
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 63.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 64.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 65.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 67.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 68.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 69.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 60.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 70.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 60.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 73.
- <sup>121</sup> British Army Doctrine Publications, 'Land Operations,' Prepared Under the Direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Directorate General Development And Doctrine, May 2005, p. 139.
- <sup>122</sup> V.E. Korol, 'The Price of Victory: Myths and Reality,' *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, (Vol. 9, No. 2, June 1996), pp. 417-426.
- <sup>123</sup> Max Hastings, *Armageddon*, (Pan, 2004), p. 152.
- <sup>124</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (London, Macmillan, 1962), p. 58. Shimon Naveh, *Tukhachevsky*, in Harold Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, (Phoenix, 1993), pp. 255-273.
- <sup>125</sup> Max Hastings, *Armageddon*, (Pan, 2004), p. 152.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 128.
- <sup>127</sup> Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-230, *Russian Combat Methods In World War II*, Washington 25, D.C., 1 November 1950, (Facsimilie Edition, Center of Military History United States Army Washington D.C., 1983), p. 1983.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

- <sup>129</sup> Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin Triumph and Tragedy*, edited and translated by Harold Shukman, (Forum, 1999), p. 475.
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 466.
- <sup>131</sup> Strobe Talbot, ed., *Khrushchev Remembers*, (Boston, Little Brown, 1970), p. 170 cited in Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders*, op. cit. p. 172.
- <sup>132</sup> Tukhachevskiy cited in Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, op. cit. p. 97.
- <sup>133</sup> Dmitri Volkogonov, 'Voroshilov' in Harold Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, (Phoenix, 1993), pp. 313-324. Also *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1976), pp. 363-365.
- <sup>134</sup> Viktor Anfilov, *Budenny*, in Harold Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. pp. 57-65.
- <sup>135</sup> British Army Doctrine Publications, 'Land Operations', Chapter 6: The Command of Land Forces, Prepared Under The Direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Directorate General Development and Doctrine, May 2005, p. 115.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 116.
- <sup>137</sup> A German method of command begun in the Scharnhorst period 1806-1813 and carried through into the twentieth century. It involved senior officers telling subordinates what they wanted but not how to do it.
- <sup>138</sup> James R. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg*, (University Press of Kansas, 1995) has an excellent discussion.
- <sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 43.
- <sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>142</sup> Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War : From the Thirty Years War to the Third Reich*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005).
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 307-308.
- <sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 170-171.
- <sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 177.
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 226.
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 147.
- <sup>149</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>150</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg* (Olma Press, Moscow, 2002), p. 26.
- <sup>151</sup> David M. Glantz, *Vatutin*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 295.
- <sup>152</sup> P.I. Batov, *V Pokhadakh i Boyakh*, (In Campaigns and Battles) (Moscow, 1966), p. 149.
- <sup>153</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>154</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 76.
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 412.
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 300.
- <sup>157</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), p. 408.
- <sup>158</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 8, (Moscow, 1980), p. 463.
- <sup>159</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 640-641.
- <sup>160</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 8, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 265-266.
- <sup>161</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1976), p. 341.
- <sup>162</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 4, (Moscow, 1977), p. 228.
- <sup>163</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 99-100.
- <sup>164</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 76.
- <sup>165</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. pp. 21-22 when discussing the Five Factor Personality Model that has emerged from decades of leadership research into the personality traits leaders possess.
- <sup>166</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 149.
- <sup>167</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>168</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 4, (Moscow, 1977), p. 27.
- <sup>169</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 157.
- <sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 149.
- <sup>171</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 21-22. Extraversion, the tendency to be sociable and assertive is the leading personality trait generally identified among leaders.
- <sup>172</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 215.
- <sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>174</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 270.

- <sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 312
- <sup>176</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, (Olma Press, Moscow, 2002), p. 348.
- <sup>177</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 374-375.
- <sup>178</sup> The reasons for this apparently odd decision, particularly when Rokossovskiy was given the option by Stalin, will be discussed in greater detail later.
- <sup>179</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 149.
- <sup>180</sup> Cited in David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, 24 December 1943-April 1944, (Part Two: The Western Axis), 2000, p. 500.
- <sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 495.
- <sup>182</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 74-75.
- <sup>183</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 390.
- <sup>184</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3411. d. 8. l. 241 in V.A. Zolotarev, *Russkiy Arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya*, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab i Gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Vyny*, (Moscow, 'TERRA', 2001), p. 610. 'Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1,2,i 3-go Belorusskikh i 4-go Ukrainskikh Frontov Ob Unichtozhenii Ostakov Razvitykh Chastey Protivnika V Tyl Nashim Voysk' (To The Commanders of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian and 4<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Fronts Concerning The Destruction and Smashing of Enemy Units In The Rear Of Our Forces), General Staff Order No:12348, 19.00 Hours, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1945. Henceforth ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001).
- <sup>185</sup> Cited in David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. VI, The Winter Campaign, 24 December 1943-April 1944, op. cit. p. 500.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 499.
- <sup>187</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 317.
- <sup>188</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 298.
- <sup>189</sup> A. Shapirov, *Chernyakovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 149-155.
- <sup>190</sup> John Ericsson, *The Road to Berlin*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 124-147 gives an excellent account of these operations.
- <sup>191</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 313. Batov, op. cit. p. 391-392.
- <sup>192</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 28 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 154. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00366/Op Komanduyushchim 2-y Tankovoy i 16-y Vozdushnoy Na Naneseniye Kontrudara.' (Battle Instructions of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On Inflicting Counterstrikes.)
- <sup>193</sup> Batov, op. cit. pp. 381-389.
- <sup>194</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 368.
- <sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 377-378.
- <sup>196</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 309. op. 4703. d. 785, l. 11 in ed. Zolotarev, in RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), p. 287. 'Boeyevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-y Udarnoy Armii Ob Ovladenii Gorodom Pulutsk' (Battle Report Of The Staff of 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army About Control Of The Town Of Pulutsk), 07.00 Hours, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1945
- <sup>197</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 380.
- <sup>198</sup> Anthony Beevor, *Berlin-The Downfall*, (Penguin, 2003), p. 222.
- <sup>199</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 565.
- <sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 566.
- <sup>201</sup> See British Army Doctrine Publications 'Land Operations', Prepared Under The Direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Directorate General Development And Doctrine, May 2005, p. 116.
- <sup>202</sup> M.F. Panov, *Na Napravlenye Glavnogo U dara* (On The Axis of the Main Blow), p. 103 cited in David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War(1941-1945)*, Vol.VI, The Winter Campaign, op. cit. p. 567.
- <sup>203</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 579.
- <sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 493.
- <sup>206</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999), p. 47.
- <sup>207</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, (Pan, London, 1964), p. 457.
- <sup>208</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 143. l. 300 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 244. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30260

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*Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Belorusskogo Fronta O Naznachenii Yego Predstavitelem Stavki V 1-y Ukrainskiy Front* (Stavka VGK Directive No:30260 To The Commander Of The Belorussian Front About His Appointment As The Stavka's Representative To 1st Ukrainian Front).

<sup>209</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 143. l. 304 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 246. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30265 *Komanduyushchim Voyskami Belorusskogo i 1-y Ukrainskogo Frontov O Perepodochinenii Shecti Strelkovikh Diviziy*' (Stavka VGK Directive No:30265 To The Commanders Of The Belorussian And 1st Ukrainian Fronts Concerning The Transfer Of Six Rifle Divisions)

<sup>210</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. p. 184.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>212</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol.4, (Moscow, 1977), p. 510.

<sup>213</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 48-49.

<sup>214</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 143. l. 306-307 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 247-248. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No: 30267 *Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Ukrainskogo Fronta O Neudovletvoritel'nom Upravlenii Voyskami i Peremeshcheniyakh Dolzhnostikh Lits.*' (Stavka VGK Directive No:30267 To The Commander Of 1st Ukrainian Front Concerning The Disatisfaction Of Headquarters And The Transfer Of Post).

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>216</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002 op. cit. pp. 318-319.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>218</sup> David M. Glantz, *Vatutin*, op. cit. p. 296.

<sup>219</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 375.

<sup>220</sup> As Western Front commander and Stavka representative respectively, Konev and Zhukov were mutually responsible for a bloodbath in Operation Mars (24<sup>th</sup> November-16<sup>th</sup> December 1942).

<sup>221</sup> British Army Doctrine Publications, 'Land Operations,' Prepared Under The Direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Directorate General Development And Doctrine, May 2005, p.119.

<sup>222</sup> Batov, op. cit. pp. 388-391.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 365.

<sup>225</sup> See the discussion of LMX leadership theory on pp. 70-71.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>227</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 164.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> *Sbornik Materialov Po Izuchenniu Opyta Voyny*, No.5. *Mart 1943*. (A Collection of Materials for The Study of War Experience, No.5. March 1943), pp. 60-65. Classified secret and prepared for the Red Army General Staff.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 298.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>233</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 301.

<sup>234</sup> David M. Glantz, 'Prelude to Kursk:' Soviet Strategic Operations, February-March 1943, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol.8, No.1, March 1995, p. 25.

<sup>235</sup> K. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, (Lancer International, 1985), p. 178.

<sup>236</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002 op. cit. p. 388.

<sup>237</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1978), p. 453.

<sup>238</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 5. l. 118,119 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 301-304. 'Postanovleniye Voyennogo Soveta Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00116 O Prichinakh Neudach Nastupleniya 70-y Armii' (Decree Of The Military Soviet Of The Central Front About The Reasons For The Failure Of The Attack of 70<sup>th</sup> Army), 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1943

<sup>239</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 302.

<sup>240</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 385.

<sup>241</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 237, op. 2394. d. 1088. l. 15-42 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 256-261. 'Operativnaya Direktiva Voyskami Komanduyushchego 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Nastupleniye' (Operational Directive Of The Commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front On The Offensive), 17<sup>th</sup> December 1944

<sup>242</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, p. 404.

- <sup>243</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 48-49.
- <sup>244</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 84-85.
- <sup>245</sup> Constantine Pleshakov, *Stalin's Folly*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson), pp. 182-144.
- <sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 24.
- <sup>247</sup> Pleshakov, op. cit. pp. 179-180.
- <sup>248</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 234-236 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 185-186. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00525/Op Komanduyushchim 3 Gvardeyskoy i 2 Tankovymi, 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiyami Na Razvitiye V Napravleniye Shablykino.' (Order Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders Of 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank, And 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On The Development Of The Offensive In The Direction of Shablino).
- <sup>249</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 34,35 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 156-157. 'Direktiva Komanduyushchego Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00376/Op Komanduyushchim 48, 13, 70 65, 60 2-y Tankovoy Armiyami, Komandarm 9-go i 19-go Tankovykh Korpusov O Nedopushchenim Samovol'nogo Otkhoda S Zanimayemykh Pozitsiy' (Directive Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders Of 48, 13, 70, 65, 60, 2nd Tank, 9th and 19th Tank Corps About Inadmissible Unauthorised Withdrawals From Defensive Positions.)
- <sup>250</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 100-101.
- <sup>251</sup> K. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, (Lancer International, Moscow, 1985), p. 136.
- <sup>252</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>253</sup> N.N. Voronov, *Na Sluzhbe Voyenny* (In Military Service) (Moscow, 1963), p. 393.
- <sup>254</sup> Bernd Wegner, 'The War Against The Soviet Union, 1942-43,' in Boog et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. 6, 'The Global War,' (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1154.
- <sup>255</sup> Anfilov, Zhukov, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 350.
- <sup>256</sup> David M. Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus*, (University Press of Kansas, 1998), p. 43.
- <sup>257</sup> Tony Le Tissier, *Race for the Reichstag: The 1945 Battle for Berlin*, (Frank Cass, London and Portland, Oregon, 1999), p. 10.
- <sup>258</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 114-115.
- <sup>259</sup> M.E. Katukov, *1-ya Gvardeyskaya v Boyakh Pod Moskvoy*, (1<sup>st</sup> Guards (Tank Brigade) in the Battle for Moscow) in Sokolov, E. Ed., *Bitva za Moskvu*, (The Battle for Moscow), (Rabochniy, Moscow, 1966), p. 195.
- <sup>260</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, p. 115.
- <sup>261</sup> Otto Preston Chaney, *Zhukov*, (University Press of Oklahoma, 1996), p. 190 argues that Zhukov's bad tempered behaviour has been exaggerated. He cites evidence from Bagramyan and Vasilevsky to support his line of argument. He concludes that it is "very likely Zhukov's wrath was reserved for certain commander and commissars who crossed him or bypassed him, ignoring the chain of command. Certainly, Rokossovsky fell into that category."
- <sup>262</sup> This was the opinion of Rokossovskiy's daughter who kindly agreed to discuss her father's relationship and character at length during a conference in Warsaw in November 1996. November 1996: Interview with Nadya Rokossovskaya, daughter of Rokossovskiy at Warsaw Conference to Commemorate 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Rokossovskiy and Zhukov, organised by the Russian Institute of Military History
- <sup>263</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 122.
- <sup>264</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>265</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 123.
- <sup>266</sup> S. Bialer, *Stalin and His Generals*, (Souvenir Press, 1969), p. 418.
- <sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 419.
- <sup>268</sup> Bialer, op. cit. pp. 419-420.
- <sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 420.
- <sup>270</sup> Bialer, op. cit. pp. 418-419.
- <sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 420.
- <sup>272</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>273</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999), p. 48.
- <sup>274</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>275</sup> Bialer, *Stalin and His Generals*, op. cit. p. 606.
- <sup>276</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 4, (Moscow, 1977), p. 28.

- <sup>277</sup> M.I. Kazakov, *Nad Kartoi Bylykh Srazhenii*, (Moscow, 1965), p. 133 cited in Bialer, op. cit. p. 422.
- <sup>278</sup> I.M. Christyakov, *Sluzhim Otchizne*, (In Service of the Fatherland), (Voyenizdat, Moscow, 1975), p. 83 cited in David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941-1943*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005), p. 490.
- <sup>279</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 149.
- <sup>280</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 107.
- <sup>281</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York, 1999).
- <sup>282</sup> Daniel Goleman, 'What Makes A Leader' in J. Steven Ott, Sandra J. Parkes, Richard B. Simpson in *Classic Readings In Organizational Behavior*, (Thomson, 2008), p. 82.
- <sup>283</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>284</sup> 'The Maiden's Soldier', Time Magazine, Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1943, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,885022.html>, pp. 1-6, this p. 4.
- <sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 242.
- <sup>286</sup> Ibid., p. 307.
- <sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 308.
- <sup>288</sup> Ibid., p. 309.
- <sup>289</sup> C. Bellamy, *Absolute War*, op. cit. p. 579.
- <sup>290</sup> See pages
- <sup>291</sup> V.I. Kazakov, *Na Perelome*, (On the Tipping Point), (Moscow, 1962), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>292</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 200-201.
- <sup>293</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, (Moscow, 1977), Vol.4, p. 303. Oleg Rzhesheshevsky, *Konev*, in Shukman, ed. op. cit. p. 92 reveals that Konev was a political commissar between 1918-1926 before he became a regular officer in the Red Army.
- <sup>294</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, (Pan, 1964), pp. 484-485. John Erickson, *Malinovsky*, in Shukman, ed., op. cit. p. 117 relates that Malinovsky served in a Russian unit on the Western Front during World War One, in the French sector. In late 1917, Malinovskiy was exiled to North Africa for mutinous, revolutionary activity. He made his own way home and joined the Reds.
- <sup>295</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (1979), p. 436. Sokolovskiy was a noted political general, later in charge of Soviet forces in Berlin, 1948-49, before being Chief of the General Staff, 1952-60.
- <sup>296</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, op. cit. p. 64.
- <sup>297</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 225-226.
- <sup>298</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 270-271.
- <sup>299</sup> C. Bellamy, *Absolute War*, op. cit. pp. 578-579.
- <sup>300</sup> Marshal M. Katukov, *Na Ostriye Glavnogo Udara*, (At the Spearhead of the Main Attack), (Voyenizdat, Moscow, 1976, Second Edition), p. 66.
- <sup>301</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 63.
- <sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 64.
- <sup>303</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 168-69.
- <sup>304</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, *The Smolensk Operation*, in David M. Glantz, *The Initial Period of War on the Eastern Front*, (Frank Cass, 1993), p. 409.
- <sup>305</sup> I.Kh. Bagramyan, *Tak Shli My K Pobede*, (Our Route to Victory), (Moscow, 1977, pp. 300-301.
- <sup>306</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 168-169.
- <sup>307</sup> Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), p. 79.
- <sup>308</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (London, 1962), p. 741.
- <sup>309</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, in Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 177.
- <sup>310</sup> See C. Bellamy, *Absolute War*, op. cit. p.
- <sup>311</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, (Sage, 2007), p. 7.
- <sup>312</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.
- <sup>313</sup> Cited in Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>314</sup> Ibid. See also Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence', in ed. Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, op. cit. pp. 69-74.
- <sup>315</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>316</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence', op. cit. p. 72-73.



- <sup>317</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 8 and Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence', op. cit. p. 73.
- <sup>318</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>319</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence', op. cit. p. 72.
- <sup>320</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>321</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence', op. cit. p. 71.
- <sup>322</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>323</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence', op. cit. p. 71.
- <sup>324</sup> Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar The Life of a Colossus*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2006), p. 79. Goldsworthy gives a sympathetic, but not uncritical assessment of Julius Caesar, but points out that the Civil War "would not have begun had Caesar not placed such a high value on prestige and position."
- <sup>325</sup> Dmitri Volokogonov, *Stalin Triumph and Tragedy*, op. cit. p. 467.
- <sup>326</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1976), p. 590.
- <sup>327</sup> V.E. Korol, 'The Price of Victory: Myths and Reality,' *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No.2, June 1996, p. 422.
- <sup>328</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 106.
- <sup>329</sup> A.A. Lobachev, *Trudnymi dorogami*, (On Hard Roads), (Moscow, Voenizdat, 1960), p. 242. Lobachev was 16<sup>th</sup> Army's political commissar and thus a senior member of the command staff.
- <sup>330</sup> Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders*, op. cit. p. 165.
- <sup>331</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3408. d. 15. l. 249 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (1), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 181-182. 'Direktiva Stavki V GK No: 001941 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Reservnogo Fronta O Nedostatках V Organizatsii Nastupleniya' (Stavka V GK Directive No:001941 To The Commander Of The Reserve Front Concerning Shortcomings In Organising The Offensive).
- <sup>332</sup> Otto Chaney, *Zhukov*, op. cit. p. 178.
- <sup>333</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 230-232.
- <sup>334</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), pp. 400-401.
- <sup>335</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), pp. 612-615.
- <sup>336</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3412. d. 480. l. 339-345 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka V GK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 549-550. 'Doklad Komanduyushchego Voyskami Donskogo Fronta No:0028/Op Nachal'niku General'nogo Shtaba Plana Operatsii Po Ob'yedineniyu S Voyskami, Oboronyayushchimiya V Stalingrade' (Report Of The Commander Of The Don Front No:0028 To The Chief Of The General Staff On The Operational Plan To Join Up With The Forces Defending In Stalingrad).
- <sup>337</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3408. d. 153. l. 904-908 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka V GK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 552-553. 'Doklad Komanduyushchego Voyskami Donskogo Fronta No:0053/Op Zamestitelyu Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu Plana Operatsii Po Razgromu Orlovskoy Gruppировки Protivnika' (Report Of The Commander Of The Don Front No:0053/Op Acting For The Supreme Commander On The Plan Of Operations To Destroy The Enemy Orlovka Grouping)
- <sup>338</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op. cit. pp. 446-447.
- <sup>339</sup> Woff, *Rokossovsky*, in *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 177.
- <sup>340</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 237. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 183-185 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 303-304. 'Boevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Proryve Yuzhnogo Sektora Vostochno-Prusskoy Oboronitel'noy Polosy Protivnika' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Breakthrough In The Southern Sector Of The Enemy's East Prussian Defence Zone), 16.20 Hours, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1945
- <sup>341</sup> Max Hastings, *Armageddon*, (Pan, 2004), p. 152. These were the words of a junior officer.
- <sup>342</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 143.-146 in ed. Zolotarev, 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 300-301 'Boevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Resultatakh Nastupleniya, Ovladenii Yanovo i Peresechenii Granitsy Vostochnoy Prussii' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Results Of The Offensive, Taking Yanovo And Crossing The East Prussian Border), 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>343</sup> Anthony Beevor, *Berlin The Downfall*, op. cit. p. 30.
- <sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- <sup>345</sup> V. Kardashov, *Rokossovskiy*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 140.
- <sup>346</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, op. cit. pp. 783-784.

- <sup>347</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky*, in *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 190.
- <sup>348</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 352.
- <sup>349</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 411. in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 113. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No: 220149 Predstavitel'yu Stavki, Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Ovladeniye Lyublinom' (Stavka VGK Directive No: 220149, To The Commander Of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front And The Stavka Representative, On Taking Lublin).
- <sup>350</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, op. cit. p. 782.
- <sup>351</sup> Ibid., p. 785.
- <sup>352</sup> Ibid., p. 786.
- <sup>353</sup> Ibid., p. 788.
- <sup>354</sup> Ibid., p. 784.
- <sup>355</sup> Ibid., p. 786.
- <sup>356</sup> David M. Glantz, 'The Failures of Historiography: Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, December 1995, pp. 768-808, this, pp. 800-803.
- <sup>357</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, (Pan, 2003), p. 83.
- <sup>358</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 356.
- <sup>359</sup> Karl-Heinz Frieser, 'Die Panzerschlacht vor Warschau als operativer Wendepunkt' in *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Zweite Weltkrieg, Die Ostfront 1943/44, (Band 8, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munchen, 2007)*, pp. 570-587 gives a detailed account of the German counter-attack.
- <sup>360</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, op. cit. pp. 784-785.
- <sup>361</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 268.
- <sup>362</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, op. cit. p. 783.
- <sup>363</sup> Ibid., p. 789.
- <sup>364</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 326.
- <sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 396.
- <sup>366</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 11. l. 51 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 192. 'Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Boevoye Podgotovke Voysk 1-y Pol'skoy Armii' (To the Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front Concerning The Battle Training of 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army), 02.00 Hours, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1944.
- <sup>367</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 12. l. 102 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 254. 'Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Boevoye Podgotovka Chastyakh 1-y Pol'skoy Armii' (To the Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front Concerning The Battle Training Of Units In 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army), 03.00 Hours, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1944.
- <sup>368</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 383.
- <sup>369</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>370</sup> Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit. p. 397.
- <sup>371</sup> Ibid., p. 149.
- <sup>372</sup> David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941-1943*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005), p. 402 gives a brief account of Serov's career.
- <sup>373</sup> Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005,) p. 156.
- <sup>374</sup> Viktor Anfilov, *Zhukov*, in Harold Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, (Phoenix, 1993), pp. 344-345.
- <sup>375</sup> Oleg Rzheshesky, *Konev*, in Shukman, ed., op. cit. p. 93.
- <sup>376</sup> *Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), pp. 436-437.
- <sup>377</sup> *Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 312-313. Roger Reese, *Red Commanders*, op. cit. p. 172 relates the tale of how Yerenenko punched a senior member of command. According to Khrushchev, General Gordov of the Stalingrad Front regularly beat up his officers. It was common knowledge that Chuikov, the celebrated commander of 62<sup>nd</sup> Army at Stalingrad beat senior officers with a stick as well as his fists.
- <sup>378</sup> *Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 100-101.

## **PART TWO: OPERATIONAL COMMAND**

### **Introduction**

The second part of this thesis will analyse Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations, examine his operational style and identify distinctive hallmarks of his operational art. It will examine Rokossovskiy's attitude towards the planning and preparation of operations. It will discuss broad front deployment, deception, localised concentration of force, holding and shock forces and simultaneous general assaults, all common themes in his operations. Rokossovskiy's imaginative, if generally orthodox approach, to deep battle and his more distinctive deep operations will be analysed. It will discuss the forms of deep operation that Rokossovskiy used, as well as other aspects of command such as operational synchronisation, harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre and operational momentum.

Rokossovskiy's conduct of deep operations and his use of mobile groups will be discussed, as will his intellectual judgement, his ability to make the correct, instinctive decisions. In addition, Rokossovskiy's operational temperament will be discussed in terms of the manner in which it influenced his conduct of operations. Rokossovskiy's personal style of leadership was authoritative in character and distinctly unorthodox in terms of the Red Army's leadership culture, but his actual conduct of operations had far more in common with the traditions of Russian-Soviet operational art. Indeed, far more than some of his more celebrated overtly Soviet, contemporaries such as Zhukov. However, to begin our examination of Rokossovskiy's operational command in the Great Patriotic War, it is necessary to analyse the origins of Soviet military thinking in the period 1905 to 1936.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **THE ORIGINS OF SOVIET MILITARY THINKING: THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL AND DEEP BATTLE (1905-36)**

The Red Army's military success in the Great Patriotic War owed much, although far from everything, to Tsarist and Soviet military thinking in the period 1905-36. The origins of Rokossovskiy's operating art, the concepts of deep battle and deep operations, lay in this era of military thought.<sup>1</sup> In short, the period 1905-36 was a formative period for both the Red Army and Rokossovskiy. It laid the foundations of Soviet operational thinking and influenced the way Rokossovskiy thought and acted as an operational commander on the Eastern Front.

#### **The Russian Civil War**

The Red Army was born on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1918 when a decree, signed by Lenin, announced the creation of the 'The Workers and Peasants Red Army.'<sup>2</sup> By summer 1918, it was a regular military force designed to fight a conventional civil war.<sup>3</sup> This was a pragmatic response, endorsed by Lenin and enforced by Trotsky, to the threat posed by counter-revolutionary White forces. It was a decision that angered many radical Bolsheviks who mistrusted the whole idea of organised state armed forces, while harbouring illusions about partisan revolutionary forces.<sup>4</sup> The Russian Civil War (1918-21) was a truly savage war. It brought utter misery to millions as Russia teetered on the edge of political, social and economic disintegration.<sup>5</sup> However, in terms of the numbers involved, as well as the easily penetrated and shallow fronts, the Russian Civil War was very different from the First World War. Breakthroughs were achieved with relative ease and cavalry played an important role,<sup>6</sup> ranging far, wide and deep.<sup>7</sup>

A tendency to overplay the significance of the Civil War and the prowess of the Red Army, were marked characteristics of Soviet military thought during the inter-war years. Its brightest thinkers were not immune. In 1932, Georgiy Samoylovich Isserson (1898-1975), a genuinely innovative military thinker, argued that the Russian Civil War "undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new

era in the history of military art, and sharply changed the entire nature of armed conflict.”<sup>8</sup> The Russian Civil War did stimulate military thinking, especially the war with Poland in 1920, but the localised peculiarities of the war were too great for such grandiose conclusions about the general nature of war. It was too easy to breakthrough, the small force to space ratio and the fighting techniques too dissimilar to the general fighting characteristics of the era, the ‘mechanised’ warfare of the western front in World War One, to be of sustained significance.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 89: G.S. Isserson**  
(commons.wikipedia.org)

The revolutionary ardour of the Red Army was dealt a sharp lesson in military reality during the Polish-Russian War of 1920. In particular, the Red defeat outside Warsaw, in August 1920, exercised a sustained influence on Soviet military thinking. The controversy surrounding 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Army’s failure to support Tukhachevskiy’s Western Front’s advance on Warsaw has rather obscured other significant lessons of the Polish War.<sup>10</sup> Polish nationalism and



**Figure 90: M. Tukhachevskiy**  
(pwhce.org)

Pilsudski’s skilful command contributed to the Red defeat, but should not disguise the collapse of the Western Front’s supply lines. Soviet supplies and reserves did exist but Tukhachevskiy’s logistical rear was so badly organised in the forests of Belorussia, that they could not be deployed at the height of the fighting, east of Warsaw.<sup>11</sup>

Tukhachevskiy’s gamble, that speed would outweigh logistic frailty, was proved wrong.<sup>12</sup>

The Red failure at Warsaw, in 1920, was extensively debated during the inter-war years. The debate confirmed in Soviet minds the pivotal importance of the rear in nourishing sustained offensive operations, the dangers of pushing an operation beyond its natural limits<sup>13</sup> and the need for operational co-ordination between separate, but linked formations. These were central themes of inter-war thinking

and operational command during the Great Patriotic War. It is an irony of history that these themes of operational synchronisation, logistical exhaustion and pushing an offensive beyond its capacity to sustain itself would recur, during the advance of Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, on Warsaw, in July 1944.

### **Ideology and Inevitability**

In 1921, the Soviet government was committed to international revolution and aspired to transform the political, economic and social world of the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> War was not the only means, or indeed, the preferred means of promoting revolution, but, given the fundamental political, economic and social differences between capitalist and socialist societies, there could be no peaceful



**Figure 91: V.I. Lenin**  
(upload.wikimedia.org)

coexistence.<sup>15</sup> The Soviet leadership assumed that the capitalist west planned to destroy the infant socialist state. Western interventions on behalf of the Whites during the Civil War only fuelled the paranoia of Soviet leaders possessed of an ideological belief that the future was theirs, if only capitalism could be prevented from destroying it. These were powerful and widely shared sentiments long before “in early 1927 Soviet political leaders began warning their citizens that encircling imperialist nations were about to start the long

anticipated assault on the socialist homeland.”<sup>16</sup> War was inevitable. Therefore, Soviet military thinking during the inter-war years was not some esoteric and indulgent academic debate, but an attempt to prepare the Red Army for war.

### **Total War and Mass Armies**

The war would be a “protracted and cruel contest, putting to the test all the economic and political foundations of the belligerent sides.”<sup>17</sup> In short, a war of ideological totality, a struggle to the death involving the sustained mass mobilisation of peoples, armies and economies.<sup>18</sup> The Red Army assumed that a mass army was both necessary and desirable. The notion of a mass army became

a central pillar of Soviet military doctrine and this heavily influenced the development of military thought at the strategic, operational and tactical level. However, while quantity was seen as having a quality of its own, it was no substitute for what an operational commander did with the mass army at his disposal. In World War Two, several Soviet commanders displayed a shocking disregard for their men, relying on numbers to achieve victory without undue regard for casualties. Mass was an end in itself.<sup>19</sup> However, for Rokossovskiy mass was always a means to an end. It enabled his formations to deploy simultaneously, in breadth and depth, a key aspect of Soviet inter-war thinking. In short, Rokossovskiy used mass as a springboard for his operational art, not as an attritional bludgeon. In fact, Rokossovskiy had a pronounced dislike for purely attritional operations based on mass. On occasions, such as Operation Kutuzov, in late July 1943, Rokossovskiy was compelled to rely on mass to force the Germans back, but in general, the historical evidence indicates that he did everything he could to avoid protracted attritional encounters.

### **Red Inheritance and Tsarist Legacy**

During the Soviet era, the Red Army and its political masters were reluctant to admit that many of its best thinkers, in the 1920s and 1930s, were ex-Tsarist officers.<sup>20</sup> Tsarist officers played an important role during the Civil War<sup>21</sup> and in the doctrinal debates of the 1920's.<sup>22</sup> The concept of the *Front* or group of armies, often assumed to be a Soviet idea, actually appeared for the first time in the Russian war plan of 1900.<sup>23</sup> The Red Army refined operational art and resolved many Tsarist terminological muddles, but its initial appreciation of the operational level, the intellectual cornerstone of its victory in the Great Patriotic War, lay in the Tsarist analysis of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1905 saw “the appearance of the first modern operations”<sup>24</sup> and is of considerable importance in explaining why Red Army commanders, like Rokossovskiy thought and fought the way they did on the Eastern Front.<sup>25</sup> At Sha-Ho River in October 1904, nearly 400,000 men fought for two weeks on a front of 90 miles to a depth of 20 miles. It was an indecisive

encounter that cost both sides nearly 40,000 casualties.<sup>26</sup> At Mukden, in February-March 1905, three Russian armies under Kuropatkin, numbering in total 300,000 men, faced five Japanese armies, numbering 280,000 men. The fighting lasted nineteen days, covering a front of 80 miles and a depth of 20 miles. This was such a huge battle, that no Russian commander recognised it for what it really was: a series of co-located tactical battles, all part of one huge operation. Russian reserves marched hither and thither trying to exploit tactical opportunities that emerged and then disappeared before they arrived.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of scale, duration, troop numbers and casualties, Sha-Ho and Mukden were unprecedented military events. In 1907, Major (later General) Aleksandr Svechin, (1878-1938) argued that conventional military labels such as strategy and tactics were incapable of explaining Sha-Ho and Mukden.<sup>28</sup> How could tactics, the art of manipulating formations on the field of battle, within sight of the commander, accurately reflect or cope with the simultaneous engagement of hundreds of thousands of men, over vast distances. Similarly, strategy, the use of armed forces in pursuit of national war aims, not their command in battle, was also a misleading term.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Svechin labelled Sha-Ho and Mukden as engagements fought at the operational level, namely the Sha-Ho Operation and the Mukden Operation, not battles.<sup>30</sup> The operational level was to occupy an intermediate position, between strategy and tactics, the level of command at which Rokossovskiy excelled on the Eastern Front. This was simply a measurement of the increased physical scale, duration and numbers seen at Sha-Ho and Mukden. It was not the same as operational art.

The transformation of the spatial dimensions of the battlefield witnessed in the Russo-Japanese War had revolutionary implications for command. An individual commander simply could not control such vast armies.<sup>31</sup> Once an engagement began, a commander was effectively redundant, a phenomenon that continued in to World War One. In the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, a minority of Russian military intellectuals such as Svechin, Neznamov and Miknevich



discussed the concept of the operation and the operational level, but it was “during World War One that the modern operation truly came into its own.”<sup>32</sup>

### **World War One: The Brusilov Offensive**

In terms of numbers, length and depth of front, duration, firepower and casualties, the operations of World War One were an unprecedented military event.<sup>33</sup> The Imperial Russian Army of World War One has not enjoyed a good historical reputation and has been associated with the image of massive casualties suffered by men advancing into battle without weapons or boots. Yet, in June 1916, General Alexei Brusilov’s<sup>34</sup> South-Western Front inflicted a stunning defeat upon the Austro-Hungarian forces and carved a highly significant place in Soviet military thinking. It was a victory that had a profound influence upon Rokossovskiy’s operational style.

By spring 1916, most Russian commanders assumed that a breakthrough could only be achieved through massive amounts of firepower, concentrated on a narrow sector. However, while enemy forces, directly opposite, were smashed, the narrow frontage of the attack did not touch other enemy formations that subsequently ravaged the flanks of any attacking force.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, as it was difficult to conceal the assembly of such a massive breakthrough force, sensible defensive commanders simply withdrew from the frontline, leaving a skeletal covering force, with heavy firepower, that could be quickly reinforced. Yet, to attack on a front broad enough to secure immunity from flanking fire, appeared to rob the assault of the concentration of force and firepower that was assumed to be a pre-requisite of any breakthrough. In short, breadth of assault and concentration of firepower were assumed to be incompatible.

However, Brusilov that argued breadth of assault and concentration of force were compatible, indeed essential, in creating a sustainable breakthrough.<sup>36</sup> Brusilov believed that a broad front deployment would spread the enemy force, and, by compelling it to defend a wider frontage, reduce the depth and density of the enemy defences.<sup>37</sup> A meticulous deception plan<sup>38</sup> would disguise the location of



**Figure 92: A. Brusilov**  
(ars.punt.nl)

the main Russian concentrations and create surprise. Subsequently, a simultaneous assault across the entire front, would, in conjunction with deception, undermine the enemy's ability to determine "where the main blow will be launched against him."<sup>39</sup> Tactical reserves, secretly positioned behind the main Russian concentrations, would ensure that any breakthrough was rapidly developed, denying the enemy time to react.

Brusilov did possess a mass army, 573,000 men, but did not have an enormous advantage over the Austrians, who fielded 473,000 men.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, it was certainly a force of sufficient size to make breadth of assault and simultaneous concentration of force a viable proposition. Brusilov's insight into the tactical problems of World War One enabled him to use his forces in a very different way from any other Russian commander. Indeed, "Brusilov's formula was certainly novel for its time."<sup>41</sup>

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1916, Brusilov's South-Western Front launched a simultaneous attack with four armies, on a broad front of 350 miles. It was astonishingly successful.<sup>42</sup> By 11<sup>th</sup> June 1916, Russian forces had advanced between thirty and ninety miles, a figure without precedent in World War One. It was only Russian exhaustion and the rapid deployment of German reserves that prevented an Austrian strategic collapse of calamitous proportions. It has been argued that Brusilov missed an opportunity to destroy the Austrians and that "Brusilov's hesitation at this point shows that he had little in common with the romanticized fighting general image which he and successive generations of Soviet and Western historians have constructed."<sup>43</sup> This seems unduly harsh, particularly as "unfortunately for the Russians, Brusilov lacked the means to exploit his success properly."<sup>44</sup> Brusilov

did not have reserves of the strength and mobility required to crush the Austrians, but he did effectively destroy the Austro-Hungarian Army as an attacking force for the remainder of World War One.<sup>45</sup>

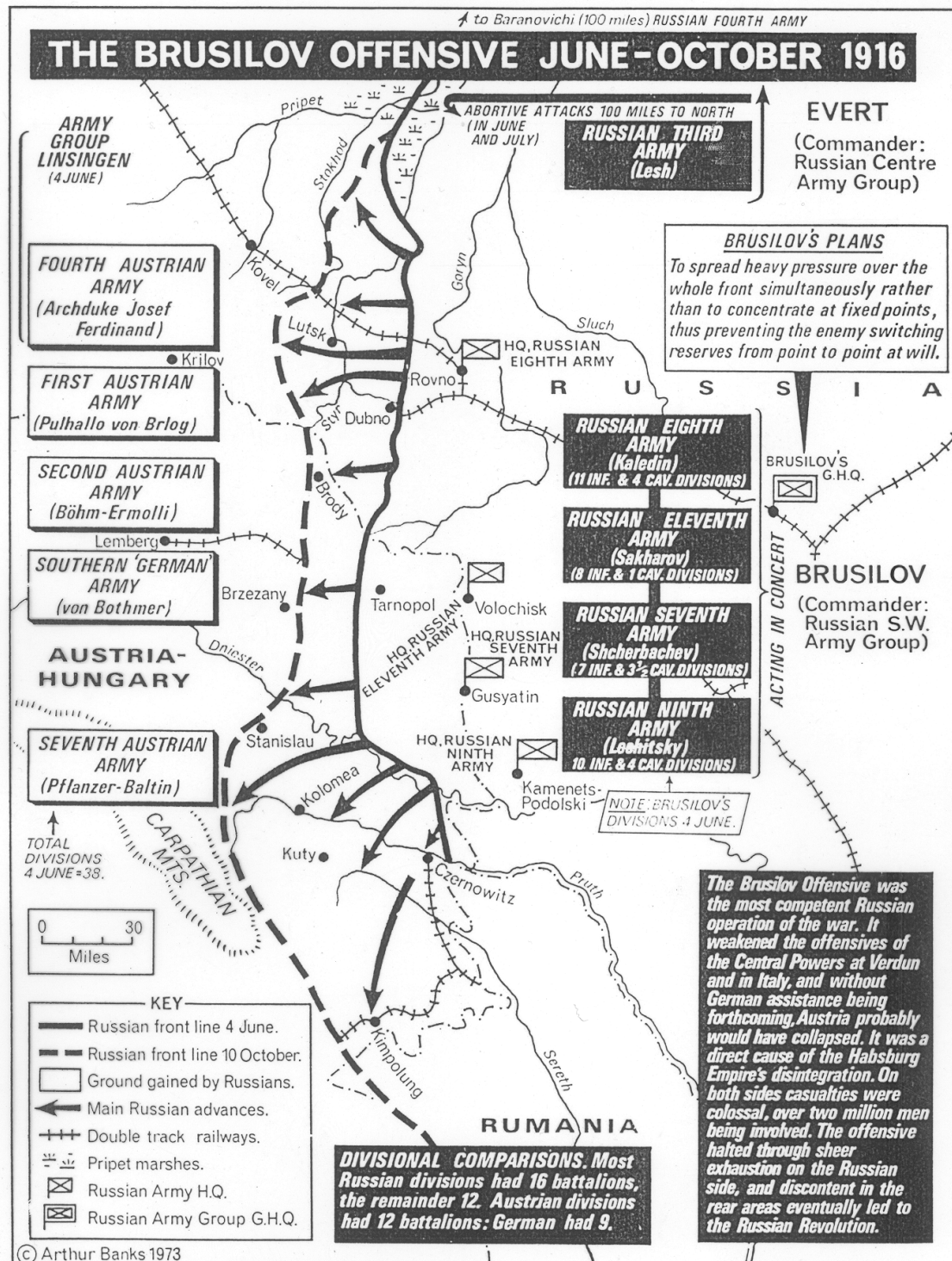


Figure 93: The Brusilov Offensive

## **Strategic Theory of Successive Operations: Reaction To World War One**

In the wake of World War One, the Red Army concluded that modern states possessed such enormous social, economic and military resources that they could not be defeated in a single battle or campaign.<sup>46</sup> It was just not possible, short of a catastrophic implosion in the will to fight, to end a war quickly. As World War One demonstrated even weaker belligerents such as Russia carried on fighting until 1917, despite massive defeats and losses. It took years, not days, weeks or months to achieve victory.

The era of the Clausewitzian battle of annihilation or the decisive Napoleonic campaign were over. Svechin believed “under our conditions Napoleon would have had to conduct successive operations with increasing difficulty against new forces massed by the state.”<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, war was not going to go away, indeed, Soviet ideology suggested it was inevitable and likely to be a protracted total war, a matter of survival or annihilation. In response to these developments the Red Army began to develop a strategic theory of successive operations. This argued that in conditions of total war, against fully mobilised states, strategic victory in war could only be achieved through the cumulative impact of successive operations. In short, victory in war required a series of battles, operations and campaigns, organised into a coherent strategic plan.

The strategic concept of successive operations quickly established itself amongst leading Red Army officers. In 1922, the Red Army’s commander-in-chief Sergey



**Figure 94: S.S. Kamenev**  
(upload.wikimedia.org)

Sergeyevich Kamenev (1881-1936)<sup>48</sup> stated that “in the warfare of modern huge armies, the defeat of the enemy results from the sum of continuous and planned victories on all fronts, successfully completed one after the other and inter-connected in time.”<sup>49</sup> In a similar vein, in 1927, Svechin noted that in historical terms it was actually decisive battles and campaigns that were aberrations. Indeed, “normally, this path to an ultimate aim is broken up into a series of operations.”<sup>50</sup> In addition,

Varfolomeyev believed that “the path to victory under modern conditions lies in the zig zag of an entire series of operations, successively developing one after another, united by the commonality of the ultimate aim, each one achieving a limited intermediate aim.”<sup>51</sup>

### **Strategy of Destruction or Strategy of Attrition**

There was fierce disagreement about the best way to implement successive operations in the field. Should the Red Army pursue the defeat of the enemy, by successive operations, through a rapid strategy of destruction, or a more deliberate



**Figure 95: M. Tukhachevskiy**  
(dtirp.dtra.mil)

and considered strategy of attrition? These labels, associated with Tukhachevskiy and Svechin respectively,<sup>52</sup> as well as the vitriolic debate, have obscured the influence of this discussion upon Soviet operational thinking. Tukhachevskiy argued for a rapid strategy of destruction; Svechin advocated a strategy dominated by cumulative attrition.

Tukhachevskiy concentrated on military factors whereas Svechin’s strategic thinking incorporated political, economic and social factors. Svechin accused advocates of the strategy of destruction of blind inflexibility in their obsession with the rapid destruction of the enemy armed forces. Tukhachevskiy and his supporters castigated Svechin’s flexibility as hesitant indecision. Tukhachevskiy was a firm advocate of the offensive while the more cautious Svechin argued that “war unfolds not in the form of a decisive blow, but rather as struggles for positions on the military, political, and economic front from which the delivery of this strike would ultimately be possible.”<sup>53</sup> Svechin was prepared to consider a strategic withdrawal in to the Russian interior. Tukhachevskiy was dogmatically committed to relentless attack. However, Svechin was also guilty of overestimating the political, social, economic and psychological capacity of the Soviet state and people to sustain a war of attrition.<sup>54</sup> The debate was settled, in Tukhachevskiy’s favour, during the 1926 Congress of the Red Army’s Military-Scientific Society.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, from the 1920s, the Red Army was doctrinally committed to the idea of defeating the

enemy through the massive offensive application of military force.<sup>56</sup> The remaining inter-war years were marked by the Red Army's search for the tactical and operational methods required to conduct offensive attacks that would defeat the enemy in a series of successive operations.

### **The Evolution of Deep Battle**

The Red Army's path from intellectual inspiration to deep battle and deep operations was not a seamless process. It is occasionally, perhaps inadvertently, presented as an organised progression from vision to reality. One commentator concedes that "the theory of Deep Operations crystallized in its final written form only in the first half of the 1930's" but also suggests "the Russians possessed a coherent concept of advanced operational manoeuvre as early as 1928."<sup>57</sup> The war scare of 1927<sup>58</sup> and the Five Year Plan did put the Red Army at the centre of the Soviet Union's planning. However, to claim that,

"the amazing pace, relative smoothness and advanced quality of weapon system which characterized the formation of Soviet armoured troops, aviation and combat support arms during the first half of the 1930's proves beyond any doubt that in the Soviet case the build-up of forces was initiated by a fully formed operational theory"<sup>59</sup>

seems an unnecessary exaggeration. The Red Army grabbed armour, artillery, airpower and other modernised weapons. It was guided, in a general sense, by the ideas of the 1920's<sup>60</sup> but not a definite plan. Armour was central to deep battle and deep operations, yet, in 1928,

"when Tukhachevskii, now the chief of staff, submitted his thinking on the military plan (which he envisaged as a four year plan), he listed rifle forces armed with strong artillery, strategic cavalry, and aviation as the decisive forces in future conflict. Armor forces or tanks were not even mentioned."<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, "in 1929 deep battle was but a promise whose realization depended on economic reforms and industrialisation. Moreover, deep battle was only a tactical concept."<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the term deep battle was not even used by Tukhachevskiy until March 1930.<sup>63</sup>

The Soviet Field Regulations of 1929 were an important staging point in deep battle. Brusilov's broad front was complemented by Tukhachevskiy's belief in the "greatest possible contact area between the two forces"<sup>64</sup> and tentatively raised the idea of simultaneously suppressing the enemy's defences, in breadth and depth, rather than consecutively as Brusilov had done. The death of Triandafillov, in July 1931, was a serious blow to the Red Army. However, although the paper distributed among the Red Army high command, in summer 1932, carried Yegorov's signature, as Chief of Staff, the ideas were Triandafillov's.<sup>65</sup> The paper confirmed Triandafillov's belief that recent technological development,



**Figure 96: V.K. Triandafillov**  
(commons.wikipedia.org)

“enables us to strike the enemy simultaneously throughout the entire depth of his position, as opposed to current forms of battle and attack, which may be characterized as the consecutive suppression of the successive parts of the battle order. The means are used so as to paralyse the fire of all defensive weapons, regardless of the depth of their deployment, to isolate one enemy unit from another, to disrupt co-operation between them, and to destroy them in detail.”<sup>66</sup>

This was the tactical idea of deep battle, put forth in 1932. It confirmed the Red Army's belief that the key development was the ability to strike simultaneously, in breadth and depth, over the enemy's entire tactical defence zone. In contrast, Brusilov struck simultaneously in operational and strategic breadth, but not in depth. This passage also confirms that the Provisional Field Regulations of 1929 were not an early statement of deep battle.

In 1933, Yegorov's report and Triandafillov's thoughts formed 'the basis for the Provisional Instructions For Organising The Deep Battle.' This was the Red Army's first manual on the subject.<sup>67</sup> The purpose of the Provisional Instructions

was to establish the main themes of deep battle and establish a common understanding of the new tactical approach.<sup>68</sup>

The aim of deep battle was defined as the “almost simultaneous neutralization of the defensive zone in all its depth.”<sup>69</sup> It was roughly 10-12 kilometres deep and was to be penetrated on selected, specific axes. It was to be a simultaneous attack across the whole front, over the entire depth of the enemy’s tactical position, using artillery, airpower, airborne forces and armour, supporting a rapid infantry assault, while long-range DD tanks, airpower and airborne troops pre-empted and disrupted counter-attacks by enemy tactical reserves.<sup>70</sup>

“The manual then proceeded to provide detailed instructions for organizing, deploying for, and implementing deep battle. Every specific element of the new doctrine, from the types and number of tanks, their organizational structure and cooperation with other forces, to the precise timing of each phase of the attack was provided for.”<sup>71</sup>

The Provisional Instructions of 1933 represent a key point in the Red Army’s intellectual and material development and formed the basis of Order No: 100 issued in November 1933, “naming deep battle as the official doctrine of the Red Army.”<sup>72</sup> The Red Army now began a more sustained examination of the more ambitious concept of deep operations.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, the translation of theory into practice was a sobering experience. As early as October 1931, Tukhachevskiy acknowledged “these new forms of battle are very complex. They raise anew the questions of command and control, the nature of battle training, and to a significant degree ‘twist the brain.’”<sup>74</sup> After the exercise of autumn 1933, “Tukhachevskii (sic) could bluntly conclude that the army had not yet learned how to organize deep battle.”<sup>75</sup> As early as 9<sup>th</sup> December 1932, Aleksandr Ignatyevich Sediakin (1893-1938)<sup>76</sup>, the Chief of Military Training argued “on maps, plans, on paper, and in exercises where there is no opponent, everything turns out well for us.”<sup>77</sup> The Kiev and Belorussian exercises of 1935 and 1936 respectively, showed the Red Army had improved its organisation but there was also a degree of contrived ritual that contradicted reality. In fact, many



of the problems of deep battle were not successfully resolved until the Great Patriotic War.

### **The Flaws of PU-36**

The Provisional Field Regulations of 1936 represent the clearest expression of the Red Army's inter-war thinking on deep battle, but it is a fact, ironically concealed by Stalin's Purge, that *Polevoy Ustav* PU-36 contained significant flaws and proved a poor guide to battlefield success in World War Two. The deep battles fought by Rokossovskiy had the same objectives as the inter-war years, but were executed in a very different way. In short, it is tempting to believe that without Stalin's Purge, fighting on the basis of PU-36, the Red Army could have met the Wehrmacht on something like equal terms in June 1941. Yet, the historical evidence does not support this conclusion, although as Rokossovskiy showed in the Great Patriotic War, the actual concept of deep battle remained valid.

In practice, when following the standard procedure for armoured attack laid down in PU-36,<sup>78</sup> Soviet armoured formations in the Great Patriotic War endured massive losses. Armour barely penetrated the German frontline, never mind carrying the attack through to the interface of the enemy's tactical and operational defence zones. Similarly, the airborne desant, a pivotal aspect of Tukhachevskiy's vision also proved flawed. It was designed to achieve simultaneity in depth as well across the front, but although tried on six occasions, the last in November 1943, it proved ruinously expensive.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the Red Army's inter-war thinking on the density of artillery fire required to create a breakthrough on the main axis proved very inaccurate. The theory and practice of the artillery offensive, first promulgated in 1942, had the same objectives but was a significant revision of Soviet artillery tactics in deep battle.

In short, it seems unreasonable to suggest that "although it focused exclusively on the tactical level, the Field Service Regulations, written under Tukhachevskii's (sic) supervision, succeeded in delivering the essence of the operational theory."<sup>80</sup> Deep battle was the tactical aspect of an operational concept, so naturally it

reflected a wider operational consciousness, but as an expression of the essence of the idea, it might be argued that given its flaws revealed on the Eastern Front during the Great Patriotic War, PU-36 misrepresented rather than clarified the essence of Soviet operational theory. The Field Regulations of 1936 conveyed a general idea of deep operations, but the significant doctrinal revisions announced by Defence Commissar Timoshenko in December 1940, suggest the Red Army knew its operational thinking, if not its tactical doctrine, required significant revision.

### **Summary**

To the Red Army battle was a tactical concept. The Provisional Field Regulations of 1936 focused on operational breadth of assault but only in tactical depth. Therefore, PU-36 was essentially a manual on tactical attrition to be achieved by deep battle. It looked forward to deep operations and was associated with the “deepening idea.”<sup>81</sup> However, PU-36 is of limited use as a yardstick of Rokossovskiy’s style of operations, because the Field Regulations of 1936 had relatively little to say on the practice of operational art. As a front commander, an operational perspective on questions of breadth, depth and simultaneity were central to Rokossovskiy’s style. Rokossovskiy’s interest in deep battle was dominated by its ability to serve the needs of the wider operation. Deep battle and deep operations were clearly connected but it would be a mistake to see them as two versions of the same thing. The objectives were different, linked and complementary as part of an operational whole, but different. It is to this level of command, the operational level and Rokossovskiy’s experiences in the Great Patriotic War that this thesis will now turn.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art, 1917-1936* in ed., Willard C. Frank and Philip S. Gillette, *Soviet Military Doctrine From Lenin To Gorbachev, 1915-1991*, (Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, (London, 1962), pp. 18-19. Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, (Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 41 suggest a decree of 12<sup>th</sup> January 1918, confirmed on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1918.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 41. John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, op. cit. p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, op. cit. p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37 And The Imperial Legacy In Soviet Military Thought*, (King’s College London, 1994), p. 89. Harrison gives an excellent

- and concise survey of civil war operations between pp. 108-128. See also Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1996), pp. 589-720. Also Bruce W. Lincoln, *Red Victory*, (Cardinal, 1991) is an excellent, vivid account of this ghastly war.
- <sup>6</sup> Christopher Bellamy, *The Evolution of Modern Land Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp. 143-157 has a thorough discussion of the role played by the deep raiding of White and Red Cavalry as well as the general significance of the war.
- <sup>7</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 89. Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art*, op. cit. pp. 102-103.
- <sup>8</sup> G. Isserson, 'The Evolution of Operational Art' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. 1, Operational Art, 1927-1964, (Frank Cass, London, 1995), p. 49.
- <sup>9</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art, 1917-1936*, op. cit. p. 103.
- <sup>10</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. pp. 135-139. Harrison gives an excellent account of the Warsaw Operation. See also Bruce W. Lincoln, *Red Victory*, op. cit. pp. 392-421.
- <sup>11</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 137.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 140.
- <sup>13</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Strategy in an Academic Formulation' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. pp. 43-45.
- <sup>14</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 37.
- <sup>15</sup> It was not until 1956 that Nikita Khrushchev declared that there could be peaceful coexistence.
- <sup>16</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, (Cornell, 2003), pp. 71-72.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 153 quoting Frunze.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 166.
- <sup>19</sup> V.E. Korol, 'The Price of Victory: Myths and Reality,' *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No.2, (June 1996), p. 422.
- <sup>20</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 43.
- <sup>21</sup> Steven J. Main, 'Pragmatism in the Face of Adversity: the Bolsheviks and the Academy of the General Staff of the Red Army during the Russian Civil War', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol.8, No.2, June 1995, pp. 333-355 provides an excellent discussion of these matters.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 45. Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 97.
- <sup>23</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 45.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 33 citing A.A. Svechin.
- <sup>25</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Strategy In An Academic Formulation,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 38.
- <sup>26</sup> Robert M. Citino, *Quest For Decisive Victory*, (University Press of Kansas, 2002), pp. 88-89. Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 33.
- <sup>27</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, (Vol. 5, Moscow, 1978), pp. 446-448. Also, Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 92. Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. pp. 34-40. Robert M. Citino, *Quest For Decisive Victory*, op. cit. pp. 94-97.
- <sup>28</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 93.
- <sup>29</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Strategy in an Academic Formualtion,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 38.
- <sup>30</sup> For a general discussion see V.A. Avdeyev, 'Posle Mukhden', (After Mukden), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.8. (August 1992), pp. 2-9
- <sup>31</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Strategy in an Academic Formualtion,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op.c it. p. 38.
- <sup>32</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 65.
- <sup>33</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1978), pp. 265-276 gives an account.
- <sup>34</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya* Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1976), pp. 605-606.
- <sup>35</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, (Penguin, 1975), pp. 235-236.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 237. Brusilov had to fight against members of his own staff to get these ideas accepted.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 251.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 237-238.
- <sup>39</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 77.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 78.
- <sup>42</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, op. cit. pp. 249-253.
- <sup>43</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 79.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, op. cit. p. 253.
- <sup>46</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 155.
- <sup>47</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 11. Also A.A. Svechin in A.B. Kadishev, ed., *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva i Sovetskikh Trudakh*, (Questions of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Works), (Moscow, 1965), p. 225.
- <sup>48</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Ensiklopediya*, Vol.4, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 51-52.
- <sup>49</sup> Cited in Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 182.
- <sup>50</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 5. A.A. Svechin in A.B. Kadishev., *Voprosy i Operativnogo Iskusstva i Sovetskikh Trudakh*, op. cit. p. 219.
- <sup>51</sup> N. Varfolomeev, 'Strategy in an Academic Formulation,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 42. Jacob W. Kipp, *Soviet Military Doctrine and the Origins of Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 112.
- <sup>52</sup> A.A. Svechin, ed., A.B. Kadishev, *Voprosy i Operativnogo Iskusstva i Sovetskikh Trudakh*, op. cit. pp. 227-232 discusses the difference between the strategy of attrition and destruction.
- <sup>53</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 14.
- <sup>54</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 161.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 163.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 179.
- <sup>58</sup> See Lennart Samuelson, 'Mikhail Tukhachevskiy and War-Economic Planning: Reconsiderations on the Pre-War Soviet Military Build-Up', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No.4, December 1996, pp. 804-847 has an excellent discussion of these issues especially pp. 812-835.
- <sup>59</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 179.
- <sup>60</sup> Alaric Searle, 'J.F.C. Fuller, Tukhachevsky and the Red Army, 1923-1941: The Question of the Reception of Fuller's Military Writings in the Soviet Union', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No.4, December 1996, pp. 848-884 has an interesting discussion.
- <sup>61</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, op. cit. p. 72.
- <sup>62</sup> Chris Bellamy, 'Red Star in the West: Marshal Tukhachevskiy and East-West Exchanges on the Art of War', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, December 1987, pp. 64-66.
- <sup>63</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, op. cit. p. 89.
- <sup>64</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, (Brassey's, 1987), p. 34.
- <sup>65</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 254.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 255.
- <sup>68</sup> A.I. Egorov (sic), 'Tactics and Operational Art of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army at a New Stage,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 316.
- <sup>69</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, op. cit. p. 179.
- <sup>70</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 255.
- <sup>71</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, op. cit. p. 180.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 202. Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 282.
- <sup>74</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, op. cit. p. 156.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 202.
- <sup>76</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Ensiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), p. 311.
- <sup>77</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, p. 176-177.
- <sup>78</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, op. cit. p. 229.
- <sup>79</sup> David M. Glantz, *History of Soviet Airborne Forces*, (Frank Cass, London, 1993).
- <sup>80</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 190.
- <sup>81</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, op. cit. p. 37.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF COMMAND**

In the last twenty years modern scholarship has confirmed beyond reasonable doubt that the Red Army was not an inferior copy of the Wehrmacht.<sup>1</sup> The Red Army may not have matched the tactical prowess of the Germans, but, at the operational and strategic level, between October 1942-May 1945 it frequently out-thought and eventually defeated the Wehrmacht.<sup>2</sup> It might be argued that, with the possible exception of the Normandy landings, this was not an achievement matched by the western allies, at least on the ground.<sup>3</sup> During the period October 1942 - May 1945, operational art and deep operations, distinctly Soviet creations, became synonymous with operational commanders such as Rokossovskiy, in charge of operational formations known as *Fronts*, a Tsarist concept developed and refined by the Red Army. By May 1945, Rokossovskiy was the Red Army's most experienced and arguably most successful *Front* commander, highly respected by his contemporaries and the Wehrmacht.

#### **The Operational Implications of Successive Operations**

The theory of successive operations was a strategic theory, but it had significant operational and tactical implications for how Rokossovskiy fought in the Great Patriotic War. In World War One, the armed forces of belligerent states drew their power from the mobilisation of the home front. In a similar way, the Red Army argued that in the field, mass armies were dependent upon, and drew their strength from, the vast organisational system in their operational rear. It was this system of command, control, communications, supplies and infrastructure such as railways, roads and bridges that maintained a mass army. It also gave direction and flexibility to the conduct of operations. A mass army relied on effective organisation from the operational rear to function as an effective military force. Furthermore, it was this systemic infrastructure that enabled a mass army to shrug off tactical, even operational defeats, because the system of command, supply and communications ensured the defender could deploy reserves and firepower quicker than an attacker.

The Red Army's leaders were fully aware that individual battles and operations



**Figure 97: M.V. Frunze**  
(Marxists.org)

were of limited value. In 1924, Mikhail V. Frunze (1885-1925)<sup>4</sup> argued victory “cannot be achieved in a single blow”<sup>5</sup> while in 1926, Triandafillov claimed “the experience of recent wars showed that it is impossible to achieve the enemy’s major defeat by a single operation.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Nikolay Nikolayevich Movchin, a Red Army staff officer, believed the operational

resilience of a mass army meant “in modern war it is impossible to destroy the enemy’s entire army with a single blow, no matter how powerful it is.”<sup>7</sup> As early as 1922, even the aggressive Tukhachevskiy conceded that “the nature of modern weapons and battle is such that it is an impossible matter to destroy the enemy’s manpower in one blow in a single day. Battle in modern operations stretches out into a series of battles not only along the front but also in depth.”<sup>8</sup>

Successive operations were a requirement of victory at the operational and tactical level. A mass army could absorb isolated tactical defeats and the strategic defeat of a mass army in one blow was seen as nonsensical. Therefore, the Red Army concluded that the key to victory in modern war lay at the operational level, the level at which Rokossovskiy exercised command in World War Two. Successive victories on an operational scale could not be ignored and a series of operational defeats would eventually produce a strategic crisis for even the most powerful adversary. Brusilov had proved that in 1916, but his inability to disrupt the underlying operational system that replenished the Austro-Hungarian Army enabled it to survive. In short, operational victory required the disruption or destruction of the enemy’s operational infrastructure or system. This system was located in the enemy’s operational rear.

### **Successive Operations and the Idea of Depth**

Therefore, it was the operational implications of successive operations that stimulated the Soviet obsession with tactical and operational depth,<sup>9</sup> before and during the Great Patriotic War. It was no coincidence that Soviet tactical and operational concepts became known as deep battle and deep operations. Mass armies were highly dependent upon effective systemic organisation between the rear and the front. If the mass of the army could be separated from its brain, then without a functioning system of organisation, the mass army would cease to function effectively and collapse under its own weight. This was a well established tradition in Russian military thinking. In the Russo-Turkish War of 1877,

“Constantinople had to be seized and quickly. The Russian plan aimed at nothing less than the swift and utter defeat and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by striking at its heart and brain.”<sup>10</sup>

The key to operational victory lay in the ability to invade the enemy’s operational rear<sup>11</sup> and disrupt the system that was the foundation of a mass army. Soviet military thinkers began to describe this as operational shock.<sup>12</sup>

“The notion of operational shock delineates in practical terms a consequential state of a fighting system that can no longer accomplish its aims. This effect, which derives from physical and psychological factors alike, is developed through a process in which the operational manoeuvre serves as the dominant executing element.”<sup>13</sup>

It was to be achieved through a combination of deep battle and deep operation.

Soviet thinkers argued that the interaction of tactical losses at the front, with deep operational manoeuvre against the system, could achieve operational victory. The enemy, rendered incapable of achieving his own mission, would lose the ability to prevent the Red Army securing its own operational objectives. Operational victory was to be achieved by a series of successes at the tactical and operational level. Indeed, in a sense, a single operation, commanded by Rokossovskiy, during the Great Patriotic War, contained two successive operations within it, namely the

tactical deep battle or breakthrough operation, followed by operational manoeuvre, the deep operation.

The concept of successive operations dominated Soviet strategy and operational art between 1942-45. It was emphatically endorsed by the course of the Great Patriotic War. Rokossovskiy played a critical role in the battles of Moscow, Stalingrad and Kursk, battles that Russians call operations, as well as in the Belorussian Operation in June-July 1944 and East Prussia in January 1945. These were significant operational victories, but individually none were decisive. Nevertheless, in a cumulative sense, these and other operational victories played a critical role in imposing an unsustainable rate of strategic attrition upon Nazi Germany. The Berlin Operation was not the catalyst of Soviet victory, but its confirmation, a validation of the theory of successive operations.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Theory of the Front As An Operational Force**

During the inter-war years, Red Army thinking was dominated by the idea that an individual army was a genuine operational formation. The main reason for this was Triandafillov's influential advocacy of the Shock Army.<sup>15</sup> Triandafillov argued that a shock army was capable of conducting both deep battle and deep operations, within one seamless operation. Although, Triandafillov's shock army evolved and changed, it retained this central principle. It dominated the framework of debate on deep battle and deep operations. Indeed, "the idea of the shock army was quickly adopted by other theorists and its composition was continuously debated throughout the 1930's. However, for a variety of reasons, the shock army, as originally conceived, never lived up to its initial promise."<sup>16</sup>

A significant shortcoming of Triandafillov's *Nature of Modern Operations* was "that practically speaking, in it the operation was examined basically only on an army scale ( only successive operations of a shock army); it did not raise its concrete analysis and generalization to operations on a *front* scale. Even the very term '*front* operation' was absent from it."<sup>17</sup>



Indeed, only Varfolomeyev in the 1930s with his hybrid idea of the shock front and Movchin, in 1928, seriously discussed front level operations. Varfolomeyev was the main dissenter to the orthodox idea of the shock army as an authentic operational force. Yet, ironically, his 1933 book *Udarnaya Armiya*, (*The Shock Army*) has ensured that he is as closely associated with the idea as Triandafillov.<sup>18</sup> However, Varfolomeyev rejected the idea that the shock army was capable of both deep battle and deep operations. Varfolomeyev's shock army was envisaged as a specialist deep battle force, supported by a mobile second echelon, capable of sustaining the offensive into operational depth. This was easily, if not openly, incorporated into the front level concept of deep operations adopted by the Red Army between 1942-45.<sup>19</sup> In a similar way, Isserson's shock army which had two echelons, an attack echelon and a development echelon, the latter designed to develop the offensive to operational depths, laboured under the label shock army, when at 350,000 "such a formidable combination of men and materiel compared favourably in size to some of the wartime fronts a decade later."<sup>20</sup> In retrospect, Varfolomeyev and Isserson were talking about operations by *fronts*, not armies.

The original notion of the shock army was utterly overthrown in World War Two. In July 1942, on the Bryansk Front, Rokossovskiy inherited the wreckage of Lizyukov's 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army. This new force, created on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1942,<sup>21</sup> had deployed and attacked in the style of an inter-war shock army. Its aim was to breakthrough the left wing of the German armies that had just launched Operation Blau, the 1942 German summer offensive. The 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army was smashed to pieces.<sup>22</sup> In the wake of this disastrous operation 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army was disbanded.<sup>23</sup> In November 1942, a new 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army<sup>24</sup> was used in a similar way during Operation Uranus, the Stalingrad counter-offensive, with mixed results. A subsequent attack by 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army, on the river Chir, south-west of Stalingrad, in December 1942, was also disappointing.<sup>25</sup> In short, Triandafillov's inter-war vision of the Shock Army, proved a distinct failure in practice.

The shock army evolved into a specialist deep battle formation such as Fedyuninskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army, part of Rokossovskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front in

1944-45.<sup>26</sup> These were not designed to conduct both deep battle and deep operations. This should have caused significant doctrinal and structural problems for the Red Army. If shock armies were incapable of deep operations, an orthodox Soviet army was unlikely to succeed. The fact that this potential crisis in Soviet operational art did not emerge indicates that Triandafillov's direct contribution to the Red Army's victory in the Great Patriotic War can be exaggerated. Equally, such a theory neglects the significance of Marshal Semyon Konstantinovich Timoshenko's address on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1940.

Marshal Semyon Konstantinovich Timoshenko (1895-1970)<sup>27</sup> was not a renowned



**Figure 98: S.K. Timoshenko**  
(northstarcompass.org)

theorist and his reputation as a field commander suffered for his perceived failures against the Wehrmacht, especially at Khar'kov in May 1942. In 1943-45, Timoshenko was pensioned off, returning periodically as a *Stavka* representative on minor operations.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1940, Timoshenko addressed the Red Army's problems with deep battle and deep

operations, as well as the weaknesses graphically revealed in the Soviet-Finnish War of November 1939-March 1940.<sup>29</sup> Timoshenko's speech of December 1940 "resembles a mini-*ustav* (regulation) on the conduct of operations."<sup>30</sup>

Timoshenko fundamentally altered the relationship between the *front* and army in Soviet doctrine. He argued that while the shock army retained its ability to penetrate the enemy's tactical zone, "developing success at this depth (turning it into a complete operational penetration and achieving a strategic effect) remains, even at present a serious problem."<sup>31</sup> In an intervention that influenced the Red Army's conduct of operations in the Great Patriotic War to a far greater extent than Triandafillov and Tukhachevskiy, Timoshenko defined the army as a tactical formation and the *front* as an operational formation. He argued,

"recent war experience demonstrated that under conditions of continuous fronts, outfitted with modern means of armed struggle, an army loses its

meaning as a self-contained operational entity. Even the shock army with maximum combat composition has lost its independence in achieving large operational objectives, and more so with respect to strategic objectives. An army is part of a *front*, and only within the framework of a *front* operation, in co-operation with other armies, does it carry out its operational activity with maximum effectiveness.”<sup>32</sup>

Timoshenko also endorsed the Brusilov Offensive<sup>33</sup> while arguing that a “modern operation develops most fully on an operational scale.”<sup>34</sup>

This was a definitive statement of Soviet military thinking. Its impact was hidden by the disastrous events of June 1941-October 1942, but its influence upon Rokossovskiy’s operations of 1943-45 should not be underestimated. The ideas of the inter-war years were no doubt of inspiration to Rokossovskiy and provided a yardstick by which to formulate his own ideas. Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy’s style of operations was influenced by Brusilov and Varfolomeyev, as well as Timoshenko’s address. However, despite paying him an official tribute in his memoirs,<sup>35</sup> Rokossovskiy was not a disciple of Triandafillov.

### **The Place of Operational Art**

Nevertheless, having worked out what was required to achieve victory in modern war, the Red Army had to devise a way to make successive operations successful ones. This acted as the link between successive operations and operational art. Indeed, “Movchin believed that the theory of consecutive operations served as the theoretical foundation and most important part of operational art.”<sup>36</sup>

The First World War endorsed Svechin’s pre-war thesis on the emergence of the operational level of war. During the inter-war years and throughout the Great Patriotic War, the Red Army came to regard battle as a tactical episode contained within an operation. A series of inter-connected operations was a campaign and a series of inter-connected campaigns was strategy. It was the task of strategy to determine the aims of operational planning, while operational planning created a

set of tactical missions.<sup>37</sup> As Svechin remarked, “tactics makes the steps from which operational leaps are assembled: strategy points out the path.”<sup>38</sup>

Operational art, a phrase accredited to Svechin in 1923,<sup>39</sup> was the creative intellectual process of planning, initiating and executing a sequence of actions and battles that would achieve operational success. It was the task of operational commanders such as Rokossovskiy to conceive, organise and link tactical battles into a coherent operational whole. This was the essence of operational art. In contrast, the term operational level related to a physical measurement of the scale, duration and numbers involved in a military action. Naturally, the two were and are related to each other, but they are not the same. Indeed, just because one is operating at the operational level in a physical sense does not automatically mean that one is engaged in operational art in a cerebral sense. Equally, it would be a mistake to assume that Svechin’s use of the term ‘operational art’, in 1923, immediately clarified the Red Army’s understanding of operational art and its place in Soviet military doctrine.

In fact, “the study of the literature of the 1920’s shows that right up until 1926 the formula ‘strategy-tactics’ remained unchanged. Moreover, as Tukhachevskiy noted, the terms ‘strategy’ and ‘tactics’ were treated differently by everyone, and often contradictorily.”<sup>40</sup> The study of operations was often smothered by its inclusion in strategy courses or by terms such as the ‘tactics of mass armies’ and ‘strategic art in an operation.’<sup>41</sup> In short, “the inclusion of the theory of operations, now in strategy, now in tactics, and the mixed nature of the terms which designated this theory created more than a few difficulties and resulted in lively arguments.”<sup>42</sup>

Terminological muddle had plagued the Tsarist and Red Army study of the operational level. It was this debate that defined the environment in which Rokossovskiy matured from junior to senior officer and the way he approached the conduct of operations. Indeed, “without resolving these problems, the further

development of Soviet military theory, in general, would have been impossible.”<sup>43</sup> Finally, in 1928, Varfolomeyev concluded,

“the study of the operation has gone beyond the framework of tactics, the lot of which was the study of a single battle, but not a group of them. The modern operation, in grouping battles, is a complex act; meaning the totality of manoeuvres and battles in a given sector or theatre of military activities, directed at achieving the overall final goal in a given period of a campaign. The conduct of operations is beyond tactics. It has become the lot of operational art. Thus the former two-part formula, ‘tactics-strategy’ has now turned into a three part formula: tactics/battle- operational art/operation-strategy/war.”<sup>44</sup>

In one sense, the difference between the tactical and operational level could be assessed by numbers, the size of the battlefield and the duration of an engagement. However, in the related, but more intangible question of the difference in command at the tactical and operational level, matters were more complex. This demanded a clear understanding of the difference between tactical command in battle and operational art in control of operations. Yet, if one believed, as German commanders did, that operational art at the operational level, if recognised at all, was simply tactical activity on a grander scale, then commanders could continue to pursue the idea of the decisive single battle or engagement of annihilation.

. Naturally, if it was possible to destroy the enemy in a single, gigantic battle of annihilation, this raised serious questions about the Soviet doctrinal idea of achieving the same objective, by means of a more prolonged series of linked tactical actions or successive operations. In turn, this rejection of successive operations would have made operational art redundant, as it did for the German Army.

Yet, as Kuropatkin found out in 1905, at Mukden, along with countless commanders in World War One, the normal principles of tactics just did not work

at the operational level. Red Army theorists argued that at a certain, intangible point battles became operations and had to be controlled by operational, not tactical principles. This required an operational plan, linking different tactical actions or battles, into one operational whole. This was operational art. In summary, the resolution of the terminological confusion and the establishment of a consensus about the nature of operational art, just as Rokossovskiy went to the Frunze Academy in 1928-29, was a key development in Soviet operational thinking. It defined the way in which Rokossovskiy conceived, planned and executed operations on the Eastern Front.

### **The Role of the Front**

In the aftermath of the chaotic improvisations of June-December 1941, the Soviet war effort was organised in an increasingly effective manner that linked grand strategy, strategy, operations and tactics into a coherent whole. The State Defence Committee or GKO led by Stalin, directed Soviet grand strategy, formulating political objectives and policy, while overseeing the Soviet war effort. The *Stavka* or Supreme Military Headquarters, having absorbed the General Staff, advised Stalin and formulated Soviet military strategy.<sup>45</sup> Naturally, no senior commander harboured any doubts about who was ultimately in charge, but between October 1942-November 1944, Stalin proved himself a surprisingly good listener, capable of listening to advice,<sup>46</sup> counter-arguments and occasionally defiance,<sup>47</sup> before making decisions. *Stavka* broke up the Red Army's overall strategy into operations and tasked individual *front* commanders, such as Rokossovskiy, with carrying out operations in pursuit of objectives that were complementary to the wider strategic plan.

In line with Timoshenko's instructions in December 1940, the Red Army's main operational fighting force was the *front*, the Russian term for a grouping of armies. A Soviet *front* is often, perhaps mistakenly, directly compared with the western idea of an army group. Naturally, they had a certain amount in common but were not the same. Soviet *fronts* were more task orientated and more numerous. They were generally operational formations, not strategic formations

and it was not until the later stages of the war that *fronts* assumed the massive quasi-strategic roles of German Army Group North, Centre and South between 1941-44.

*Fronts* did have an organisational role but they were primarily fighting formations. Their mission-dominated nature is revealed by their dramatic changes in size, in accordance with operational and strategic priorities. In July 1943, Rokossovskiy's Central Front fielded 711, 575<sup>48</sup> at Kursk, while in June 1944 Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was over 1.25 million strong,<sup>49</sup> because of its pivotal status in the key Red Army operation of 1944. In contrast, a relatively minor front such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian in June 1944 had just over 300,000 men,<sup>50</sup> smaller than some German armies. A *front* was too big to be a tactical formation, but was insufficiently independent of Moscow to be considered a strategic formation. It was, in short, an operational formation.

Equally, a Soviet army was a tactical formation, not an operational unit. No Soviet army ever matched Sixth German Army at Stalingrad, which at nearly 270,000 strong in November 1942<sup>51</sup> was actually bigger, if in other senses weaker, than Rokossovskiy's 220,000 Don Front, in January 1943. A Soviet army was notably strong if it numbered over 100,000, others such as 51<sup>st</sup> Army in December 1942, mustered only 34,000,<sup>52</sup> while south of Stalingrad, 28<sup>th</sup> Army had just 44,000 men.<sup>53</sup> In a similar, if confusing way, a Soviet tank army was approximately the equivalent of a German panzer corps, while a Soviet armoured corps or rifle corps, was roughly the size of a German panzer or infantry division.

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<sup>1</sup> A. & J. Seaton, *The Soviet Army: 1918 to the Present*, (New York, 1987) claimed "the Soviet Armed Forces at the time of the interwar period had no soldiers of genius or experience and the Red Army was an indifferent imitation of the German Army."

<sup>2</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art*, (Frank Cass, 1991). Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, (Frank Cass, 1997) and Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, (Cornell, 2003) have more than corrected the idea that the Red Army's was a poor copy of the Wehrmacht.

<sup>3</sup> Max Hastings, *Armageddon*, (Pan, 2005) is generally unimpressed with the quality of Anglo-American generalship in the Second World War.

<sup>4</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol.8, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 342-344.

<sup>5</sup> M.V. Frunze cited in Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 196.

- <sup>6</sup> V.K. Triandafillov, cited in Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. pp. 198-199.
- <sup>7</sup> N.N. Movchin, cited in Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p.128.
- <sup>8</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Operational Art*, (Frank Cass, 1991), p. 22.
- <sup>9</sup> See Chris Bellamy, 'Seventy Years On: Similarities Between the Modern Soviet Army and Its Tsarist Predecessor', *The Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, CXXIV, No.3, September 1979, p. 32.
- <sup>10</sup> Christopher Bellamy, *The Evolution of Modern Land Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (Routledge, London, 1990), p. 130.
- <sup>11</sup> See Chris Bellamy, 'Antecedents of the Modern Soviet Operational Maneuvre Group (OMG), in *The Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, CXXIX, No.3, September 1984, p. 50.
- <sup>12</sup> A.I. Verkhovskiy, 'Manyevr i Yevo Formy' (Manoeuvre and Its Forms) in A.B. Kadishev, *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva v Sovetskikh Voennykh Trudakh*, (Questions of Strategy And Operational Art In Soviet Military Thought), (Moscow, 1965), pp. 264-273.
- <sup>13</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 16.
- <sup>14</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), pp. 532-640.
- <sup>15</sup> V.K. Triandafillov, *The Nature of The Operations of Modern Armies*, ed., Jacob W. Kipp, (Frank Cass, 1994).
- <sup>16</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 184.
- <sup>17</sup> A. Golubev, 'Was Our Military Theory in the 1920's Turned To The Past,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol.II, Operational Art, 1965-1991, (Frank Cass, 1995), p. 65.
- <sup>18</sup> N.E. Varfolomeyev, *Operatsiya Udarnoy Armii*, (The Operations of Shock Armies), in A.B. Kadishev, *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva*, op. cit. pp. 439-462.
- <sup>19</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. pp. 269-271. On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1932, Varfolomeyev wrote an article on deep operations for *Krasnaya Zvezda*.
- <sup>20</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p.284.
- <sup>21</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*,f. 48a. op. 3408. d. 71. l. 325,326 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), p. 219. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:994023 Komanduyushchim 3-y i 5-y Tankovymi Armiyami O Formirovanii Upravleniy Armiy' (Stavka VGK Directive No:994023 To The Commanders Of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Armies About Controlling Formations)
- <sup>22</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 358. See also M. Kazakov, 'Na Voronezhskom Napravlenii Letom 1942 Goda,' (On The Voronezh Direction in the Summer of 1942), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 10, October 1964, pp. 27-44, this pp. 39-41 for details of 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army disaster.
- <sup>23</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*,f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 124. l. 228 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 309-310. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:170511 Komanduyushchim Voyskami Bryanskogo Fronta i 5-y Tankovoy Armiyey O Rasformirovanii Armii' (Stavka VGK Directive No:170511 To The Commanders Of The Bryansk Front And 5th Tank Army About The Disbandment Of The Army)
- <sup>24</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*,f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 124. l. 253 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 376-377. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No: 994176 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Bryanskogo Fronta O Vosstanovlenii 5-y Tankovoy Armii' (Stavka VGK Directive No: 994176 To The Commander Of The Bryansk Front About The Restoration Of 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Army).
- <sup>25</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op.c it. pp. 10-11.
- <sup>26</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*,f. 309. op. 4703. d. 785. l. 11 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), p. 287. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-y Udarnoy Armii Ob Ovladenii Gorodom Pulutsk' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army About Control Of The Town Of Pulutsk), 07.00 Hours, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1945
- <sup>27</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol.8, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 43-44.
- <sup>28</sup> Viktor Anfilov, *Timoshenko* in Harold Shukman, ed., *Stalin's Generals*, (Phoenix, 1993), pp. 239-253 gives an account of Timoshenko's career. It is interesting to note that Zhukov was sympathetic to Timoshenko, insisting he was a competent man, far better than Voroshilov, but that Stalin lost confidence in him after Kharkov, in May 1942.



- <sup>29</sup> Carl Van Dyke, *The Soviet Invasion of Finland, 1939-40*, (Frank Cass, London and Portland, Oregon, 2001) provides an excellent discussion of the war. See also, Carl Van Dyke, 'The Timoshenko Reforms: March-July 1940,' *The Journal of Slavic Studies*, Vol. 9, No.1, March 1996), pp. 69-96.
- <sup>30</sup> David M. Glantz, 'The Test of War, 1941-45,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 92.
- <sup>31</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Hero and Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko at a Military Conference held on 31 December 1940,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 118.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 117.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 109-110.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 107.
- <sup>35</sup> K. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, (Lancer International, Moscow), p. 8.
- <sup>36</sup> N.N. Movchin, cited in Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 128.
- <sup>37</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. 1. Operational Art, 1927-1964, (London, Frank Cass, 1995), p. 6. Also A.A. Svechin, 'Strategiia' in A.B. Kadishev, *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva* op. cit. p. 220.
- <sup>38</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 22. A.A. Svechin, in A.B. Kadishev, *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva*, op. cit. p. 238.
- <sup>39</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Strategy in an Academic Formulation,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 39.
- <sup>40</sup> Colonel (Ret.) I. Mariyevsky, 'Formulation and Development of the Theory of Operational Art' (1918-1938), in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 302.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 239.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> A. Golubev, 'Was Our Military Theory in the 1920's Turned To The Past,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. II, op. cit. p. 54.
- <sup>44</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Strategy in An Academic Formulation,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 38.
- <sup>45</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 7, (Moscow, 1979), pp. 511-512 for further details on what the Russians understood by Stavka.
- <sup>46</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, (University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 129.
- <sup>47</sup> In May 1944, Rokossovskiy openly defied Stalin three times, in front of witnesses, over the role of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, in Operation Bagration. See K. Rokossovskiy, 'Dva Glavnikh Udara,' (Two Main Blows), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.6, June 1944, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>48</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999), p. 65.
- <sup>49</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 201.
- <sup>50</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *Soviet Blitzkrieg: The Battle for White Russia*, (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder), p. 31.
- <sup>51</sup> Bernd Wegner, in *Germany And The Second World War*, Vol. VI, *The Global War*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1160, argues that on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1942, the Sixth Army's losses since the encirclement on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1942, were 30,000. Therefore, by the end of 1942, Sixth Army numbered 241,000. These men were exhausted and malnourished but this was still a substantial force.
- <sup>52</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 11.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **FROM CONCEPTION TO EXECUTION: ROKOSSOVSKIY'S OPERATIONAL ART**

#### **The Tasks of the Front Commander**

In 1949, the most important tasks of operational art were defined as,

“developing a plan of operations; determining forms and methods and employing and leading large operational formations in an operation; determining methods and means of cooperation among different combat arms within the framework of an operation; determining the nature and sequence of cooperation among large operational formations participating in the operation; implementing all prepared measures for organizing the operation and its support; and executing the operation and leading forces during the operation.”<sup>1</sup>

Rokossovskiy was an accomplished commander of operations, but the extent to which his style was influenced by the period before an operation began is frequently overlooked. Yet, he placed considerable emphasis upon it. Indeed, creative thinking and meticulous preparations were essential characteristics of Rokossovskiy's operational art.

It was Rokossovskiy's job to establish the basic concept of an operation followed by a formal operational plan. As a front commander, all Rokossovskiy's creative planning was guided by the operational objective. Rokossovskiy closely adhered, consciously or not, to Tukhachevskiy's belief that “one cannot afford to have a plan which does not link the beginning and the end. And to link the beginning and the end one must visualize the sequence of disruption.”<sup>2</sup> It was a demanding task that covered the whole process of conceiving, planning and executing an operation. It required a plan that blended all phases of an operation linking tactical attrition and operational manoeuvre. Operational art also required the sustained co-ordination of all units under Rokossovskiy's command.

This was the creative and practical expression of what Svechin called the operating art. There was no manual for the conduct of operational art, indeed it would have been a contradiction in terms, for in its truest sense operational art was creative and relied upon what the Red Army called *tvorchestvo*.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, Rokossovskiy's military style and operating art were influenced by many ideas, several of which pre-dated the Red Army. It was precisely because there was no specific manual of operational art that Rokossovskiy had his own distinct style of operations, one that was very different to that of Zhukov. The passage of time and the acquisition of experience brought to operational art certain methods and procedures that appeared to facilitate success, but for Rokossovskiy, these acted as a springboard for creative thought, not a substitute for it.

Once the basic concept of an operation had been established, it was Rokossovskiy's job to select the form of operation and the most suitable axis for the main blow. This was a key task for

“determining the direction of the main blow, the composition of forces and assignment of tasks to the striking groups and the armies which operate in secondary directions, constitutes the essence of the decision of the Front commander and represents the basis for planning of an offensive operation.”<sup>4</sup>

These decisions, in turn, dominated the tactical planning of individual armies. If an operation was poorly conceived at the operational level, it was highly unlikely that any degree of tactical brilliance could rescue it.

It was Rokossovskiy's task to foresee, anticipate and avoid operational problems in both the planning and execution of operations. Indeed, in December 1940, Timoshenko argued, “the art of control of a modern operation consists of the ability of higher command personnel and staffs to anticipate the course of an operation.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the purpose of a Soviet operational plan was not simply to inform subordinate commanders and units of their mission, but to maximise the chances of an operation succeeding before it began. It was argued that creative foresight, married with intellectually able and experienced commanders, could

foresee and avoid obstacles, rather than stumble across them and be forced to improvise. In short, a *Front* commander was expected to “load the dice” before an operation. It required a careful balance between creative foresight and unnecessarily rigid prescription. This was one of Rokossovskiy’s greatest qualities as a commander, namely his ability to foresee potential problems but retain flexibility in his conduct of operations. If problems had been correctly foreseen and anticipated, the power and momentum of a Red Army offensive such as that of Rokossovskiy’s 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front in June 1944, was awesome.<sup>6</sup>

However, if something was missed or the planning was infected with wishful thinking, the strengths of the Soviet system were also its weaknesses. An operational commander blindly dominated by the plan, rather than guided by it, imposed an inherent inflexibility that undermined the true spirit of operational art. Blind, obstinate determination to make a plan work, regardless of the casualties, was a hallmark of many Soviet commanders, but not Rokossovskiy. As we have seen, Rokossovskiy consistently emphasised creative planning, creative foresight and the use of initiative.<sup>7</sup> Yet, he was prepared to radically alter an operation if the realities of the situation on the ground were at odds with those foreseen in the operational plan, for example in the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation of August 1943.<sup>8</sup> In short, Rokossovskiy’s pre-operational creativity often expressed itself as flexibility during an operation. He was guided by a plan, not a slave to it. This combination of effective operational planning in concert with flexible execution became a hallmark of Rokossovskiy’s operational art.

As Timoshenko indicated in December 1940, as a *front* commander “it is necessary to assign partial missions to armies and organize operational co-operation among them.”<sup>9</sup> Rokossovskiy had to create an operational concept in his own mind and envisage the sequence in which units would be committed as well as the manner in which they were to be linked in order to achieve operational objectives. Equally, as a *front* commander Rokossovskiy could not afford to concentrate on either deep battle or deep operations at the expense of the other, for both were essential to the overall success of an operation. They were two phases

of one operation and the ability to foresee and actively harmonize the tactical attrition of deep battle with the operational manoeuvre of deep operations was an essential aspect of operational art.

As an operation moved from the conceptual to the preparatory stage, it was Rokossovskiy's task to produce a formal operational plan. The operational plan "always expressed precisely the aim, missions, and concept of the operation, methods for routing the enemy, the sequence for completing combat missions (immediate and subsequent), composition of groupings, and their operational formation."<sup>10</sup>

It formally expressed the operational commander's thoughts. Rokossovskiy's operational directives followed a certain pattern. They were detailed documents, often running to three or four pages. The *front's* individual armies were dealt with in sequence with each given a date and time of attack. The directive usually indicated which army or armies were to inflict the main blow and which were to carry out secondary attacks or holding actions. In presenting the deep battle phase of an operation Rokossovskiy's directives contained targets or lines to be achieved or reached on certain days. Therefore, the deep battle phase of an operational directive was quite detailed with a deliberate time schedule. However, deep operational objectives were specific in terms of target but with no detailed time schedule other than perhaps a number of days or date by which the objective was to be achieved. However, in keeping with Rokossovskiy's desire to foster the use of independent initiative, there was no prescription as to how these objectives were to be achieved.

The operational directive for Operation Kutuzov was issued on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1943 to 48<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army. It covered each army, the date of attack, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943, and the objectives to be achieved. It ordered 13<sup>th</sup> Army to strike the main blow with 70<sup>th</sup> Army providing a secondary attack. The 48<sup>th</sup> Army was allocated the holding role. All armies were given axes of attack. The directive then conveyed the operational objectives to be achieved, particularly by 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army working in co-operation with 13<sup>th</sup> Army. Finally, the directive

outlined the role of 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army in the deep battle and in support of 13<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's deep operations. It had specific instructions to prevent the enemy withdrawing north and north-west.<sup>11</sup>

The operational directive issued on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943 was similar in style. It was issued to 65<sup>th</sup> Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army. The 65<sup>th</sup> Army was to strike the main blow and break the enemy front at Sevsk. This was followed by a list of specific objectives to be reached on the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth days. The deep operation objective was Novgorod-Severskiy on the River Desna. The 65<sup>th</sup> Army was informed that 48<sup>th</sup> Army would play the holding role and that it was to cooperate closely with 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank was given a list of objectives to be achieved on the first, second and third days of the operation but its main focus was the deep operation: taking Novgorod-Severskiy, crossing the River Desna and establishing a bridgehead. The 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army was to support 65<sup>th</sup> Army in the breakthrough battle, before switching to support 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's deep operation.<sup>12</sup> A separate directive ordered 60<sup>th</sup> Army to put in a secondary attack in order to support the 65<sup>th</sup> Army. It was not the main blow, but it was more than a holding role. The directive outlined the objectives to be achieved on the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth days of the 60<sup>th</sup> Army's operation.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the extensive operational directive issued by Rokossovskiy on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1944, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's East Prussian Operation, used the same method.<sup>14</sup>

By 1943-44, Rokossovskiy's planning habits and his natural, if unusual; inclination to delegate enabled him to pass on many of the mundane mechanics of an operation, leaving him to concentrate on the key operational decisions. Yet, Rokossovskiy did not relinquish the essential, creative aspects of operational art, namely, the creation of an operational concept to inform the plan of operations, determining the direction of the main blow, the initiation of the operation and the transition from deep battle to deep operations

## **Meticulous Preparations**

Rokossovskiy incorporated one of Brusilov's less obvious, but highly important traits into his own operational command, namely meticulous preparations. In June 1916, Brusilov's sustained preparations played a critical role in enabling him to breakthrough the Austro-Hungarian forces. Yet, significantly, Brusilov's later attacks, ordered by the Russian high command and not marked by the meticulous preparations of the earlier offensive, were bloody failures. The desire for time to prepare properly and thus foresee potential difficulties and opportunities was a consistent theme of Rokossovskiy's memoirs. Rokossovskiy's emphasis on time for preparation frequently clashed with *Stavka's* demands for almost continuous operations, especially in the period November 1942-December 1943. As Rokossovskiy commented,

“unfortunately, it occasionally happened that the higher echelons issued orders and directives without due account of the time factor or the state of the troops designated to carry them out.”<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, he repeatedly criticized *Stavka's* insistence on launching inadequately prepared operations. He disliked improvised operations of an entirely *ad hoc* kind and frequently blamed insufficient time for preparation if an operation failed to achieve all its objectives.

This might be interpreted as Rokossovskiy trying to explain failure. However, although Rokossovskiy experienced setbacks and operations that did not fulfil their promise, he never presided over an operational defeat, in the same way as Zhukov and Konev, in Operation Mars, during December 1942.<sup>16</sup> Equally, although he disliked improvised operations, Rokossovskiy was very good at them. During the Moscow defensive operation at Volokalamsk (17<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup> October 1941), and at Moscow (15<sup>th</sup> November–4<sup>th</sup> December 1941), Rokossovskiy distinguished himself in defensive operations marked by weeks of shattering, constant improvisation and the incessant juggling of inadequate forces.<sup>17</sup> Finally, in January 1945, Rokossovskiy's brilliant improvisation in the face of *Stavka's* sudden alteration of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian's mission,<sup>18</sup> ensured the East Prussian Operation was a triumph of operational art, if not humanity, that actually drew

praise from the Wehrmacht.<sup>19</sup> In short, Rokossovskiy was not some perfectionist who had been denied time to refine his own operational masterpiece.

If time permitted, Rokossovskiy always rehearsed the sequence of operations with his commanders.<sup>20</sup> As a result he could rely on their initiative to get the job done without becoming consumed in tactical details. Therefore proper preparations were inextricably linked to delegation, a form of command that Rokossovskiy practised in a way that no other senior Soviet commander did during the Great Patriotic War. This link between time for preparations and delegation was important in several ways for Rokossovskiy's style of operational command. First, it left Rokossovskiy free to concentrate on the overall synchronisation of an operation. Second, the efficient exercise of their missions by tactical commanders generated operational tempo and momentum. Third, Rokossovskiy was able to focus on the timing of the insertion of a mobile group, a key point in the transition from deep battle to deep operations. Fourth, it enabled him to exercise creative foresight during an operation, as well as before it, thus permitting his forces to foresee and prepare for trouble if it could not be avoided, or, anticipate and bypass trouble, thus preserving operational momentum.

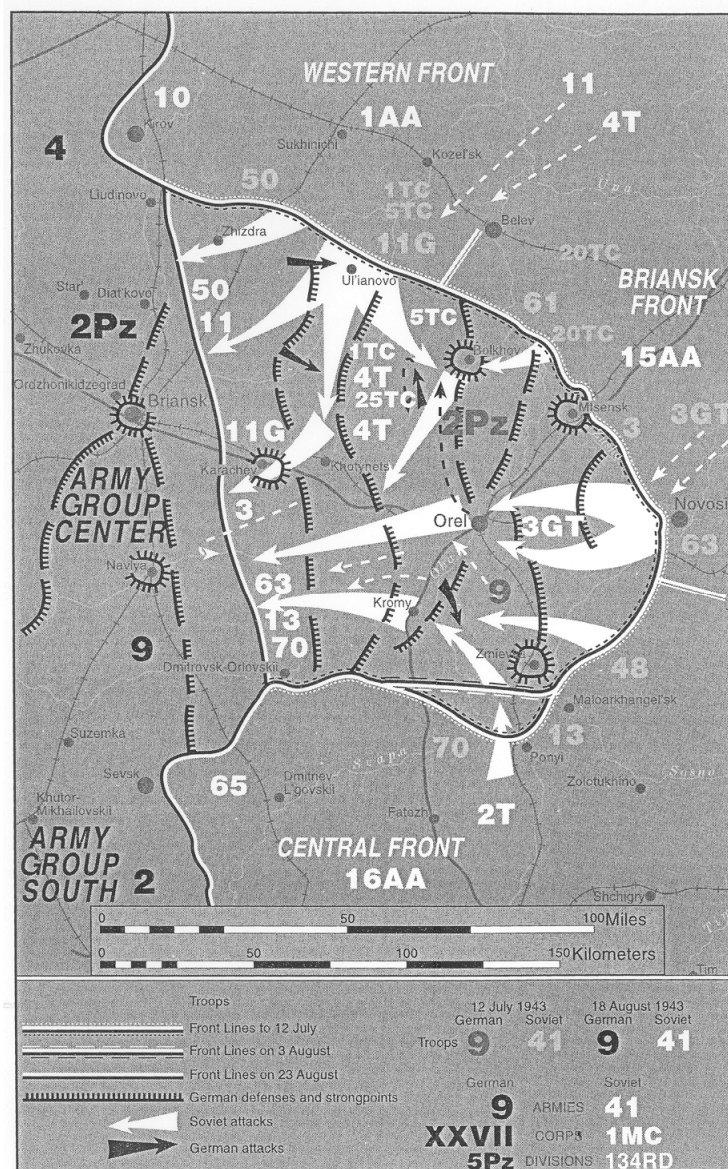
As part of Operation Uranus, in November 1942, Rokossovskiy's Don Front contributed to the encirclement of Sixth German Army in Stalingrad. He believed that good preparations "to a large degree predetermined the success of the operation."<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, in December 1942, Rokossovskiy's Don Front was charged with the final annihilation of the Sixth German Army. It was a key operation with the eyes of the world, as well as Stalin, fixed on Stalingrad.<sup>22</sup> Rokossovskiy prepared Operation Kol'tso meticulously and although "Moscow kept hurrying us to start the offensive"<sup>23</sup> he insisted, even in the face of Stalin's objections, that the operation was meticulously prepared. Indeed, "time and time again Stalin urged rapid 'liquidation' on the *Stavka* officers and Front commanders, and in early December he became utterly demanding in this matter."<sup>24</sup> Rokossovskiy argued "after visiting several sectors, I saw that without



special preparations we could hardly count on success in the offensive. I reported this to Stalin.”<sup>25</sup>

Rokossovskiy curtailed pointless, inadequately prepared assaults because “the constant offensive operations had taken a great toll of the troops.”<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Stalin insisted on “the systematic harassment of the encircled troops by air and ground attacks, denying the enemy any breathing space by night or by day.”<sup>27</sup> The Soviet high command was impatient but the sustained tenacity of German resistance during Operation Kol'tso (10<sup>th</sup> January 1943-2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943), indicates the quality of Rokossovskiy's judgement. This was not a simple mopping up operation and without meticulous preparation the Don Front may have been embarrassed by Sixth German Army.<sup>28</sup>

On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1943, *Stavka* launched Operation Kutuzov, the Soviet counter-offensive at the northern end of the Kursk salient.<sup>29</sup> The Central Front's successful defensive operation at Kursk was pivotal to *Stavka*'s overall plan<sup>30</sup> but it was given just three days to make the transition from defence to counter-offensive. On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1943, the counter-offensive began led by Bryansk and Western Front,<sup>31</sup> followed, on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943, by Rokossovskiy's Central Front.<sup>32</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> August 1943, Operation Kutuzov officially liberated Orel but it was a slow grinding offensive that laboured forward in the face of skilful German defences<sup>33</sup> and massive Soviet casualties. In the opinion of some, “Operation Kutuzov was a perfect example of the newly sophisticated Soviet way of warfare.”<sup>34</sup> However, Rokossovskiy felt “once again undue haste was displayed; as a result the attack on the decisive sectors was launched without adequate preparation.”<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 99: Operation Kutuzov:Soviet Counter-Offensive in July-August 1943**  
(Glantz and House, *The Battle of Kursk*, 1999, p.231.)

Rokossovkiy's sustained commitment to meticulous preparations is clearly revealed by the manner in which he prepared 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front for Operation Bagration. The extensive, but carefully planned aerial reconnaissance of 16<sup>th</sup> Army was extremely beneficial,

“the resulting photographs of the German defences were quickly transferred to maps, duplicated and sent to the forces. As a result the depth of the enemy defense, the nature of defensive structures, the

condition of crossing sites, the location of reserves, etc. were accurately determined.”<sup>36</sup>

Hundreds of day and night reconnaissance raids were conducted to establish a ground force perspective of the German defences. The preparation time was also used for “Staff exercises and war games on the theme ‘The Penetration of an Enemy Defense and Supporting the Commitment of Mobile Forces in Battle’ were held at *front* headquarters and in the armies in early June.”<sup>37</sup> Extensive preparations were made regarding command and control as well as training troops to deal with difficult terrain in order to sustain operational momentum.

“The infantry practised swimming, overcoming water obstacles using available means and without them, the erection of assault bridges, and the use of inflatable boats in specially allowed sectors in the immediate rear. During the preparation, great attention was focused on training individual soldiers and entire sub-units in overcoming swampy sectors, orienting themselves in the forests.”<sup>38</sup>

Soviet tank troops were specifically trained in fighting in marshes, in close co-operation with combat engineers, in night fighting, building corduroy roads out of logs and in using various tools for overcoming ditches and streams. There was a staggering attention to detail with specific infantry and engineers assigned to train and fight with specific tank and self-propelled artillery units. Similarly, intense training programmes were designed for engineers,<sup>39</sup> artillery and airpower.<sup>40</sup>

The East Prussian Operation of January 1945 was also marked by meticulous preparation. As early as 5<sup>th</sup> December 1944, Rokossovskiy had an extensive analysis of German defence lines. This provided him with substantial detail of the German positions, forces, defensive sectors, lines and troop densities in the region.<sup>41</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> December 1944, Rokossovskiy issued instructions to the staff of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front concerning the preparation of troops and staff for the East Prussian Operation. He ordered constant reconnaissance with systematic and through recording of observations. Troops were to be trained for night operations and *maskirovka* was to be checked everyday. All commanders were to have thought about and decided upon the location of observation, communication and

command points by 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945. Similarly, all questions of communication, co-operation and co-ordination within and between all units at all levels were to be carefully examined and resolved. Finally, commanders were to study and familiarise themselves with the German tactical and operational battle order.<sup>42</sup>

Rokossovskiy's emphasis on meticulous preparations was not an idiosyncrasy of temperament, but an expression of his operational art. It reflected Rokossovskiy's extremely broad interpretation of the role of time in operational art. In Rokossovskiy's style of operations the apparent, but in reality, false anomaly of patient, meticulous preparations was followed by operations of great power and speed. Time invested in preparation was time gained in operations. It was meticulous preparation that enabled Rokossovskiy to create operations that erupted upon the enemy with sufficient momentum to achieve operational objectives deep in the enemy rear. To Rokossovskiy, undue haste in preparation was simply a false economy, one that would undermine operational momentum as logistic reality clashed with the overall operational imperatives of the *front* commander. In short he understood that,

“if advancing forces disregarded the disposition and organization of their rear area during an operation, they could, in turn, find themselves in a critical or even catastrophic position, fraught with the danger of obliteration of all their previous successes.”<sup>43</sup>

Rokossovskiy's prioritisation of time for preparations should not be seen as evidence that he was a cautious commander. In fact, he was often bold, particularly during an operation. Rokossovskiy recognised the operational dilemma posed by trying to deny the enemy time whilst attempting to refresh exhausted Soviet troops. Yet, as far as Rokossovskiy was concerned adequate preparation, good planning and realistic objectives pre-empted the problem of operational exhaustion. It was not a question of hesitancy, indecision or unnecessary caution. In October 1965, Golubev's retrospective article on deep operations, clearly endorsed Rokossovskiy's judgement in time for preparations. It argued that,

“it was indisputably proven that large modern operations required careful materiel-organized preparation, that it was impossible to conduct them continuously, that between them interruptions no less protracted than the operation itself were unavoidable, and that these interruptions would be filled with preparations for new operations.”<sup>44</sup>

### **The Use of a Broad Front**

The keystone of Brusilov’s success in 1916 was his decision to deploy and subsequently attack on a broad front. In the wake of his success “the notion of a broad front offensive quickly became official army policy and its utility was never seriously questioned by any of the major theorists.”<sup>45</sup> It became an enduring theme in Red Army thinking long before Timoshenko’s endorsement of Brusilov in December 1940. In summary, “Varfolomeyev believed as had Triandafillov, that in order to achieve decisive success, an operation must be launched along a sufficiently broad front.”<sup>46</sup> In a similar vein, Tukhachevskiy believed “in the greatest possible contact area” with the enemy.<sup>47</sup> The overwhelming majority of Soviet wartime operations incorporated the idea of a broad front, at both the tactical and operational level. Certainly, it was a feature of Rokossovskiy’s operational art.

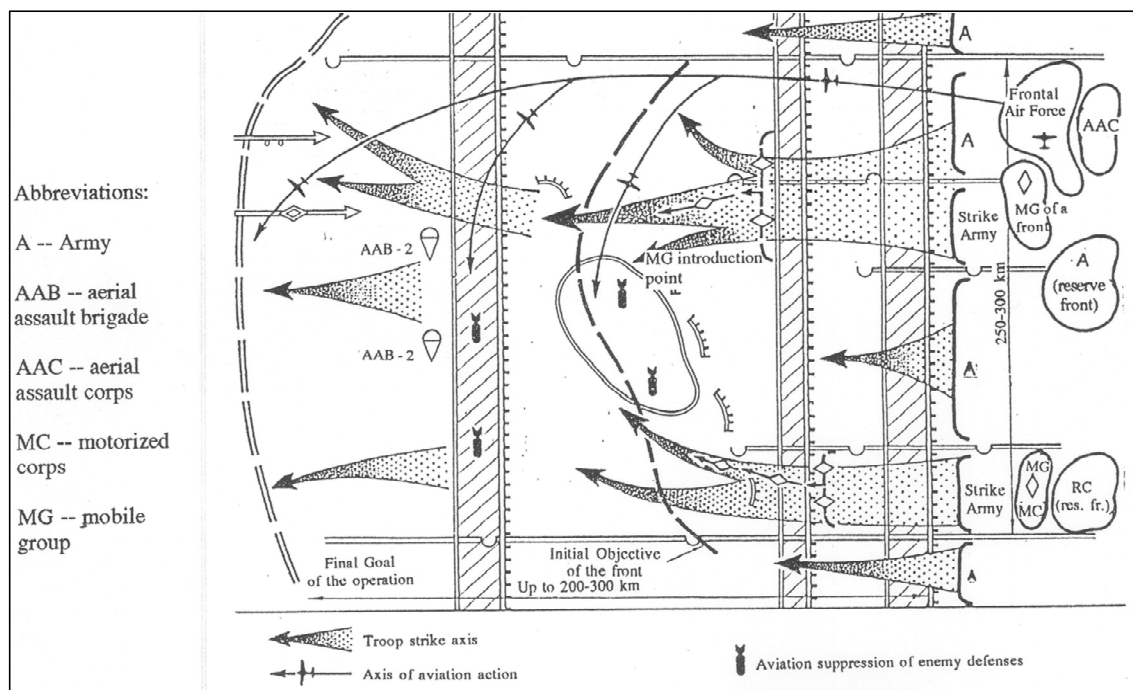
In his study of the German defeat in the east, Ziemke, the American military historian concluded that,

“Of course, Soviet protests to the contrary notwithstanding, the broad front offensive was at best a modified linear method of warfare. It required mass troops, repeated frontal encounters and an enemy willing, as Hitler was, to respond with a linear defence.”<sup>48</sup>

The Soviet inclination to deploy and attack on a broad front, is often cited as evidence of the Russian steamroller, grinding its way to victory through frontal assaults, reliant on numbers and a callous disregard of casualties to achieve victory over smaller, more tactically adept opponents. In short, the broad front is presented as an end in itself, not a means to an end. Therefore,

“despite the smokescreen of high-flowing theorizing which the Russians have thrown around the basic two elements, the single or salient thrust and the broad front offensive, both can be most simply and, it appears be most logically be explained in terms of shortcomings.”<sup>49</sup>

At best, this statement misunderstands the Red Army’s operational use of the broad front.<sup>50</sup> At worst, it wilfully misrepresents the Soviet approach for “Soviet practice in the Soviet-German war supports their doctrine of a wide frontal offensive containing one or few main blows.”<sup>51</sup> In either case, this statement fails to understand the link between the broad front and the Soviet obsession with depth. The aim of a broad front deployment was to spread the enemy forces, thus reducing the depth and density of the enemy’s defences. In conjunction with a deception plan, this denied the enemy the ability to discern the main blow, forcing the enemy commander to defend his entire frontage on the basis of guesswork rather than considered judgement. In turn, by reducing the density and depth of the enemy’s tactical defences, the Red Army increased the chances of turning a rapid breakthrough into a deep operational victory.



**Figure 100: Red Army frontal blow operation according to pre-war concepts.**  
(Soviet Military Encyclopaedia, Abridged English Version, Vol. 2, 1993, p.373.)

Some Soviet commanders did extract ghastly victories, with little manoeuvre and just bloody numbers.<sup>52</sup> However, Rokossovskiy's style of operations was more consistent with the fact that "in most cases in which a wide front was attacked, only the key sectors were penetrated as the Soviets concentrated their major effort there, exercising elsewhere a keen conservation of force."<sup>53</sup> Rokossovskiy's style of command did utilise the broad front, but unlike Brusilov, on an operational rather than strategic level. For example, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943, at the launch of Operation Kol'tso, Rokossovskiy's forces attacked simultaneously around the entire 150 kilometres of the Stalingrad pocket.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, in the Lublin-Brest Operation of July 1944, the left-wing of Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front deployed on a front of 200 kilometres,<sup>55</sup> while in the East Prussian Operation of January 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian deployed on a frontage of approximately 140 kilometres.<sup>56</sup> Rokossovskiy's use of the broad front was an operational device, a means to an end, designed to create the right conditions for a tactical breakthrough from which to launch a deep operation. Once a breakthrough was achieved, the apparent flat uniformity of Rokossovskiy's broad front was quickly replaced by forces striking fast and deep to secure operational objectives in the enemy rear, while others moved at a steadier pace mopping up resistance, securing objectives and supply lines. These were not the actions of a commander committed to a slow, attritional advance on a broad front. As the historical record demonstrates, when the opportunity arose, Rokossovskiy quickly launched deep operations based on manoeuvre. A uniform broad front was only a feature of his style of command in the initial stages of an operation.

In summary, Rokossovskiy used the broad front as a means to an end, and his style of operations was marked by a desire for rapid attrition and deep operational manoeuvre, not a uniform advance on a broad front of operational scale. Indeed, Rokossovskiy positively disliked prolonged attrition and throughout his active command on the Eastern Front seized every opportunity to avoid or escape from such operations. Finally, if commanders such as Rokossovskiy were prepared to

accept the idea of a broad front offensive as an end in itself, why did he and they, spend so much time before an operation trying to deceive the enemy.

### **Rokossovskiy and the Conduct of Maskirovka**

The Soviet inclination to deploy on a broad front interacted with *maskirovka*. *Maskirovka* was a combination of deception, disinformation, security and camouflage.<sup>57</sup> It involved a concerted attempt to confuse the enemy by playing to his expectations or by deliberately misleading him. It was also part of the Red Army's desire to manipulate combat conditions before an operation. The commitment to deploy on a broad front deliberately spread the enemy deployment while presenting him with a multitude of potential threats making the main strikes impossible to discern. *Polevoy Ustav* 1936 argued that the "concealment of preparations is one of the most important conditions of success,"<sup>58</sup> while the 1944 Field Regulations viewed *maskirovka* as a mandatory form of combat support.<sup>59</sup> It was practised at the strategic, operational and tactical level, by all Soviet formations, and was closely associated with the achievement of surprise and the acquisition of the initiative.<sup>60</sup> It was central to any Soviet commander's approach and Rokossovskiy was no exception to this rule.

In October 1942, as part of Operation Uranus, Rokossovskiy's attempt to deceive Paulus, Sixth German Army's commander was a pivotal part of his plan. In order "to convince him that our intention was to attack in the sector between the Don and the Volga we were especially active there."<sup>61</sup> There is little doubt that at times, Soviet *maskirovka* became rather formulaic. Naturally, certain standard procedures had to be implemented<sup>62</sup> and Rokossovskiy used them, but also had an eye for more imaginative *maskirovka*. He insisted the Germans were confronted with random and unpredictable actions that did not conform to patterns of behaviour. In December 1942, during preparations for Operation Ko'ltso, Rokossovskiy noticed that the Germans used Soviet artillery tactics to predict Soviet assaults. Rokossovskiy ordered his officers to mix it up: attacks were to be at night and during the day, with and without artillery support, short and



prolonged artillery barrages, some attacks were to bite and hold, while others were to probe deeper taking on the character of an extended reconnaissance.<sup>63</sup>

At the tactical level, *maskirovka* was primarily physical, involving dummies and other artificial constructions. It also involved the physical camouflage of units and covering the tracks of Soviet forces. By 1943-44, extensive Soviet manuals covered the procedures and techniques of *maskirovka*.<sup>64</sup> It was the *front* Chief of Staff's task to devise, oversee and implement tactical *maskirovka*. However, at the operational level, *maskirovka* played a more subtle but highly significant role in operational art. At this level, *maskirovka* involved the psychological undermining of the opponent and the insertion of doubt into the mind of the enemy commander. In 1941-43, German army commanders could absorb the limited impact of tactical surprise, but operational surprise presented problems of a more substantial nature. In 1942-43, German commanders relied on deep defences, superior mobility and tactical prowess, as well as operational reserves, to negate Soviet *maskirovka* and their own lack of intelligence. However, in late 1943-44, as German reserves dwindled and the deep nature of their defences diminished, greater numbers of German troops were forced into the forward tactical zone. This lack of depth made German formations susceptible in both a physical and psychological sense, to *maskirovka*.

The psychological implications of this situation on German commanders and troops were profound. If any tactical setback had the potential to shatter the entire operational position, German commanders had to cover their entire frontage, thus robbing themselves of the depth that curtailed previous Soviet deep operations. All German tactical and operational commanders recognised the dangers of covering an entire front. Indeed, since World War One, German doctrine had emphasised strongpoint defence, constructed in depth, with the ability to absorb a blow, followed by rapid counter-attack. This was the anti-thesis of a linear defence, pre-occupied with holding the line. However, from autumn 1943 lack of manpower, lack of depth and prepared defensive positions plagued German commanders. As a result German commanders became more reliant on

intelligence. This made them vulnerable to disinformation and deception. In particular, German commanders were increasingly anxious to repel Soviet assaults and launch immediate counter-attacks rather than absorb the blow. In this sense the loss of the Dnepr and the penetration of the Panther Line, in autumn 1943, were critical strategic reverses. The more creative Soviet operational commanders such as Rokossovskiy thrived on this situation.

In the 1930's a leading Soviet theorist, A.M. Vol'pe, argued that secrecy, rapidity and misleading the enemy were the essential components of *maskirovka*. Furthermore, Vol'pe considered misleading the enemy to be "the most delicate of *maskirovka* means requiring 'the genius of a commander.'"<sup>65</sup> It is by this standard that Rokossovskiy's creative *maskirovka* should be assessed. Rokossovskiy knew it was extremely unlikely that a German commander would have no warning of a major Soviet operation. Yet, more significantly, he seems to have understood, that from a psychological perspective, this presented considerable opportunities. Active disinformation about a forthcoming operation could be more beneficial than complete secrecy. Naturally, it was essential to conceal the main blow and the breakthrough zones but the passage of credible, but misleading information was a deadly psychological weapon. Disinformation could induce a false sense of security by encouraging an inclination to concentrate on 'known' information, to the neglect of less tangible but potentially significant indicators. During the Belorussian campaign of autumn 1943-spring 1944, German commanders often pounced on any overt sign of activity by Rokossovskiy's forces. Rokossovskiy manipulated this impetuosity in order to conceal his own operational plans, often quite deliberately using diversionary attacks that were seized upon by German commanders keen to believe that they had the situation under control. Of course, if the enemy commander believed he had the situation under control, the psychological impact of an operation delivered from an unexpected direction could be shattering.

Therefore, *maskirovka* was a central feature of Rokossovskiy's style of command and played a particularly important role in several of Rokossovskiy's Belorussian

operations in the autumn of 1943. Rokossovskiy's appreciation of the finer psychological aspects of *maskirovka* is revealed by his reaction to intelligence reports in late June 1943. The 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army believed it had identified a substantial concentration of German armour in the Orel region. Air Marshal Rudenko, 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army's commander, suggested an air strike.

In Rudenko's words,

“General Rokossovsky(sic) listened attentively and then said: ‘well, say we shake up these two divisions, and so tell the enemy we know much about him. He’ll restore their combat power and hide them so that our recce will never find them. What we want now’ he continued his argument, ‘is to make believe we know nothing and at the same time to find out his strength and plans. And so we shouldn’t alarm the Germans. Let them attack and then, if you want to, take a smack at those groves. Only it’s hardly likely that you’ll find any tanks there. You have to watch their movement and then shower them with bombs.’”<sup>66</sup>



**Figure 101: S.I. Rudenko**  
(Rokossovskiy, 1992)

This leaves one in no doubt that Rokossovskiy possessed a shrewd intellect and an astute appreciation of the psychological dimension of *maskirovka* at the operational level.

As we have seen Rokossovskiy's Belorussian campaign of October 1943-April 1944 have been overshadowed by Kursk in July 1943 and the crushing Soviet victory in the Belorussian Operation of June-August 1944 as well as Soviet historiography's concerted efforts to disguise the true scope and success of Rokossovskiy's operations. However, the Belorussian campaign was also notable because it witnessed Rokossovskiy's progression from a single main blow towards active diversionary operations using the idea of two main blows within a broad front, a theme that began as Rokossovskiy entered Belorussia in 1943 and reached its zenith in Operation Bagration during June-July 1944. These

developments were intimately linked with Rokossovskiy's more creative and sophisticated approach to *maskirovka*.

This process began on the eve of the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation of August 1943.<sup>67</sup> In its original form the main blow of the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation was to be inflicted by 65<sup>th</sup> Army and exploited by 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army.<sup>68</sup> However, in an unusual move, given that it was involved in the same operation, on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943, Rokossovskiy also issued a specific operational directive to Chernyakhovskiy's 60<sup>th</sup> Army. The 60<sup>th</sup> Army's prominent role in the subsequent Chernigov-Pripyat Operation is often portrayed as an exceptional example of brilliant improvisation in the face of unforeseen events. There is no doubt that Rokossovskiy's agile response to 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's failure was an object lesson in flexibility. However, the separate operational directive of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943 indicates that Rokossovskiy did not see 60<sup>th</sup> Army's attack in the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation as simply a holding role. Rokossovskiy ordered the 60<sup>th</sup> Army, at the southern end of the Central Front, to launch a secondary attack, not just a holding operation. After listing its tactical objectives for the first six days, again Rokossovskiy specifically stated that this was to be an active secondary attack.<sup>69</sup>

On the Central Front's northern sector, on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1943, 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army found themselves facing deep German defences manned by reserves that had been smartly deployed in expectation of a Soviet attack.<sup>70</sup> As 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army ground their way forward<sup>71</sup> further south, on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1943, Chernyakhovskiy's 60<sup>th</sup> Army discovered a weakness in the German line, moved through it and into open country.<sup>72</sup> On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1943 Rokossovskiy shifted the entire Central Front's main effort to the south in support of 60<sup>th</sup> Army, thereby turning an auxiliary effort into the main blow.<sup>73</sup> It was a resounding success, injecting tremendous momentum into the Central Front's offensive. As the Germans rushed reserves south, to curtail 60<sup>th</sup> Army, this released the pressure further north, enabling 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army<sup>74</sup> to make greater progress.<sup>75</sup> In the face of the two Soviet efforts, the German line was stretched to breaking



a considerable achievement as Belorussia was dominated by rivers, marsh and forest. It appeared unsuitable for manoeuvre warfare and ideal for defensive and positional war. The Second German Army had extensive defensive positions including the Panther position, envisaged, perhaps wistfully, by many German commanders, as a strategic bulwark that would stabilise the German position on the Eastern Front.

However, Rokossovskiy realized that in the absence of substantial reserves, Second German Army was relying upon Belorussia's natural defensive assets to bolster frontline German defences. Equally, Rokossovskiy recognised that difficult terrain also undermined the mobility of Second German Army's defence. It was primarily an infantry force denuded of armour due to greater German priorities in the Ukraine and an expectation that the Belorussian environment would undermine the speed and depth of Rokossovskiy's operations. Nevertheless, if a significant tactical breakthrough was achieved and exploited, Second German Army would struggle to respond in an agile manner.

Therefore, Belorussia confronted Rokossovskiy with the possibility of positional and attritional war. Yet, Rokossovskiy did not grind his way through Belorussia. The fact that he was able to devise operations characterised by agility and manoeuvre is a testimony to his creativity as an operational commander. In particular, Rokossovskiy used active *maskirovka*, taking massive but considered risks, in order to deceive Second German Army as to his intentions, before completely wrong footing them. In short, Rokossovskiy's style of operations in autumn 1943 was notable for its aggressively creative *maskirovka*, in search of surprise, designed to create the opportunity for manoeuvre.

By early October 1943, after the successes of September 1943, Rokossovskiy's Central Front was losing momentum. All attempts to expand bridgeheads over the Dnepr and the Sozh met fierce resistance. In particular, Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army was stuck in an attritional slogging match and mired in the marshy and wooded terrain, between the Sozh and the Dnepr.<sup>80</sup> In response, Rokossovskiy created a

daring plan to restore fluidity to operations in which *maskirovka* played a crucial role. The plan was to withdraw the main forces of 65<sup>th</sup> Army from the western bank of the Dnepr, to the eastern bank, before quickly re-deploying them south, for a more dynamic operation across the Dnepr, on Central Front's southern wing. In order to preserve operational secrecy, Rokossovskiy ordered a single corps of 65<sup>th</sup> Army<sup>81</sup> to remain on the western bank "with the task of continuously harassing the nazis in order to divert their attention."<sup>82</sup>

The plan was brilliantly successful, helped by the fact that on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1943, Rokossovskiy had deliberately ordered 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and 50<sup>th</sup> Army, on the northern wing of Central Front, to launch a diversionary attack. Rokossovskiy knew that these two armies lacked the resources to sustain an offensive "but it was in the common interest, and certain quite conscious sacrifices had to be made."<sup>83</sup> As Rokossovskiy had anticipated, Central Front's rapid change of direction to the north, caught Second German Army on the hop. Indeed, "as we foresaw, the offensive of the 50<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies scored some initial success. On the third day, however, the enemy threw in additional forces, counterattacked and forced our units back to their initial positions."<sup>84</sup> This was exactly what Rokossovskiy wanted to achieve.

As Second German Army pounced on the Central Front's northern armies, further south Rokossovskiy unleashed his operational masterstroke. This turned what appeared to be a tactical setback into an operational victory. On 15<sup>th</sup> October 1943, 65<sup>th</sup> Army crossed the Dnepr and moved on Gomel, Second German Army's key systemic centre. In a matter of hours, German troops in the north that had been counter-attacking 3<sup>rd</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Army rapidly disengaged, relieving the German pressure in the north, but too late to do anything about 65<sup>th</sup> Army's move across the Dnepr in the south.





“taking into account the difficult terrain, criss-crossed by large rivers, and the strongly fortified enemy defence lines, including the vaunted Eastern Wall, possession of a bridgehead 40km in frontage and 20km in depth on the western bank of the Dnieper was a major achievement for the troops on the left wing of our Front. It overhung the whole of the enemy’s Gomel group, compelling him to bring up forces from other sectors of the front, and thus weakening his defences there.”<sup>85</sup>

Ziemke concluded that by the end of November 1943 “the distinguishing aspect of the Belorussian Front’s three month fall campaign was its drab pointlessness. It had operational, even strategic, possibilities but the indications are that the *Stavka* could not have exploited these and, in fact, had not wanted to do so.”<sup>86</sup> It is significant that Ziemke refrains from criticism of the tactical and operational handling of the Soviet forces in Belorussia. Rokossovskiy’s forces crossed the Desna, bounced the Dnepr, crossed the Sozh<sup>87</sup> and broke the Panther position. In short, Rokossovskiy out-thought, out-maneuvred and out-fought Second and Ninth German Armies. The Belorussian campaign refined his operational style and evolved his thinking on *maskirovka*. By the end of November 1943,

“after nearly three months the Ninth and Second Armies once more held a continuous front. They had eluded a succession of dangerous thrusts, often just in the nick of time. The price was high. Half of the Dnepr bridgehead was lost and with it a 100 mile stretch of the river. In the south a 60 mile gap yawned between the flanks of Army Group Centre and South.”<sup>88</sup>

Therefore, in the autumn of 1943, Rokossovskiy’s style of operations was notable for its use of *maskirovka* in order to generate opportunities for manoeuvre. There was great emphasis upon active measures to divert enemy formations and lure the enemy into counter-attacks against minor tactical probes dressed up to look like the initial stages of significant operational breakthroughs. Rokossovskiy’s *maskirovka* moved from the passive to the active use of the *front’s* forces in order to positively deceive the enemy rather than simply relying on concealment to hide the main blow.

This commitment to tactical and operational *maskirovka* continued into 1944 through Rokossovskiy's extensive preparations for the Belorussian Operation in which he considered deception, disinformation and surprise as key parts of the operational plan. In support of *Stavka's* strategic deception<sup>89</sup> programme, issued on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1944,<sup>90</sup> Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front prepared an operational *maskirovka* plan. It concentrated on concealing the location of individual formations and confusing Ninth German Army as to 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's main blow. In the Zlobin-Rogachev sector, where 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian had attacked and failed during May 1944,<sup>91</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and 48<sup>th</sup> Army made extensive and overt preparations for attack, real and false, in order to draw German attention to this area. This was an area of promising defensive terrain, and, in a region where they had succeeded before, recently at that, the Germans were confident in their ability to dominate this sector. Naturally, Soviet activity in this area, carefully balanced in order to maintain credibility, drew German attention. The operational aim was to distract Ninth German Army and persuade it that it has the situation under control while concealing the movement of 28<sup>th</sup> Army, on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1944, into the southern breakthrough area, around Parichi.<sup>92</sup> This was also supported by instructions issued by the General Staff to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Fronts, as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> Baltic Front to engage in simulated preparations for offensive operations.<sup>93</sup>

A detailed *maskirovka* plan was developed. It paid particular attention to night movement, monitoring rail and road traffic as well as the systematic provision of disinformation through dummy concentrations, false radio nets, artillery registration and reconnaissance. It was meticulously planned, implemented and observed by 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's staff. Rokossovskiy paid tribute to Malinin, his chief of staff, for his tireless efforts.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Proshlyakhov, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's Chief of Engineers wrote a detailed pamphlet advising all tactical formations on ideas and procedures for concealment, deception and security.<sup>95</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's efforts were successful. By 22<sup>nd</sup> June

1944, Ninth German Army knew a major offensive was coming<sup>96</sup> but German intelligence had failed to discern the organised presence of 28<sup>th</sup> Army.

The success of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's attack on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1944 in the Parichi region vindicated Rokossovskiy's foresight in anticipating the problem likely to be incurred at Rogachev. If he had not insisted on two breakthrough zones and developed a highly creative *maskirovka* plan in order to maximise the chances of a breakthrough the Belorussian Front's attack in Operation Bagration may not have developed the operational momentum that proved critical in the most impressive Red Army operation of the Great Patriotic War.

### **Localised Tactical Concentration of Force**

*Maskirovka* was also connected to an operational commander's ability to create massive localised concentrations of force, on selected breakthrough axes. The ability to pit enormous strength against weakness enabled commanders such as Rokossovskiy to capitalise on opportunities created by *maskirovka*. In 1916, Brusilov created massive localised concentrations of force, in selected breakthrough areas. This was not particularly innovative, but Brusilov's ability to make breadth of front simultaneously compatible with and indeed complementary to massive localised concentrations of force was highly significant.<sup>97</sup>

This was not lost on Soviet inter-war thinkers, indeed, "the principle of maximum concentration of force at a single point in the context of an extended front and an overall scarcity of resources was as old as the Red Army itself."<sup>98</sup> In this sense, Rokossovskiy's style of operations was no different from that of his contemporaries. Indeed, the *Polevoy Ustav* of 1936 had emphasised,

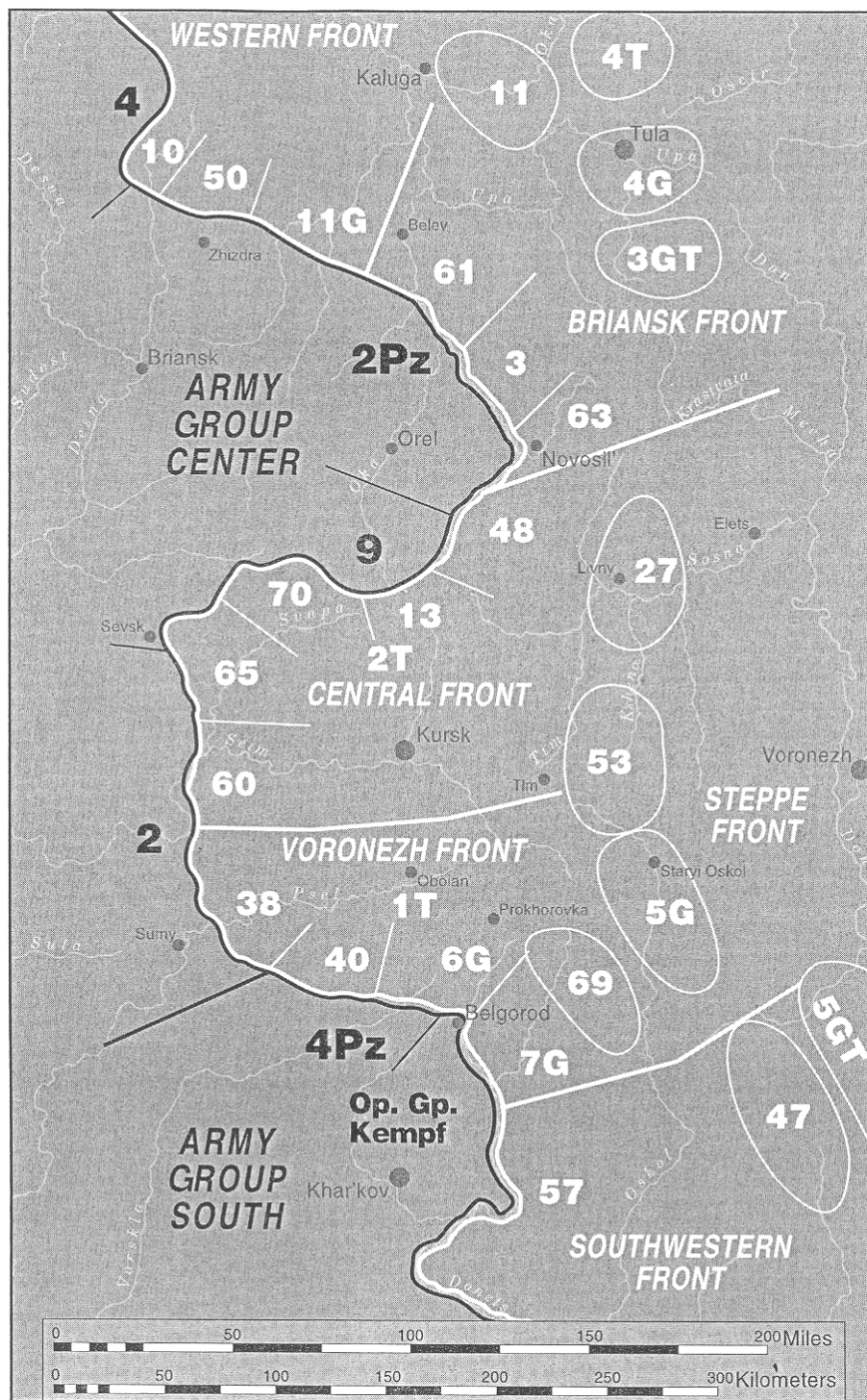
"to fight everywhere with the same force is impossible. To obtain success it is necessary to gain a decisive superiority over the enemy on the main direction by means of regrouping of forces and means. At secondary points only forces to cover the enemy are needed."<sup>99</sup>

In many respects, the whole purpose of a broad front deployment and *maskirovka* was to create massive localised concentrations of force designed to facilitate a

rapid breakthrough. Rokossovskiy's approach to the initial stages of an operation had much in common with Brusilov and the massive localised concentration of force prior to the assault was a theme of virtually every operational plan that Rokossovskiy devised.

The Central Front's defensive operation at Kursk clearly reveals Rokossovskiy's inclination to concentrate tactical force within a broad front deployment. Rokossovskiy believed the main German blow would be directed against Central Front's right wing.<sup>100</sup> In response, "of the 41 rifle divisions located in the *front's* first echelon, 29 were in 13<sup>th</sup> Army. Whereas along a front an average of 7.5 kilometres were allocated per division, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Army only 2.7 kilometres were so allocated."<sup>101</sup> Equally, "as is evident from the decision by the Central Front's commander, the *front's* main forces and weapons were concentrated on the axis of the assumed enemy main attack, that is, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Army's sector."<sup>102</sup>

At Kursk, 13<sup>th</sup> Army deployed "114,000 men, 2,934 guns and mortars, 105 multiple rocket launchers and 270 tanks and self-propelled guns"<sup>103</sup> These forces were concentrated on a front of just 32 kilometres in breadth and up to 30 kilometres in depth. Naturally, Rokossovskiy benefited from the Red Army's excellent intelligence for "the Germans did not succeed in concealing their offensive preparations"<sup>104</sup> but acted upon it in a decisive manner. The Central Front's other formations provide a sharp contrast with 13<sup>th</sup> Army. The 60<sup>th</sup> Army was 96,000 strong, but covered a frontage of 92 kilometres, while 65<sup>th</sup> Army numbered 100,000 with a front of 82 kilometres.<sup>105</sup> Significantly, neither 60<sup>th</sup> or 65<sup>th</sup> Army deployed a third echelon at Kursk, while the majority of their forces were deployed in the first echelon.



**Figure 104: The Central and Voronezh Front Deployment at Kursk: July 1943.**  
(Glantz and House, *The Battle of Kursk*, 1999, p.82.)

Their deployments had greater breadth, less concentration of force and markedly less depth than the Central Front's right-wing. In contrast, 13<sup>th</sup> Army had a third echelon. It also contained the greatest proportion of infantry divisions.<sup>106</sup> In summary, at Kursk, Rokossovskiy decisively shaped the field, through a pronounced concentration of force. As Rokossovskiy recalled,

“we did everything to pack our troops as tightly as possible on the threatened direction, concentrating on a frontage of 95 kilometres, 58 percent of our infantry divisions, 70 percent of our artillery and 87 per cent of our tanks and self-propelled guns.”<sup>107</sup>

In his memoirs, Rokossovskiy criticised Vatutin's failure to establish tactical concentrations of force within a broad defensive front. At Kursk, the Voronezh Front, under Vatutin, did stop the German offensive in the south, but with great difficulty, after a 35 kilometre German advance. It also received considerable support from *Stavka's* reserve. In contrast, Rokossovskiy's Central Front “had got along without the GHQ Reserve, managing with our own forces.”<sup>108</sup> In response to claims that Central Front had an easier task against the northern attack by Ninth German Army, Rokossovskiy argued,

“obviously, the reason lies elsewhere: namely, the Central Front had deployed its forces better, concentrating them on the most threatened sector, and the enemy had been unable to overcome such a concentration of forces and materiel.”<sup>109</sup>

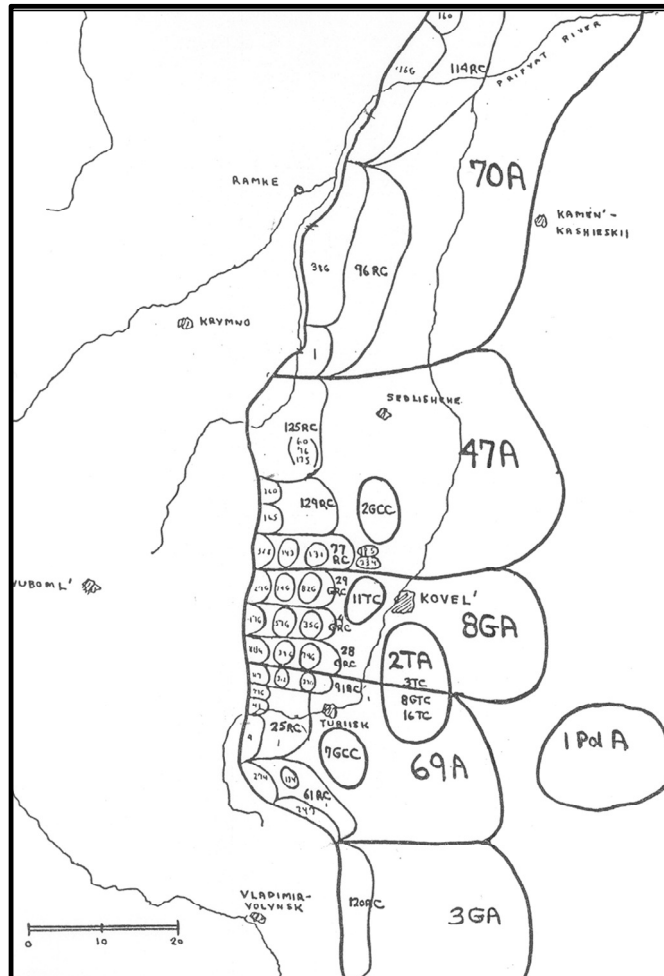
Furthermore, the penetration of 6<sup>th</sup> Guards Army “was due basically to the fact that Vatutin (unlike Rokossovskii) had spread his forces more thinly over greater distances; local German superiority soon made itself felt very painfully.”<sup>110</sup>

Rokossovskiy's criticisms of Vatutin reflect Rokossovskiy's perception of operational command. To Rokossovskiy, a *front* commander should never authorise a uniform deployment across a broad front. It represented an abdication of operational art and an inability, or refusal, to make decisions. In Rokossovskiy's view, operational command was defined by the need to make

decisions that involved prioritisation, reflected in tactical concentrations of force within a broad front, not indecision disguised by the deployment of a broad front, covering everything and nothing. In effect, Rokossovskiy accused Vatutin of operational incompetence in one of the most significant Soviet operations of World War Two.<sup>111</sup>

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1944, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front launched the Lublin-Brest Operation.<sup>112</sup> The Lublin-Brest Operation reveals how the pattern of tactical concentration within a broad front permeated Rokossovskiy's *front* operations and also dominated the deployment of individual armies. The left-wing of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front deployed from east to west, consisted of 70<sup>th</sup> Army, 47<sup>th</sup> Army, 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army, 69<sup>th</sup> Army, 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, supported by 6<sup>th</sup> Air Army.<sup>113</sup> It was deployed on a broad front of approximately 200 kilometres, but 70<sup>th</sup> Army alone covered 120 kilometres, concentrating most of its forces on its left flank, leaving minor formations and the Pripjat Marshes to defend the rest of the front.

In the days before the Lublin-Brest Operation, 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army was secretly deployed into the line. It was to deliver the main blow on a breakthrough sector just 9 kilometres wide. The 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army's three rifle corps each deployed on their own three kilometre sector. These individual corps' deployed three divisions, one behind the other. Therefore, an extraordinary tactical concentration in breadth was supported by substantial strength in depth. The 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army had 11<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army poised to move through as deep operational manoeuvre forces.<sup>114</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army's tactical concentration was supplemented by 69<sup>th</sup> Army to the south, which deployed its main forces on its right flank, adjacent to 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army, with 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps ready to exploit. To the north of 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army, 47<sup>th</sup> Army established tactical concentrations on its left to support 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army, with 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps in operational reserve.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, "in the 18 kilometer front penetration sector Rokossovskiy concentrated 70 percent of his rifle forces, 80 percent of his artillery, and all of his armor."<sup>116</sup>



**Figure 105: 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's concentration of force prior to the Lublin-Brest Operation**

(Glantz, Soviet Military Deception, 1989, p.407.)

In January 1945, Rokossovskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front held a frontage of 250 kilometres. The Rozan bridgehead could not hold all of 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock, 48<sup>th</sup> Army and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. The main blow was to be launched simultaneously, from the bridgehead<sup>117</sup> and across the Narev river on a front of 50 kilometres.<sup>118</sup> It was to be supported by a secondary assault, from the Serotsk bridgehead,<sup>119</sup> to the south of Pulutsk, by 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 70<sup>th</sup> Army<sup>120</sup> who together covered 25 kilometres. In contrast, 49<sup>th</sup> Army covered a 50 kilometre front, while on the extreme northern wing 50<sup>th</sup> Army held 100 kilometres.

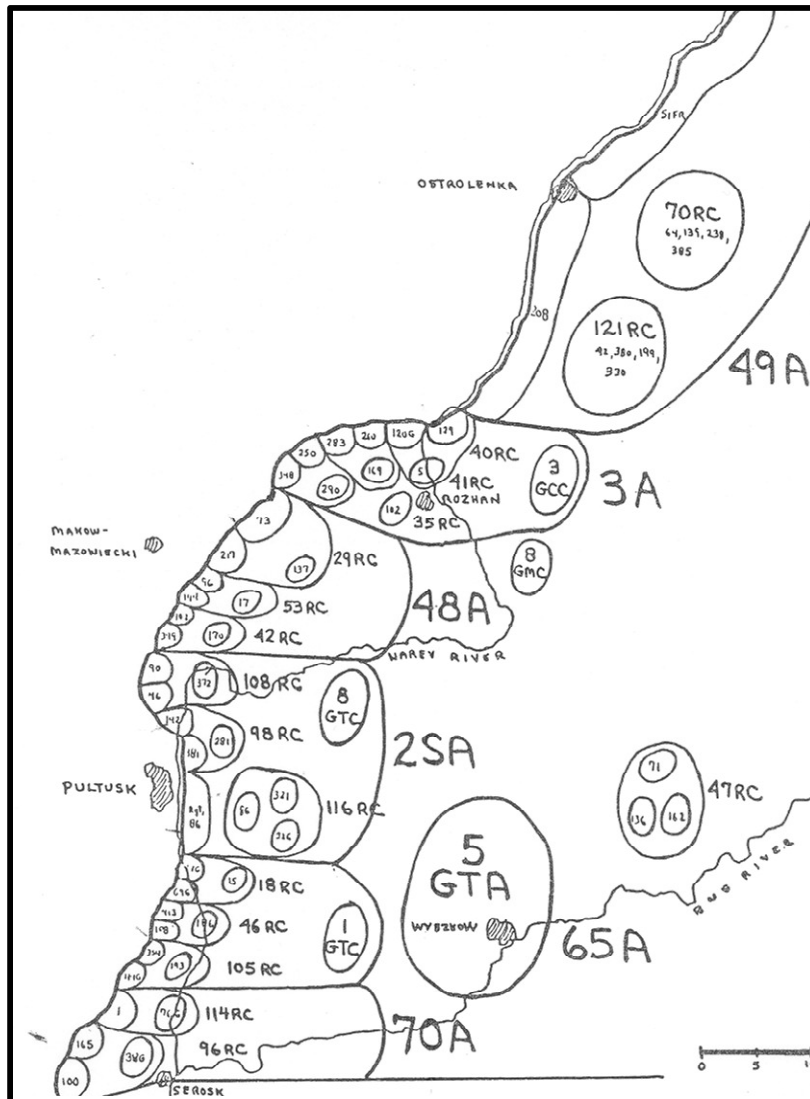
To the west of Rozan, with its right-wing straddling the Narev, Gorbato's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army made up of three corps, deployed six divisions on a front of 20 kilometres, with three divisions in the second echelon. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army's three corps all



deployed their forces with two divisions in the line and one in reserve. Its breakthrough zone was to be six kilometres wide, with its artillery deployed at a density of no less than 220 guns per kilometre.<sup>121</sup> Its tactical success was to be transferred into deep operations by 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps. On the left wing of the Rozan bridgehead, Gusev's 48<sup>th</sup> Army was deployed on a 15 kilometre sector covered by three corps. Yet, one half of 48<sup>th</sup> Army's frontage was held by a single corps, 29<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps, with the southern sector, identical in length to the northern sector, held by two corps, 52<sup>nd</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Corps, each with two divisions up and one in reserve. Its breakthrough zone was to be six kilometres wide with no less than 220 guns per kilometre.<sup>122</sup> This meant four divisions were packed in on a 6 kilometre front, a massive localised tactical concentration of force double that of 48<sup>th</sup> Army's right-wing.<sup>123</sup> Tactical success was to be turned into deep operational manoeuvre by 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Mechanised Corps whose initial positions straddled the boundary of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Army.

This concentration on 48<sup>th</sup> Army's left-wing was supported by 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army's right-wing. Fedyuninskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army held a frontage of approximately 20 kilometres, east of Pulutsk, but concentrated two corps in the northern half, adjacent to 48<sup>th</sup> Army's tactical concentration, with 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps waiting to exploit. Its breakthrough zone was also six kilometres with no less than 220 guns per kilometre.<sup>124</sup> In contrast, only one regiment held the remaining 10 kilometres of 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army's southern sector.<sup>125</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's secondary attack, by 65<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Army, was dominated by the more northerly of the two armies, namely 65<sup>th</sup> Army. It deployed its three corps across its frontage with the result that nine divisions deployed in two echelons on a 12 kilometre sector with 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps poised for operational manoeuvre.<sup>126</sup> Its breakthrough zone was seven kilometres with no less than 210 guns per kilometre in support.<sup>127</sup> In support, 70<sup>th</sup> Army deployed just two corps. It was to act as a holding force with a three kilometre localised concentration of force containing no less than 210 guns per kilometre.<sup>128</sup> Rokossovskiy *front* level deep operational manoeuvre force, 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army, was deployed in positions

approximately fifty kilometres east of Pulutsk on the boundary of 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army.



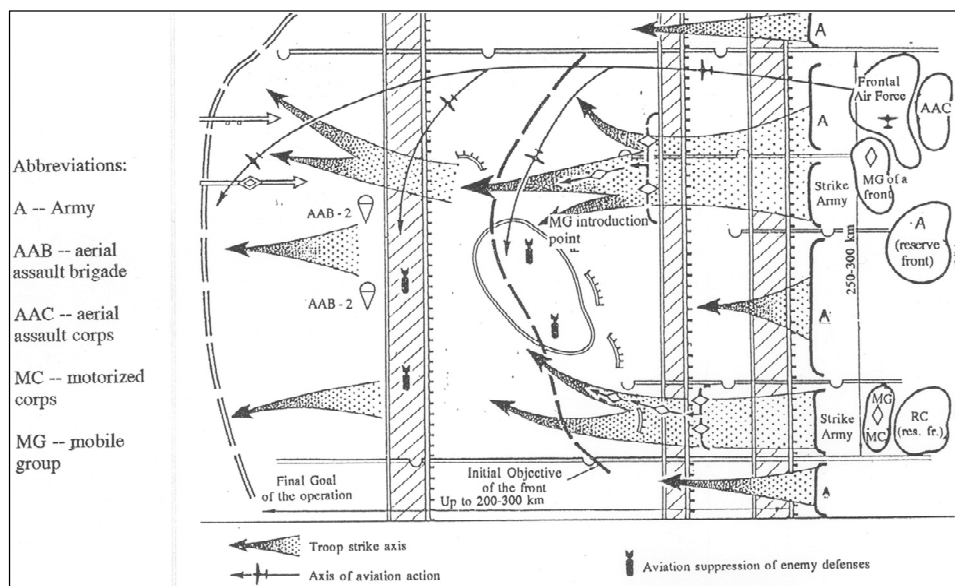
**Figure 106: 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front concentration of force prior to the East Prussian Operation of January 1945.**  
(Glantz, Soviet Military Deception, 1989, p.513.)

These massive, localised tactical concentrations, within 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's overall frontage of over 200 kilometres, reflected Rokossovskiy's operational concept. It is clear that the desire to create massive localised tactical concentrations of force within a broad front was a pronounced characteristic of Rokossovskiy's operational style. It was also present in as Operation Uranus, at

Stalingrad, where 65<sup>th</sup> Army deployed on a front of eighty kilometres but with a breakthrough sector of only six kilometres.<sup>129</sup> In this sense, Rokossovskiy's operational art had much in common with Brusilov, but also with the orthodox practices of the Red Army. A similar pattern would repeat itself with Rokossovskiy's use of holding and shock forces, a concept endorsed by the Red Army, but also central to Brusilov's method of operation.

### **The Use of Holding and Shock Forces**

In Soviet inter-war thinking, at least in theory, all formations within a broad front deployment were divided into holding and shock forces, with different but complimentary tasks, designed to achieve operational success. The idea of holding and strike forces was central to Triandafillov's thinking and that of many other Soviet theorists.<sup>130</sup> Once again, the origins of a Soviet concept lay in the Tsarist era, particularly, the Brusilov Offensive. In 1916, Brusilov attacked on a strategic width of front in order to achieve tactical success. If all four armies in Brusilov's South-Western Front were of *equal* status, the introduction of holding and strike forces, by the Red Army, was an important doctrinal innovation. However, if Brusilov's 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Armies constituted the *main* effort, with 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Armies in *supporting* roles,<sup>131</sup> there is a clear link between 1916, the inter-war years, the Great Patriotic War and Rokossovskiy's style of operations.



**Figure 107: Holding and strike forces concept in a *Front* operation.**  
(Soviet Military Encyclopedia, Abridged English Version, Vol. 2, 1993, p.373.)

These developments constitute an important point in Soviet military thinking because

“probably the turning point between ‘broad front’ and ‘deep battle’ came when the need to reinforce the effort on the main axes led to a deliberate thinning out of the troops on other sectors until, diversions apart, they came to assume a holding role rather than an offensive one. This conceptual change is perhaps the selection of main axes *in advance* rather than in response to the course of the battle.”<sup>132</sup>

This difference in status was designed to facilitate the rapid acquisition of depth. The strike army was to acquire depth, while the holding army fulfilled the function of breadth, in order to fix and stretch the enemy defence, so as to enhance the strike army’s chances of success. The aim was to make breadth of attack and depth of attack, simultaneously compatible, through the interaction of strike and holding forces.<sup>133</sup> All formations were part of one operational whole, but the strike army was clearly more important than the holding force. Therefore, “a holding group was designated for operations on a secondary sector.....it was assigned the mission of pinning down the enemy by dynamic action and by preventing him regrouping his forces for operations against the shock group”<sup>134</sup> whereas “the striking group in offensive battle is designated for action in the main direction.”<sup>135</sup> Basically, the objective of a holding force was defined purely by its contribution to the strike army’s success, not its own. In a similar way, during the Great Patriotic War, the success of a standard combined arms army was defined, not by its own achievements, but in its ability to create a gap for a mobile group to pass through and conduct deep operations.

These principles retained their relevance at the operational level during the war but significant changes occurred at the tactical level. The *Infantry Combat Regulations of 1942-1945* argued,

“the concepts of striking groups and holding groups in the composition of combat formations, as expressed in previous combat regulations, were conducive to inactivity of the holding group in battle.....the present

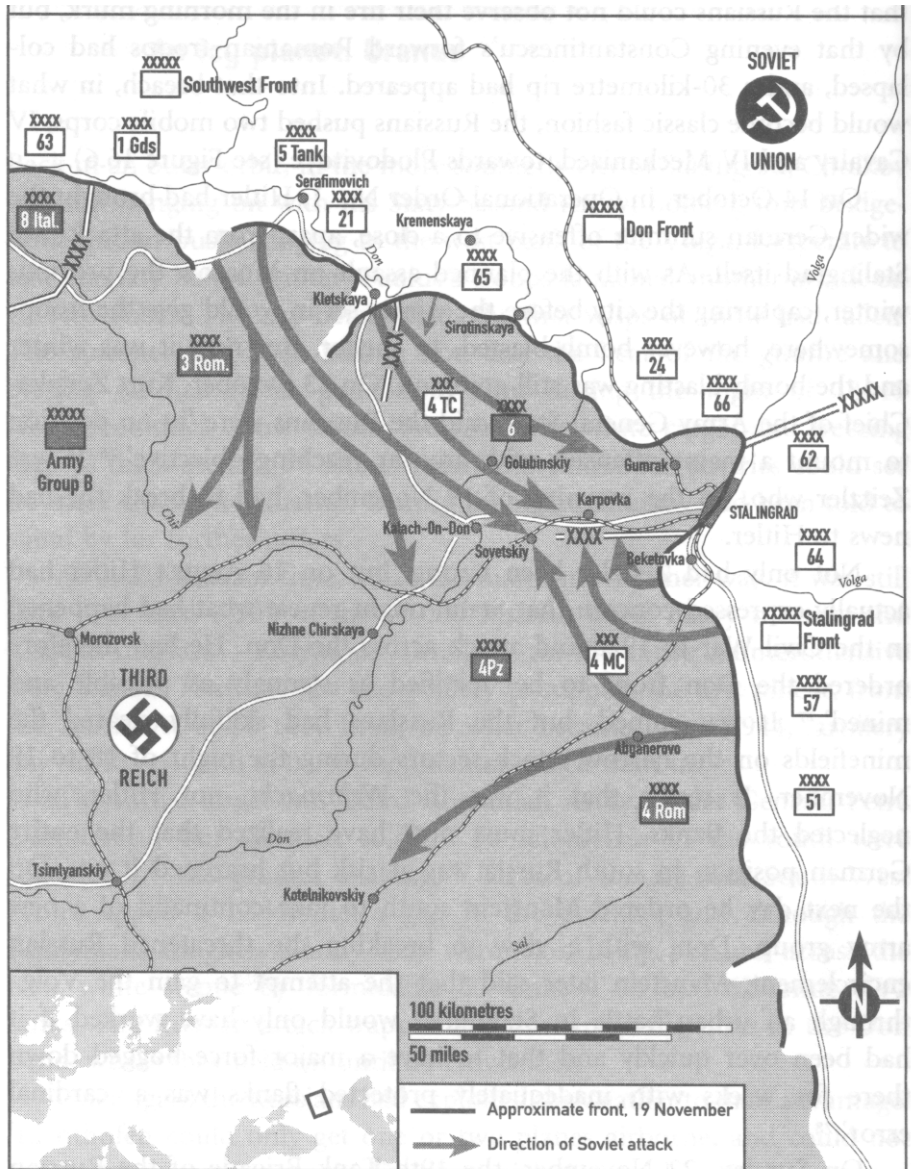
infantry combat regulations abolish the distinction of combat order into striking and holding groups.”<sup>136</sup>

Tactical commanders were to ensure the maximum use of troops and firepower in the front line. At the tactical level, the enemy was to be fixed by a combination of breadth and firepower. This replaced the universal idea of holding and strike groups. Equally, in pursuit of firepower at the expense of depth, the *Infantry Combat Regulations of 1942-45* abolished “echeloned deployment in depth of combat order in the platoon, company, battalion, regiment and division.”<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of holding and shock forces remained relevant at the corps, army and front level. Certainly, the operational level concept of holding and shock forces was a theme of Rokossovskiy’s operating art.

The question of holding and strike forces had substantial implications for the conduct of operational art. If all Soviet forces in a *front* were equal, then operational command would simply have been a matter of overseeing the deployment of a huge mass, before launching one massive rolling offensive. However, Rokossovskiy always sought to integrate holding and strike forces into an operational plan, before combining their actions during an operation. This required a great deal of creative thought to foresee and control the process of interaction between holding and striking forces, in a way that worked towards the operational objective. It was not just a question of manpower, firepower and repeated frontal encounters.

The Don Front’s contribution to the Stalingrad encirclement, Operation Uranus, in November 1942, was dominated by the idea of holding and striking forces. The Don Front’s operational task was to fix units north of Stalingrad, to ensure they did not disrupt South-Western Front’s main blow,<sup>138</sup> against weak Romanian forces.<sup>139</sup> It was an important operational mission because a German counter-attack against South-Western Front’s left flank, as it engaged the Romanians, could have seriously compromised Operation Uranus. Yet, Don Front’s holding

role evidently placed it in a subservient role to South-Western Front.<sup>140</sup> This was entirely in line with Soviet theory, but of little consolation to Rokossovskiy.<sup>141</sup>



**Figure 108: Operation Uranus: 19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November 1942**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.534.)

The pattern of holding and strike forces was repeated within the Don Front. On the right-wing of the Don Front, its strike force, 65<sup>th</sup> Army,<sup>142</sup> was to support South-Western Front's 21<sup>st</sup> Army, while Don Front's two other armies, 24<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Army played a holding role<sup>143</sup> within the Don Front, designed to mirror the

overall operational holding role of the Don Front.<sup>144</sup> This pattern of holding and strike forces, allocated separate but complementary roles, was an enduring, if orthodox theme, in Rokossovskiy's operational art. In Operation Kol'tso, of January 1943, 65<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Army took on the main strike role with active support from 24<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>145</sup> The Don Front's armies on the northern, southern and eastern perimeter of the pocket

“were to attack on their respective sectors with limited objectives, the aim being to pin down as many enemy forces as possible and deny him any opportunity of manoeuvring. These armies had to rely entirely on their own resources.”<sup>146</sup>

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy battle report on the opening day of Operation Kutuzov, made it clear that 48<sup>th</sup> Army played the holding role, while 13<sup>th</sup> Army struck the main blow.<sup>147</sup> In the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation of November 1943, Rokossovskiy used 11<sup>th</sup>, 63<sup>rd</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Armies as holding forces, with 65<sup>th</sup> Army in the striking role. Similarly, Rokossovskiy explicitly acknowledged that in the early stages of the East Prussian Operation in January 1945, the task of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Army “was to pin down enemy forces and prevent them from being transferred to the main line of advance.”<sup>148</sup>

In summary, the use of holding and strike forces was a central feature of Rokossovskiy's operational style. In this sense, Rokossovskiy was an orthodox Soviet commander. However, in another sense, Rokossovskiy's use of holding and shock forces was notable for its creativity and brilliant harmonisation in the actual conduct of operations. Officially, all Soviet commanders incorporated the idea of holding and strike forces into their conduct of operations. However, few understood as well as Rokossovskiy the questions of timing that determined whether holding and strike forces genuinely interacted, or just happened to fight alongside each other. At the conceptual level, this required creative imagination and was critical in distinguishing between commanders who simply threw a mass at the enemy, on an operational scale, and those like Rokossovskiy who had a genuine understanding of operational simultaneity.

### **Simultaneous General Assault: Operational Simultaneity**

In the words of Marshal M.V. Zakharov<sup>149</sup> Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Army,

“the theory of the deep offensive operation proposed a method of conducting combat operations in which shock, holding, and other groups, and tactically disconnected echelons for penetration and development of the penetration, were united along the front and in depth, on the ground and in the air, into a single shock mechanism providing purposeful action against the entire enemy operational grouping until his complete defeat.”<sup>150</sup>



**Figure 109: M.V. Zakharov**  
(commons.wikipedia.org)

It was called operational simultaneity.<sup>151</sup> A Soviet offensive was launched simultaneously in the air, on the ground, in breadth and depth. The simultaneous nature of the assault was designed to undermine the enemy commander's ability to discern the main effort. By disguising the main effort, the Soviet offensive undermined the enemy's ability to deploy reserves effectively. Equally, by attacking across the entire front, a combination of holding and strike forces fixed the enemy in place and undermined his ability to react in a flexible manner by re-deploying troops to more threatened sectors.<sup>152</sup> This concept underpinned the Red Army's sustained commitment to the idea of a simultaneous assault on a broad front. Thus, the Red Army's commitment to a simultaneous general offensive was not a sign of the Red Army's shortcomings or a penchant for the broad front offensive as an end in itself.

The origins of operational simultaneity lay with Brusilov. In June 1916, four Russian armies attacked simultaneously, but simultaneity only existed in breadth, not depth. It was the Red Army, not the Tsarist Army that introduced the idea of a simultaneous attack in depth as well as breadth. It was a key aspect of Soviet inter-war thinking and central to deep battle. The notion of operational



simultaneity found its clearest expression in the idea of the airborne *desant*. The *Polevoy Ustav* of 1936 argued, “parachute desants are an effective means of disorganising the direction and work of the enemy’s rear.”<sup>153</sup> The aim was for airborne forces to act as a catalyst of operational shock and disrupt the enemy’s capacity to organise a counter-attack. In practice this consistent theme in Soviet inter-war thinking, proved utterly disastrous in practice and after November 1943, the role of airborne forces was increasingly taken up by airpower.

Operational simultaneity in breadth *and* depth was a very ambitious concept but its literal expression was difficult to achieve. In practice, during World War Two, operational simultaneity expressed itself in two ways. An operation began with a simultaneous assault across the front, followed by the synchronisation of forces to achieve operational objectives. The colossal scale of Rokossovskiy’s operational commands, the different speeds and capabilities of artillery, infantry, armour and airpower meant pure operational simultaneity was more or less impossible to achieve and sustain throughout an operation. Nevertheless, Rokossovskiy’s style of operations suggests that the conceptual idea of a simultaneous general offensive was central to his thinking in deep battle. At the start of Operation Kol’tso, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943, “the whole perimeter of investment rose simultaneously to the attack.”<sup>154</sup>

Rokossovskiy interpreted the concept of operational simultaneity and deep operations in a manner that ensured all forces under his command acted in a way that supported the achievement of the operational objective. Rokossovskiy’s interpretation of operational simultaneity was guided by the need to link all combat activity to the needs of the wider operational plan. It is perhaps better understood as operational synchronisation. Isserson believed that “if a tactical effort does not develop into an operational achievement, it becomes, in essence, pointless. A tactical effort is only a step toward achieving an aim; it can never be an end in itself.”<sup>155</sup> Rokossovskiy’s approach was in keeping with this operational perspective. A simultaneous general assault in tactical depth and operational breadth, across the front, was simply a means to an end, designed to

maximise the chances of a rapid penetration of the enemy's tactical defences. This rapid penetration was to be achieved by the localised tactical annihilation of enemy forces.

### **Localised Tactical Annihilation and the Conduct of Deep Battle**

Rokossovskiy considered annihilation as a means to an end, not an end in itself. He used *selective*, localised tactical annihilation. In particular, Rokossovskiy understood that localised tactical annihilation of the enemy in deep battle was the key event in any Soviet operation. All that went before it: broad front deployment, creation of an operational plan, *maskirovka*, massive localised concentrations of force, the designation of holding and striking force, was done to maximise the tactical annihilation of enemy forces, in order to create a breakthrough.

Rokossovskiy's thinking on localised tactical annihilation was absolutely dominated by speed. A quick breakthrough that both annihilated and stunned the enemy was the ideal foundation for a deep operation designed to erupt into the enemy's operational rear, denying him the time to recover. This is why Rokossovskiy placed so much emphasis upon creative thought and time for meticulous preparation. Rokossovskiy seems to have been acutely aware that a failure to achieve the rapid, localised tactical annihilation of the enemy often condemned an operation to grinding attrition and, at worst, a positional stalemate.

Rokossovskiy's attitude to localised tactical annihilation reveals a great deal about the essence of his operational style. He was not interested in the gradual attrition and annihilation of the enemy as an end in itself. It was not Rokossovskiy's style to wear down the enemy or grind out a breakthrough. On the contrary, he was interested in speed and the infliction of physical and psychological shock upon the enemy. Rokossovskiy viewed attrition and annihilation as a means to an end and placed considerable emphasis upon the *rapid* localised tactical annihilation of the enemy. Rokossovskiy was patient in the preparation of operations and considered meticulous planning a logical part of creating the conditions for a rapid

breakthrough. Indeed, the whole pattern of patient preparation and rapid breakthrough followed by lightning deep operations, a pattern that dominated Rokossovskiy's style, was related to his appreciation of time in the conduct of operations, particularly its physical and psychological implications for both attacker and defender. Rokossovskiy wanted to disrupt, dislocate and shatter the moral and physical cohesion of the enemy. This was dependant on a rapid breakthrough. The historical evidence suggests Rokossovskiy positively disliked protracted breakthrough operations and acted quickly, usually after approximately forty-eight hours, to prevent operations stagnating into an attritional morass.

In January 1943, during Operation Kol'tso, Rokossovskiy clearly wanted a quick breakthrough, followed by a rapid deep operation designed to split the German pocket in two. However, as Kol'tso began, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943, progress was slow. The 65<sup>th</sup> Army faced fierce resistance and made slow progress, while 21<sup>st</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Armies all failed to pierce the German front.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, "the fighting began to drag and our troops literally had to gnaw through the enemy defences."<sup>157</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1943, just forty-eight hours into the operation, Rokossovskiy revised his operational plan and "by shifting our efforts to the 21<sup>st</sup> Army zone, we aimed at breaking up the enemy's defences as quickly as possible."<sup>158</sup> Rokossovskiy was not prepared to allow Operation Kol'tso to degenerate into a protracted slugging match.<sup>159</sup> It was imperative to inject speed and momentum in order to exploit Sixth German Army's lack of mobility and stamina, hence Rokossovskiy's rejection of any operational pause on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1943. Operation Kol'tso reveals, at a relatively early stage of the war that Rokossovskiy's was committed to rapid tactical annihilation as a platform for deep operations designed to shatter the moral and physical cohesion of the German troops.

Operation Kutuzov of July 1943, on the northern face of the Kursk salient, did not develop in accordance with Rokossovskiy's consistent preference for rapid tactical annihilation and intense dislike of grinding attrition. A combination of Soviet mistakes, deep German defences and reserves, ensured that "instead of a

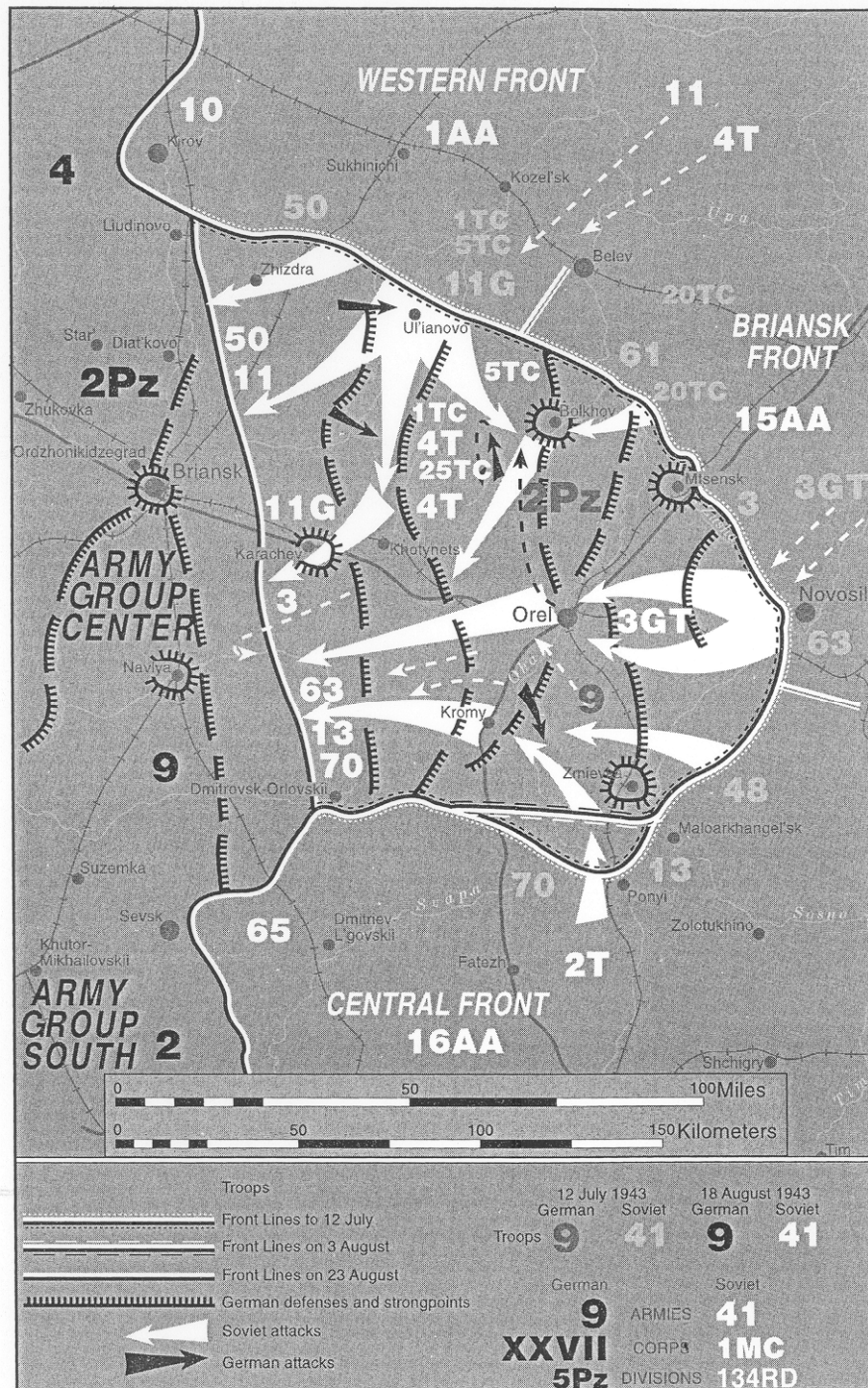
swift thrust the offensive deteriorated into protracted fighting.”<sup>160</sup> Rokossovskiy repeatedly re-grouped his forces and switched direction in an attempt to create a breakthrough and a more fluid operational environment. These efforts were not successful. Orel was liberated on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1943, but it was the closest Rokossovskiy experienced to a pyrrhic victory.

By 18<sup>th</sup> July 1943, after seventy-two hours of fierce fighting the Central Front had regained the ground it lost during the defensive phase of the Kursk Operation.<sup>161</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy ordered his forces to prepare for a new offensive, beginning on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1943. The 48<sup>th</sup> Army was to play the holding role, while 13<sup>th</sup> Army, 70<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army attacked simultaneously, with support from 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army. The operational objective was to cross the River Oka, near Kromy, south of Orel.<sup>162</sup> However, in his midnight report on the Kromy Operation of 19<sup>th</sup> July, Rokossovskiy informed *Stavka* that 13<sup>th</sup> Army had met stubborn resistance and despite three attacks, had been unable to secure a rapid breakthrough.<sup>163</sup>

The 70<sup>th</sup> Army, attacking towards Kromy, initially had more success but then faced stiff resistance and failed to rupture the German line. The 13<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Army had both confronted fierce German resistance followed by a fighting withdrawal to new defensive positions in the afternoon. These prepared positions gave the Germans the platform to launch repeated counter-attacks supported by armour and airpower.<sup>164</sup> This became a regular pattern of events over the next three weeks as Rokossovskiy’s Central Front struggled against German forces in deep, prepared defences supported by armour and airpower.

On 20<sup>th</sup> July 1943, the Central Front attacked again. It made little progress. After approximately forty-eight hours and two major assaults without a breakthrough, at 21.15 hours on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy ordered a halt. Rokossovskiy ordered the shattered 13<sup>th</sup> Army, which had been in continuous action since 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943, to withdraw from the line for twenty-four hours and rebuild the battle spirit of the army.<sup>165</sup> In order to avoid a grinding positional and attritional

advance Rokossovskiy granted his units a twenty-four hour pause in which to re-organise and switch the focus of his attack.



**Figure 110: Operation Kutuzov**  
(Glantz and House, *The Battle of Kursk*, 1999, p.231.)

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1943, at 22.00 hours, Rokossovskiy ordered a new assault to begin at 10.00 on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1943. The 70<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army were to form a shock group with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank's Army's entire armoured force ordered to attack simultaneously.<sup>166</sup> Rokossovskiy's willingness to dispense with normal operational procedure indicates the importance he placed on a quick breakthrough. It also indicates his frustration. The 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1943 attack was more successful and in the evening Rokossovskiy issued ambitious instructions for the pursuit of the enemy. The Central Front's forces were to create forward detachments of infantry, tanks and sappers. Rokossovskiy's desire to break the attritional stalemate shone through in his specific orders that units were to avoid battle, bypass German formations and engage in parallel pursuit with liberated villages to be left to infantry forces. Above all, the enemy was to be denied the opportunity to establish himself in new defensive positions or to reinforce those areas he wished to hold.<sup>167</sup>

However, Rokossovskiy's hopes of creating a fluid combat environment dominated by rapid manoeuvre and deep operations were frustrated. German troops regained control and stemmed the Central Front's advance. However, rather than bash away, Rokossovskiy paused and re-organised to change the pattern of attack and create a quick breakthrough. On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy's directive, issued in the early hours, ordered 70<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army to attack, but, this time 70<sup>th</sup> Army was to fight an orthodox tactical deep battle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was to slice through the enemy and strike deep towards Kromy on the River Oka and cut off the German retreat.<sup>168</sup> The attack failed.

As was Rokossovskiy's habit throughout the war, he curtailed the attack after forty-eight hours, issuing orders at 00.30 on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1943, for a new attack by 70<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army. This time Rokossovskiy tried to create a rapid breakthrough by amassing overwhelming firepower. To support the committal of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, Rokossovskiy ordered the entire artillery resources of 55<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Corps, 4<sup>th</sup> Artillery Corps and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army to be

used.<sup>169</sup> In summary, once again, Rokossovskiy tried to create a solution rather than settle for grinding attrition. On 27<sup>th</sup> July 1943, after receiving 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Army from the Bryansk Front, Rokossovskiy ordered the new assault. It was to commence on the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> July 1943, force the Oka and by-pass the German defences in Kromy. The 48<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Army were to break the enemy front with the support of 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army.<sup>170</sup> However, yet again the attack failed and after approximately forty-eight hours, on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy suspended the assault. Indeed, it was not until 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943, after nineteen days that Rokossovskiy's Central Front forced the Oka and fought its way into Kromy.<sup>171</sup>

In his attitude to localised tactical battles of annihilation, Rokossovskiy was clearly influenced by his appreciation of time, a central theme of his operational style. Naturally, this influenced Rokossovskiy's attitude towards localised tactical annihilation because a prolonged, attritional deep battle was incompatible with Rokossovskiy's operational style. It is clear that the operations of 18<sup>th</sup> July-6<sup>th</sup> August 1943 did not reflect Rokossovskiy's intentions or his natural inclinations as an operational commander. The relentless timetable of progress demanded by Stalin and *Stavka* in the wake of Kursk ensured the Kromy Operation, the Central Front's contribution to Operation Kutuzov, was launched by tired, shattered units with inadequate preparations. As a result instead of rapid localised annihilation followed by deep operational manoeuvre designed to split the enemy and shatter his operational cohesion, Rokossovskiy reluctantly found himself dragged into a protracted positional and attritional contest.

The German positions, at least a year old, were formidable. The defences were deep with at least three main defence lines, supplemented by numerous strongpoints and tactical positions, manned by the experienced, well led troops of Ninth German Army, with significant Luftwaffe support. The Ninth German Army was tired after Kursk, but the strength of the German defences in the Kromy region, on the Oka, helped to offset these losses. The Kromy Operation also demonstrated the residual tactical prowess of German troops capable of

holding defensive positions before engaging in organised tactical withdrawals, punctuated by rapid counter-attacks supported by armour and airpower. The German positions in the Kromy region would have been a formidable proposition for a refreshed, full strength Central Front that had been given adequate time to prepare. The tired Central Front struggled, as in relative terms did Rokossovskiy.

In summary, Rokossovskiy had a problematic stop-start operation imposed on him, an operation at odds with his natural style. There was no rapid, localised tactical annihilation, no clean break followed by deep operational manoeuvre. However, the Kromy Operation also demonstrates Rokossovskiy was not prepared to simply grind out attritional operational victories by dint of firepower and manpower. The Central Front did advance, it did achieve its objective, it did suffer heavy losses, but the historical record indicates that in the face of formidable German positions and with exhausted troops Rokossovskiy relentlessly tried new ideas to break the deadlock.

Similarly, in January 1945, after forty-eight hours fighting in the East Prussian Operation, Rokossovskiy intervened decisively in order to create a rapid breakthrough.<sup>172</sup> As 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army and 48<sup>th</sup> Army struggled to create a rapid breach, Rokossovskiy took the unusual step of introducing 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps into the tactical deep battle. It ruptured the German line and 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army exploded into the German rear, utterly transforming the East Prussian Operation from one of static attrition to operational manoeuvre.

Indeed, throughout the war Rokossovskiy seems to have operated an informal rule: if an attack had not achieved a rapid breakthrough within forty-eight hours, then either a deep operation force, against standard Soviet doctrinal practice, was employed to crack a creaking defence, or attacks were halted. This pattern manifested itself in Operation Ko'ltso in January 1943, the Kromy Operation of July-August 1943, the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation of August 1943, the Belorussian Operation of June-July 1944, the East Prussian Operation of January 1945 and the Oder-Elbe Operation of April 1945. During all these operations the



point of attack was switched, forces regrouped, tactical methods changed and forces temporarily rested. In summary, it is clear that Rokossovskiy preferred a quick, localised tactical battle of annihilation followed by a rapid transition to deep operations. Rokossovskiy's flexible and imaginative command during the Kromy Operation and above all his refusal to engage in deliberate, protracted operational scale attrition throughout the war forms a sharp contrast to the actions of Zhukov in November 1942 during Operation Mars, Sokolovskiy on the Western Front in Belorussian during 1943-44 and Malinovskiy at Budapest between October 1944-January 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> Major General L. Vetoshnikov, *Operational Art And Its Place In Soviet Military Art*, in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant-General V. Zlobin, cited in Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 224 comments that after one week of Operation Bagration, three German armies had lost over 130,000 men killed, 66,000 taken prisoner (almost half of them, 32,000, falling to Rokossovskii), 900 tanks and thousands of motor vehicles.

<sup>7</sup> P.I. Batov, *V Pokhadakh i Boyakh*, (In Campaigns and Battles), (Moscow, 1966), p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> A.S. Galitsan, *Chernigovsko-Pripyatskaya Operatsiya*, *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 8, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 454-456.

<sup>9</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 121.

<sup>10</sup> Colonel General M.I. Bezhkhrebtyy, 'The Preparation of Successive Offensive Operations: History and Contemporaneity, in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art, 1927-1991*, Vol. II, op. cit. p. 237.

<sup>11</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 219-222 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 164-167. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00140 Verkhovnomu Komanduyushchemu Ob Obstanovke. (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front No: 00140 Concerning The Situation) 13<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>12</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 21. l. 46-50 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 201-202. 'Direktiva Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00553/Op Komanduyushchim 65, 2-y Tankovoy i 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiyami Na Nastupleniye.' (Directive Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders of 65, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On The Forthcoming Offensive,) 00.30 Hours, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943.

<sup>13</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 21. l. 39-42 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 203-204. 'Direktiva Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Front No: 00554/Op Komanduyushchemu 60-y Armiyey Na Nastupleniye.' (Directive Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commander Of 60<sup>th</sup> Army On The Forthcoming Offensive) 00.30 Hours, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943.

<sup>14</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16. op. 956. d. 24. l. 5-18 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 311-314. *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 237. op. 2394. d. 1526. l. 33-35 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), 'Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No: 00110/OP' (Operational Directive No: 00110/Op Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944. pp. 329-330.

<sup>15</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 120.

- <sup>16</sup> David M. Glantz, *Zhukov's Greatest Defeat*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999).
- <sup>17</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 109-139. The chapter is called 'Nowhere To Retreat.' See also K. Rokossovskiy, 'Na Volokolamsk Napravelennii,' (On the Volokolamsk Direction), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 11, November 1966, pp. 46-55. See also K. Rokossovskiy, 'Na Severnykh Podstupakh k Stolitsye, (On The Northern Approaches To The Capital), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, pp. 50-61.
- <sup>18</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 213. l. 12 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VVG, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 193.(No.288) K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. , p. 384. Also *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Volume 5, (Moscow, 1963), pp. 113-114.
- <sup>19</sup> Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, (London, 1971), p. 539 notes the comments of Fourth German Army's war diarist who was impressed by the flexibility of the Red Army leadership in East Prussia, namely Rokossovskiy.
- <sup>20</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 330. Also David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, edited and translated, *The Battle For Kursk, The Soviet General Staff Study*, (Frank Cass, 1999), p. 132 emphasises the use of war games in the preparations for the defensive phase of the Kursk Operation.
- <sup>21</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 205.
- <sup>22</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1961), p. 43 makes it very clear Stalin was determined that the German pocket must be annihilated and that his commanders must not lose sight of this.
- <sup>23</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 225.
- <sup>24</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 7.
- <sup>25</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 148.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- <sup>27</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 13.
- <sup>28</sup> See Bernd Wegner, *Germany and The Second World War*, op. cit. pp. 1158-1169.
- <sup>29</sup> G.A. Koltunov and B.V. Solovyev, *Kurskaya Bitva*, (The Battle of Kursk), (Moscow, 1983), pp. 72-92.
- <sup>30</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 167.
- <sup>31</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. pp. 113-115.
- <sup>32</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 289.
- <sup>33</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 241-244 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 169-170 reveals how the Central Front struggled on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komnduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No:00148 Verkhovnomu Komanduyushchemu O Resul'tatakh Pervogo Dnya Kontrastupleniya' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front About The Results Of The First Day Of The Counteroffensive) 24.00 Hours, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943.
- <sup>34</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 168.
- <sup>35</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 289.
- <sup>36</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 56.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- <sup>39</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 11. l. 88 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 195 'Nachal'niku Inzhenernykh Voysk Krasnoy Armii Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Peredache v Sostav Fronta 2-y Sturmovoy Inzhenerno-Saperoy Brigady' ( To The Chief of Red Army Engineer Forces To The Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front About The Transfer Into Your Establishment of 2<sup>nd</sup> Storm Engineer-Sapper Brigade). Order No: 293558, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1944.
- <sup>40</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. pp. 59-61.
- <sup>41</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 237, op. 2400. d. 18. l. 367-388 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 241-244. 'Kharakteristika Oboronitel'nykh Rubezhey Protivnika V Polose 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na 5 Dekabriya 1944 Goda' (Characteristics Of The Enemy Defence Lines In 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's Sector), 5<sup>th</sup> December 1944
- <sup>42</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 237. op. 2394. d. 1088. l. 8-14 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 245-247. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo

- Fronta Na Podgotovku Voysk I Shtabov K Nastupleniyu* (Battle Instructions Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front On The Preparation Of Troops And Staffs For The Offensive), 14<sup>th</sup> December 1944.
- <sup>43</sup> A. Golubev, 'Was Our Military Theory In The 1920's Turned To The Past?' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. p. 62.
- <sup>44</sup> A. Golubev, 'Was Our Military Theory In The 1920's Turned To The Past?' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. II, op. cit. p. 62.
- <sup>45</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 186.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 292.
- <sup>47</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, op. cit. p. 34.
- <sup>48</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad To Berlin*, (Center For Military History, U.S. Army, Washington D.C., 1966), p. 148.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 147.
- <sup>50</sup> See A. Radzievskiy, 'Proryv Oborony v Pervom Perikhode Voyny,' (Breaking Through Defences in the First Period of War), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.3, March 1972, pp. 11-21 citing several examples of how Soviet commanders tried to make breadth of deployment and localised tactical concentration of force compatible including Rokossovskiy as the commander of Group Rokossovskiy in his first attacking operation of the war near Yartsevo, in the Smolensk region, p. 12. See also A. Radzievskiy, 'Proryv Oborony Protivnika Vo Btorom i Tret'em Perikhodakh Boyny,' (Breaking Through The Enemy Defences in the Second and Third Period of the War), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 3, March 1973, pp. 12-22.
- <sup>51</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 129.
- <sup>52</sup> Makmut Gareyev, *Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voyna, 1941-45*, Volume 3, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 10-20 discusses Sokolovskiy's command of Operation Suvorov in October 1943. It liberated Smolensk, but only after a series of bloody assaults. A. Pokrovskiy and V. Istomin, 'Smolenskaya Operatsiya 1943 Gody,' (The Smolensk Operation of 1943), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.10, October 1973, pp. 11-23 provides a detailed narrative of events but does not analyse the operation in the way that Gareyev does.
- <sup>53</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 129.
- <sup>54</sup> Bernd Wegner, *Germany and The Second World War*, op. cit. p. 1168 provides a map from which this calculation is made.
- <sup>55</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War*, (Frank Cass, London, 1989), p. 407 provides a map from which this calculation is made.
- <sup>56</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1963), pp. 104-105 provides a map from which this calculation can be made.
- <sup>57</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 175-177 has a detailed definition of the theory and practice of *maskirovka*.
- <sup>58</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 272.
- <sup>59</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 33.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- <sup>61</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 201.
- <sup>62</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. pp. 21-34.
- <sup>63</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 213.
- <sup>64</sup> V.A. Matsulenko, *Operativnaya Maskirovka Voysk*, (Operational Camouflage of Forces) (Moscow, 1975).
- <sup>65</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>66</sup> Cited in David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Intelligence in War*, (Frank Cass, London, 1990), p. 214.
- <sup>67</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol.8, (Moscow, 1980), pp. 454-456.
- <sup>68</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 317.
- <sup>69</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62, op. 321, d. 21. 1.46-50 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 203-204. 'Direktiva Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00554/Op Komanduyushchemu 60-y Armiyey Na Nastupleniye.' (Directive of The Commander Of The Central Front On The Forthcoming Offensive) 00.30 Hours, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943.
- <sup>70</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002 op. cit. p. 297.
- <sup>71</sup> I. Glebov, 'Manevr Voysk v Chernigovsko-Pripyatskoy i Gomel-Rechitskoy Nastupleniykh Operatsiyakh,' (The Manoeuvre of Forces in the Chernigov-Pripyat and Gomel-Rechitsa Offensive Operations), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.1, January 1976, pp. 12-18, this p. 14 discusses the difficult fighting at Sevs. Glebov was 65<sup>th</sup> Army's Chief of Staff.
- <sup>72</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 3. (Moscow, 1961), p. 308.

- <sup>73</sup> Ibid., Also A. Shapirov, *Chernyakhovskiy*, op. cit. p. 150. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 298. This involved moving the entire 13<sup>th</sup> Army from the north to the southern wing of the offensive.
- <sup>74</sup> P. Batov, 'Forsirovaniye Rek Obshchevoyskovoy Armiyey', (River Crossing With Combined Arms Armies), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.1, January 1978, pp. 20-27, this p. 22 relates the 65<sup>th</sup> Army's crossing of the Desna on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1943.
- <sup>75</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 298.
- <sup>76</sup> V. Frolov, 'Udar na Chernigov', (Shock at Chernigov), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.9, September 1975, pp. 85-91 has an extremely detailed narrative of 13<sup>th</sup> Army's crossing of the Dnepr at Chernigov.
- <sup>77</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol.8, (Moscow, 1980), p. 456.
- <sup>78</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 297.
- <sup>79</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 195.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 309.
- <sup>81</sup> Batov, op. cit. pp. 333-336 relates how Rokossovskiy explained his plan.
- <sup>82</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 309-310.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 310
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 311.
- <sup>86</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 196.
- <sup>87</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1961), pp. 377-379.
- <sup>88</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 196.
- <sup>89</sup> V. Chernyaev, 'Operativnaya Maskirovka Voysk v Belorusskoy Operatsii', (The Operational Camouflage of Forces in the Belorussian Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.8, August 1974, pp. 3-10) has a detailed account of the deception programme.
- <sup>90</sup> *Tsentrallyy Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 11. l. 15 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), pp. 185-186. 'Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Frontov O Meropriyatiyakh Po Maskirovke Sistemy Oborony i Podgotovke k Nastupatel'nyim Deystviyam' (To Front Commanders Concerning Methods and Systems of Maskirovka For Defence And In Preparation For Offensive Actions) Order No. 202947, 7th May 1944.
- <sup>91</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 368.
- <sup>92</sup> *Tsentrallyy Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 11. l. 344 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 219. 'Komanduyushchim 28-ya Armiyey i Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Peredache Armii v Sostav Fronta' (To the Commanders of 28<sup>th</sup> Army and 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front Concerning The Transfer of the Army To The Establishment of the Front). Order No: 293762, 15.45 Hours, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1944.
- <sup>93</sup> *Tsentrallyy Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 11. l. 372,373 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 224. 'Komanduyushchim Voyskami 2,3, i 4-go Ukrainskikh, 2-go Pribaltiyskogo Frontov, Bronetankovymi i Mekhanizirovannymi Voyskami i Artilleriyey Krasnoy Armii O Maskirovke Perevozmoy Tekhniki' (To The Commanders of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baltic Fronts, Armoured and Mechanised Forces of the Red Army Concerning Transportation Maskirovka Techniques). Order No: 293798, 24.00 Hours, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1944.
- <sup>94</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002 op. cit. p. 330.
- <sup>95</sup> Major-General V.A. Matsulenko, 'The Operational Camouflage/Deception of Forces, (USSR Ministry of Defence Publishing House, 1975), translation by Soviet Studies Research Centre, pp. 143-148.
- <sup>96</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 316.
- <sup>97</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front*, (Penguin, 1975), pp. 237-239.
- <sup>98</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 63.
- <sup>99</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 126.
- <sup>100</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, Translated and Edited, *The Battle For Kursk, The Soviet General Staff Study*, (Frank Cass, 1999), p. 11.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 15.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>103</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, op. cit. p. 301.
- <sup>104</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *The Battle For Kursk 1943, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 107.
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

- <sup>106</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>107</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 269.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 287.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>110</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 109.
- <sup>111</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 287-288.
- <sup>112</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), p. 51. John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. pp. 235-240.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>114</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 504.
- <sup>115</sup> B. Petrov, 'O Sozdaniy Udarnoi Gruppировки Voisk V Lyubliński-Breskoi Nastupatel'noi Operatsii,' (About the Creation of Shock Groups In The Lublin-Brest Operation), *Voyenno-Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No.3, (March 1978), p. 83.
- <sup>116</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 405.
- <sup>117</sup> *Tsentrál'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16. op. 956. d. 29. l. 5-18 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 311-314. "Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No:00110/OP<sup>2</sup> (Operational Directive No: 00110/Op<sup>2</sup> Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944.
- <sup>118</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 370.
- <sup>119</sup> *Tsentrál'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16. op. 956. d. 29. l. 5-18 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 311-314. "Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No:00110/OP<sup>2</sup> (Operational Directive No: 00110/Op<sup>2</sup> Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944.
- <sup>120</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 505.
- <sup>121</sup> *Tsentrál'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16. op. 956. d. 29. l. 5-18 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 311-314. "Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No:00110/OP<sup>2</sup> (Operational Directive No: 00110/Op<sup>2</sup> Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944.
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>123</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 513.
- <sup>124</sup> *Tsentrál'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16. op. 956. d. 29. l. 5-18 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 311-314. "Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No:00110/OP<sup>2</sup> (Operational Directive No: 00110/Op<sup>2</sup> Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944.
- <sup>125</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1963), p. 100 makes it clear that the left-wing of 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army was to support 65<sup>th</sup> Army and co-operate in establishing a breakthrough.
- <sup>126</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1963), p. 100.
- <sup>127</sup> *Tsentrál'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16. op. 956. d. 29. l. 5-18, in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 311-314. "Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No:00110/OP<sup>2</sup> (Operational Directive No: 00110/Op<sup>2</sup> Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>129</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobeda Na Volge*, op. cit. p. 244.
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>131</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 98.
- <sup>132</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, op. cit. p. 37.
- <sup>133</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 174.
- <sup>134</sup> Colonel V.I. Ul'yanov, *The Development of the Theory of Deep Offensive Battle in the Prewar Years*, in Harold S. Orestein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. p. 292.
- <sup>135</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 134 citing the 1936 Field Regulations.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 136.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>138</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobeda na Volge*, op. cit. pp. 220-221 reports that the decision to inflict the main blow on the Romanians was taken in the middle of October 1942.
- <sup>139</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1961), p. 41. *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1976), p. 46.

- <sup>140</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede na Volge*, op. cit. p. 224.
- <sup>141</sup> The decision to give Vatutin's South-Western Front the main role at Stalingrad was not made until the end of October 1942. On 30th October the Don Front's 63rd and 21st Armies went to the South-Western Front, leaving the Don Front with only 65<sup>th</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Armies. See 'Izvyecheniye Iz Operativnoy Svodka No:303 General'nogo Shtab Krasnoy Armii. 08.00 Hours, 30th October 1942. (Excerpt From The Red Army General Staff Operational Summary No:303, 08.00, 30th October 1943) cited in V.A. Zhilin, *Stalingradskaya Bitva, Khronika, Fakty, Lyudi, Kniga Pervaya*, (The Battle of Stalingrad, Chronicles, Facts, People, Book One), Moscow, Olma Press, 2002), pp. 818-820.
- <sup>142</sup> I. Glebov, 'V Kontrastupleniye v Stalingrade', (In the Counteroffensive at Stalingrad), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No. 12, December 1974, pp. 41-53 gives a solid account of 65<sup>th</sup> Army's role. See also K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede na Volge*, op. cit. pp. 285-287.
- <sup>143</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede na Volge*, op. cit. p. 245.
- <sup>144</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Stalingrad*, op. cit. p. 451.
- <sup>145</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1961), pp. 56-57.
- <sup>146</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 225.
- <sup>147</sup> *Tsentr'al'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62, op. 321. d. 104. l. 241-244 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 169-170. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentr'al'nogo Fronta No: 00148 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Resul'tatakh Pervogo Dyna Kontrastupleniya.' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front About The Results Of The First Day Of The Counteroffensive) 24.00 Hours, 15th July 1943.
- <sup>148</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. , p. 374.
- <sup>149</sup> Richard Woff, *Zakharov*, ed., Harold Shukman in *Stalin's Generals*, (Phoenix, 1993), p. 327-341.
- <sup>150</sup> Marshal M.V. Zakharov, *On The Theory of Deep Operation*, in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, Vol.II, p. 115.
- <sup>151</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. pp. 215-216.
- <sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223 points out that it is difficult to separate synchronisation and simultaneity.
- <sup>153</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 351.
- <sup>154</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002 op. cit. pp. 232-233.
- <sup>155</sup> G. Isserson, 'The Evolution of Operational Art,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 74.
- <sup>156</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede na Volge*, op. cit. p. 447.
- <sup>157</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 233.
- <sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.
- <sup>159</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede Na Volge*, op. cit. p.450.
- <sup>160</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 289.
- <sup>161</sup> *Tsentr'al'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 276-277 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 172. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentr'al'nogo Fronta No:00160 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Khode Nastupatel'noy Operatsii.' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front About The Outcome Of The Offensive Operation) 23.50 Hours, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1943.
- <sup>162</sup> *Tsentr'al'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 201. op. 398. d. 21. l. 315-318 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 170-171. 'Direktiva Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentr'al'nogo Fronta No:00425/Op Komanduyushchim 13,70,2 Tankovoy i 16-y Armiyami Na Nastupleniye.' (Directive Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:00425/Op To The Commanders Of 13,70, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Amies On The Forthcoming Offensive) 15.55 Hours, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1943
- <sup>163</sup> *Tsentr'al'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62, op. 321. d. 104. l. 284-287 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 173-174. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentr'al'nogo Front Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Perekhode V Nastupleniye Na Kromy.' (Battle Report Of The Commander of The Central Front About The Transition To The Offensive On Kromy) 24.00 Hours, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1943.
- <sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>165</sup> *Tsentr'al'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 143. in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 174. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentr'al'nog Fronta No: 00436/Op Komanduyushchemu 13-y Armiyey Na Perekhode k Obornone (Order of the Commander of the Central Front to The Commander of 13<sup>th</sup> Army On The Transition To Defence) 21.15 Hours, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>166</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 33. l. 291 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 175. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Shtaba Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00442/Op Komanduyushchemu 2-y Tankovoy Armiiyey Na Nastupleniye V Napravleniye Krom.' (Battle Instructions Of The Staff Of The Central Front No: 00442/Op To The Commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army In The Attack On The Kromy Direction) 22.00 Hours, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1943.

<sup>167</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 157, 158 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 175. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Shtaba Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00444/Op Komanduyushchim 48, 13 i 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiiyami Na Presledovaniye Protivnika.' (Battle Instructions Of The Staff Of The Central Front No: 00444/Op To The Commanders of 48, 13 and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On The Pursuit Of The Enemy) 10.30 Hours, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1943.

<sup>168</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 201. op. 398. d. 21. l. 319, 320 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 176-177. 'Direktiva Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00453/Op Komanduyushchim 70, 2 Tankovoy i 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiiyami Na Nastupleniye Napravleniyii Krom.' (Directive Of The Commander Of The Central Front No: 00453/Op To The Commanders of 70, 2 Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On The Offensive In The Direction Of Kromy), 00.40 Hours, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>169</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 178, 179 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 177-178. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No :00465/Op Komanduyushchemu 2-y Tankovoy Armiiyey Na Vvod Armii Proryv.' (Order of the Commander of the Central Front To The Commander Of The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army On Introducing The Army Into The Breakthrough) 00.30 Hours, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>170</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 33. l. 51 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 178-179. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00481/Op Komanduyushchim 48, 3 Gvardeyskoy Tankovoy i 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiiyami Na Proryv Obrony Protivnika i Razvitye Nastupleniya Na Nikol'skoye, Maloye Ryzhkovo'. (Order of the Commander of the Central Front No: 00481/Op To The Commanders Of 48, 3 Guards Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On Breaking Through The Enemy Defences And Develpoing The Offensive On Nikolskoye and Maloye Ryzhkovo) 13.40 Hours, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>171</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 105. l. 77-82 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 186-188. 'Boyevoye Donseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00237 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Khode i Itogakh Nastupleniya Na Kromskom Napravleniye.' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front No: 00237 To The Supreme Commander On The Outcome And Results Of The Offensive On The Kromy Direction). 24.00 Hours, 6th August 1943

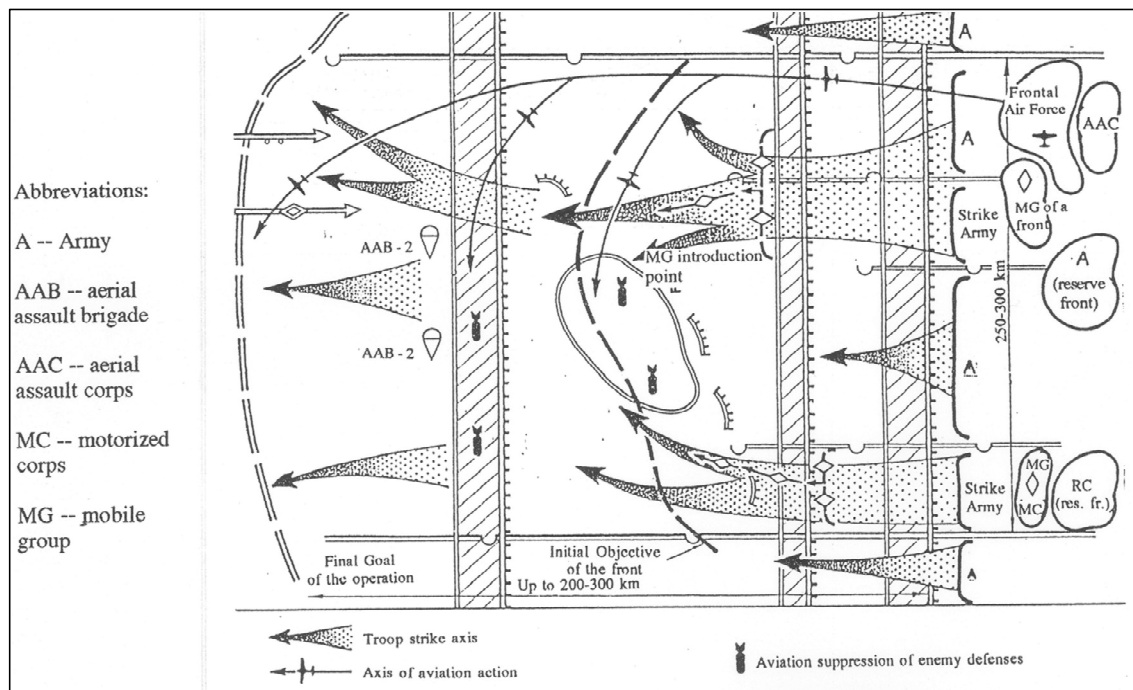
<sup>172</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 381.

## CHAPTER 7:

### FORMS OF OPERATION AND ROKOSSOVSKIY'S OPERATIONAL STYLE

#### The Frontal Blow Operation

The flawed nature of *Polevoy Ustav* 1936 and the Red Army's limited understanding of the actual conduct, if not the theory of deep operations, made October 1942-August 1943 a time of intense experimentation in both deep battle and deep operations. However, three forms of operational art, the frontal blow, the *obkhod* or turning movement and operational encirclement and annihilation dominated the conduct of operations during the Great Patriotic War.



**Figure 111: The concept of the frontal blow as conducted by a Front.**  
(Soviet Military Encyclopaedia, Abridged English Version, Vol. 2, 1993, p.373.)

The frontal blow was designed as a highly sophisticated form of operation that required careful harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre. A frontal blow operation began with an orthodox deep battle phase, marked by a broad front, *maskirovka* and a simultaneous attack in the air and on the ground over the entire operational breadth and tactical depth of the front. It was intended to produce a



rapid breakthrough and rapier like operational manoeuvre in depth. The frontal blow form of operation did not advocate operational scale attrition on a slow moving broad front. However, if confronted by deep defences, adequate reserves and good intelligence, a frontal blow could descend into a grinding attritional advance, like Operation Kutuzov,<sup>1</sup> the antithesis of Rokossovskiy's *modus operandi*.

The historical evidence suggests that Rokossovskiy's preferred style of operations was the frontal blow<sup>2</sup> and that his approach was distinctly reminiscent of Brusilov. In conducting a frontal blow Rokossovskiy's aim was to penetrate the enemy's tactical defences and launch a deep operation, designed to splinter and break up the enemy forces into isolated tactical pieces, before going on to shatter his operational cohesion by targeting the enemy system deep in the rear.<sup>3</sup> The aim was to physically and psychologically unhinge the enemy so that, as in Brusilov's victory of 1916, the enemy "melted away into miserable fragments."<sup>4</sup>

Rokossovskiy was trying to present enemy tactical and operational commanders with a painful moral and physical dilemma. If a German tactical unit, usually a division or corps, confronted by a Soviet holding force won its individual tactical encounter, but neighbouring German units were annihilated by Rokossovskiy's shock forces, then in operational terms it did the Germans little good. In such circumstances, a German tactical commander faced a serious problem: the line was smashed with German units splintered, battered and divided from each other. A deep operation conducted by several mobile groups is underway with Soviet forces in front of you, flanking you and behind you. Communications with higher headquarters are fitful or impossible. There is no guarantee that German operational commanders have the situation in hand, or that reserves are on the way. Nor is there adequate information about the fate, position and actions of neighbouring units or the exact position of the frontline.

In such circumstances a senior German commander needed his tactical units to hold the line in order to create time for organised counter-attacks. In contrast,

especially from autumn 1943, when their positions lacked physical depth and manpower, German tactical units confronted with fighting on, risking annihilation, or abandoning the mission and withdrawing to survive and fight another day, regularly opted to withdraw. This increased Soviet operational momentum and accelerated the physical and psychological collapse of the enemy thereby shattering his physical cohesion.

By 1944, confronted with suicide or survival, German tactical commanders often engaged in fighting withdrawals. Indeed, senior German commanders often conspired with tactical commanders in defiance of Hitler's standing orders to stand and fight. At the very least German formations were forced to abandon their mission. By Soviet standards this was operational shock.<sup>5</sup> It was precisely Rokossovskiy's aim to confront German tactical commanders with these dilemmas and to drive a wedge between the interests of operational and tactical commanders, between the physical survival of a force and the achievement of its mission. It was a dilemma Rokossovskiy managed to impose on the Germans with great regularity in the period September 1943-May 1945.

There were several forms of the frontal blow, many of which were outlined by Timoshenko on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1940. The first form of frontal blow outlined by Timoshenko, in December 1940, involved a single main effort, within a broad front.<sup>6</sup> The main blow was to be delivered on a narrow sector to ensure penetration, before widening the breach by expanding to the flanks to guard against counter-attacks. Massive concentrations of force were designed to guarantee breakthrough and Timoshenko cited the "March penetration in 1918 by three German armies on a front of up to 70 kilometres."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in this form of the frontal blow, Soviet doctrine advocated a single breakthrough but on an operational, rather than tactical scale.

However, the Red Army was aware that a massive, single blow was extremely vulnerable to a counter-concentration. This imposed a tremendous burden of deception and secrecy in preparation for an attack. Yet, naturally, it was difficult

to conceal such a massive concentration<sup>8</sup> and then sustain an offensive into operational depths, while simultaneously expanding an offensive to the flanks. Finally, a single thrust was extremely vulnerable to major counter-attacks against the shoulders of the penetration. A mobile group with severed lines of supply was a liability in need of rescue, not an instrument of deep operations.<sup>9</sup> Timoshenko was conscious of the fact that “countermaneuver by defensive reserves is most simple” and “an attack in a narrow sector, although conducted against the entire depth of the operational defense, involves a very insignificant portion of enemy forces.”<sup>10</sup>

An alternative form of the frontal blow was the dividing strike or cleaving blow. “The pattern of the *drobiaschii udar* (dividing strike) concerned the severance of a certain operational entity from a broader strategic complex.”<sup>11</sup> During the war these operations aimed, for example, to cut the links between German army groups. In Belorussia, during autumn 1943, Rokossovskiy was involved in several operations that threatened to divide German Army Group Centre and South, to the extent that on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1943, Field Marshal von Kluge, the commander of Army Group Centre warned Hitler that he might have to pull back the entire front in order to contain Rokossovskiy’s Loyev Operation.<sup>12</sup> In a similar way, on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1945, during the East Prussian Operation, Rokossovskiy unleashed 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army with orders to reach the Baltic coast and cut off German forces in eastern Prussia, thus dividing them from the German homeland. However, many of the concepts associated with the dividing strike were simply part of a style of operation that Rokossovskiy preferred and incorporated such ideas into offensives against German operational formations.

Rokossovskiy’s true metier, his natural operational style was the form of frontal blow known as the fragmenting strike of *rasskayuscchiy udar*.

“The pattern of *rassekaiuscchi udar* entailed the sundering of the operational system which had already been divided from the parent strategic complex, into compact tactical segments, isolating these tactical segments by encirclement, and bringing about their ensuing destruction.”<sup>13</sup>

In Rokossovskiy's style of operations, the enemy force was to be splintered by two or more deep strikes to operational depth, its operational cohesion shattered and the isolated tactical groups destroyed in small encirclements. In December 1940, Timoshenko argued that this form of frontal blow involved "several mutually coordinated attacks and the formation of separate army penetrations on several operational axes."<sup>14</sup> Timoshenko cited Brusilov's Offensive of 1916 as the prototype of this form of attack. Brusilov's success in June 1916 was marked by two main strikes at the northern and southern end of the front, by Kaledin's 8<sup>th</sup> Army and Lechitskii's 9<sup>th</sup> Army. The 11<sup>th</sup> Army under Sakharov and Shcherbachev's 7<sup>th</sup> Army, "the front's weak central armies were assigned purely secondary objectives."<sup>15</sup>

This was clearly Rokossovskiy's preferred operation, one he aspired to and tried to achieve in 1942-43 but did not have the resources for as shown in Belorussia in autumn 1943. However, in 1944-45, during Operation Bagration, the Lublin-Operation, the East Prussian Operation and the Eastern Pomeranian Operation, Rokossovskiy repeatedly used this form of the frontal blow. It confirms the connection between Rokossovskiy and Brusilov. Rokossovskiy's style of operations had far more in common with Brusilov than the huge operational encirclements advocated by Tukhachevskiy and practised by Zhukov. The broad front, *maskirovka*, localised tactical concentrations, and simultaneous general attack were common to Brusilov and Rokossovskiy, but also many other Soviet commanders. However, in his commitment to creative foresight, meticulous preparation and mutually co-ordinated forces within a frontal blow, designed to fragment the enemy through deep strikes, Rokossovskiy was in many ways Brusilov's successor and the heir to a long Russian military tradition of deep strikes.<sup>16</sup> This was particularly noticeable in Rokossovskiy's emulation, deliberate or otherwise, of Brusilov's notion of two main strikes within a broad front, aided by *maskirovka*. Indeed, during the Great Patriotic War, Rokossovskiy repeatedly challenged the Red Army's doctrinal position of a single powerful blow, in favour of two main blows.

In autumn 1943 Rokossovskiy's aggressive use of active deception in Belorussia ensured that subsidiary strikes had the impact of a second main strike, as seen in the Loyev Operation of October 1943, and in the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation in November 1943. This process culminated in Rokossovskiy's clash with Stalin, *Stavka* and the General Staff over his desire to explicitly utilise two main blows in the initial stages of the Belorussian Operation, a concept that played a critical role in the subsequent success of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's operation. As early as March 1944, Rokossovskiy knew *Stavka* was planning a major operation<sup>17</sup> in Belorussia. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1944, Rokossovskiy presented his operational concept to *Stavka*.<sup>18</sup>

The region's problematic terrain and his experiences in Belorussia since autumn 1943 persuaded Rokossovskiy that 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front must conduct an operation involving two main blows within a broad front, one from Rogachev, in the north, and Parichi in the south. This was not standard Soviet doctrine. In the face of Stalin's preference for one main blow, Rokossovskiy thrice defied him by insisting that the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's operation must contain two main blows if it was to succeed. In the face of Rokossovskiy's insistence, remarkably, Stalin consented.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, in the East Prussian Operation of January 1945, the second attack was altogether more substantial than a simple holding blow. Therefore, a distinct pattern emerged in Rokossovskiy's operations during the war, one that made him both an innovator in terms of the wartime Red Army and an imitator of Brusilov. In fact, the underlying nature of Rokossovskiy's operational style had emerged as early as December 1942.

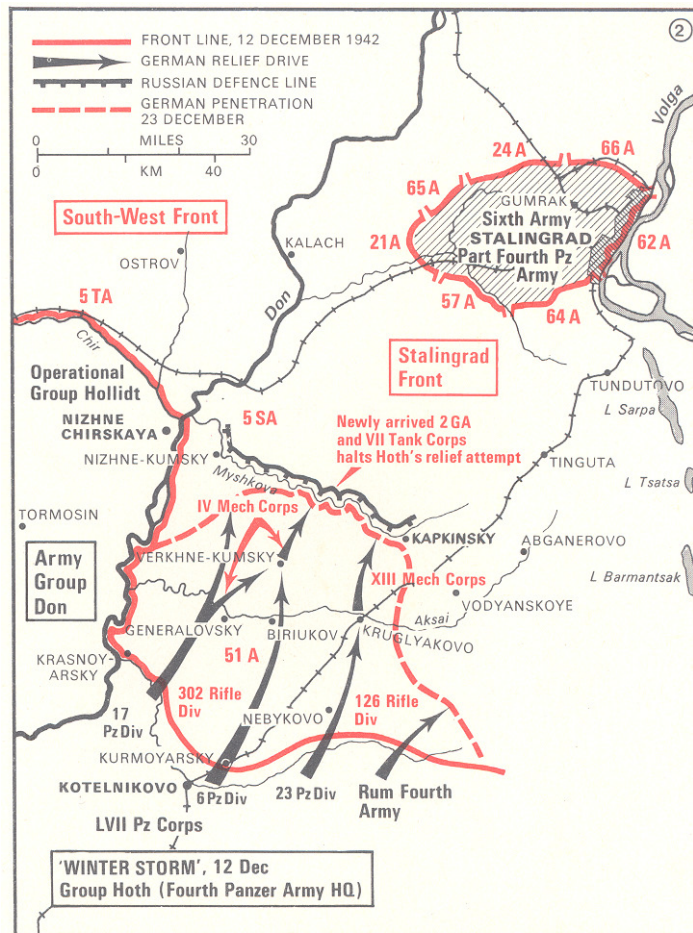
In late November 1942, Rokossovskiy began to plan Operation Kol'tso, his first major offensive operation of the war. It reveals a great deal about his natural inclinations as an operational commander. In Rokossovskiy's original plan "the basic idea of the operation was to split the surrounded group by striking at the centre from two sides and then to mop up the resulting pockets" and "this conception dominated the operation from the beginning to the end."<sup>20</sup> It was to be a rapid breakthrough followed by "an uninterrupted, deep and shattering blow along the main axis of advance."<sup>21</sup> The aim was to scatter German resistance and

thus destroy Sixth German Army's physical and psychological cohesion. In other words, Sixth German Army's operational system and its ability to fight was to be broken up in order to induce a catastrophic implosion in German fighting spirit. It was to be split and fragmented into isolated tactical pieces then overwhelmed by a Soviet deep operation that fused attrition and manoeuvre at high tempo.<sup>22</sup> This was Rokossovskiy's natural operational style, a model of operations that would be the conceptual backbone of virtually all the operations he planned and conducted on the Eastern Front.

Rokossovskiy was never able to implement this plan due to the diversion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army, Rokossovskiy's main strike force<sup>23</sup> in response Operation *Wintersturm*, launched on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1942.<sup>24</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army was not returned although Rokossovskiy did receive complete command of all Soviet forces charged with the destruction of Sixth German Army.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless,

“with the transfer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army to the Stalingrad Front we had to make some substantial adjustments in the plan of the operation. The objective was still to slice the enemy group in half. Only now it was to be achieved, not by two, but by one main thrust from west to east.”<sup>26</sup>

Rokossovskiy's operational concept remained the same but without the forces he wanted to execute it. In order to compensate for his reluctance to use a single strike, Rokossovskiy assigned three armies to his main blow, with 65<sup>th</sup> Army in the centre, 24<sup>th</sup> Army to the north and 21<sup>st</sup> Army to the south.<sup>27</sup> The remaining Soviet armies, 57<sup>th</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 62<sup>nd</sup> Army were to hold German forces initially, followed by a transition to the offensive<sup>28</sup> but had a less aggressive role in fragmenting a Sixth German Army that was to be split in two by the main strike.<sup>29</sup> In summary, Rokossovskiy sought to retain the original operational concept that underlay Kol'tso. However, he did not get an operation in keeping with what he wanted, or his natural style of operations in the Great Patriotic War.

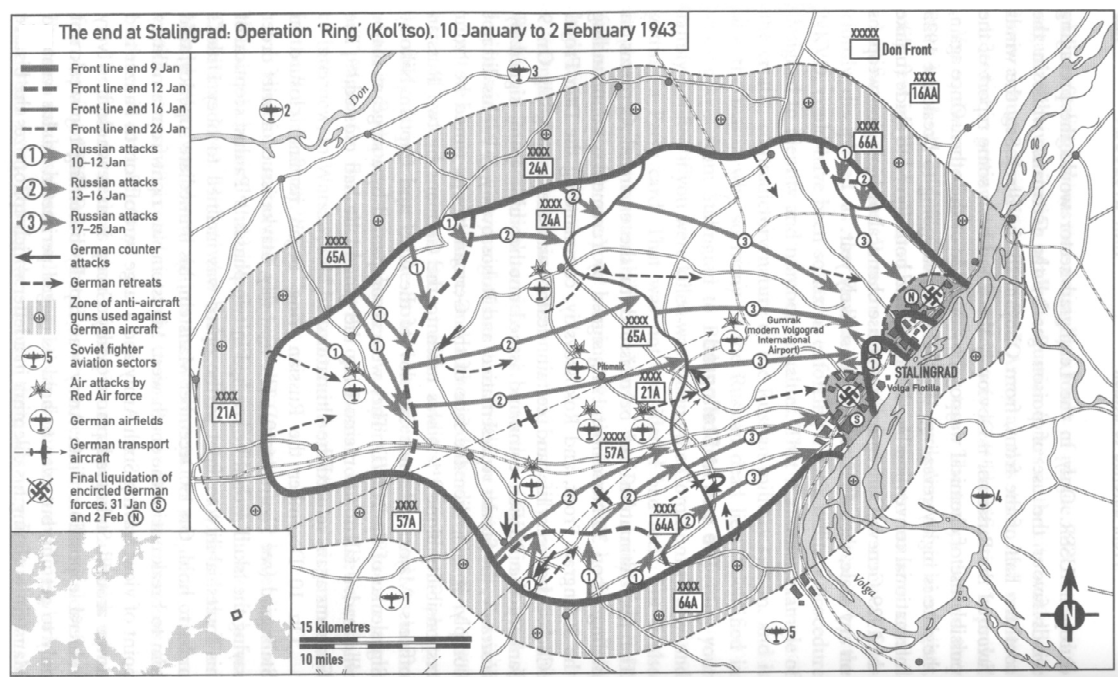


**Figure 112: The diversion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army: December 1942.**  
(Times Atlas of the Second World War, P. Young (ed.), 1973, p.199.)

The breakthrough was sluggish, the holding armies lacked dynamism and the deep operation did not scatter Sixth German Army. To generate momentum, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1945, Rokossovskiy was forced to switch the main effort from 65<sup>th</sup> Army to 21<sup>st</sup> Army, drive his commanders on, overrule requests for pauses and engage in constant re-grouping to keep the Germans off-balance. There is a retrospective assumption that Operation Kol'tso was a straightforward mopping up operation. In fact, Kol'tso was beset by significant structural weaknesses that undermined Rokossovskiy's ability to fulfil his operational concept. First, the competing demands of Operation Small Saturn in December 1942, robbed Rokossovskiy's Don Front of sufficient armoured formations capable of conducting deep operational manoeuvre. The Don Front had only three armoured corps in Operations Kol'tso.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the Don Front's massive underestimation of German numbers meant Rokossovskiy planned Kol'tso on an entirely flawed estimate of Sixth German Army's strength. The Don Front's intelligence estimated German strength at 85,000.<sup>31</sup> In fact, although frozen, shattered and malnourished, German strength in the pocket was closer to 270,000. Therefore, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943, at 220,000 when the Don Front believed it comfortably outnumbered Sixth German Army, Rokossovskiy actually had no true idea of the numbers he was facing. The 1943 Soviet General Staff Study was highly critical of this aspect of the Don Front's conduct of Operation Kol'tso.

“A great weakness in the planning of the operation was the miscalculation by the staff of the Front in estimating the strength of the encircled enemy.....in reality the enemy was much stronger and more numerous than the reconnaissance organizations estimated by the Front. This explains the drawing-out of the operations, which, instead of lasting 7 days as planned, lasted 23 days.”<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 113: Operation Kol'tso (Ring):10<sup>th</sup> January-2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943.**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.548.)

Rokossovskiy's operational concept was praised,<sup>33</sup> but this was stinging criticism. As a result of this enormous miscalculation, Rokossovskiy's ordinary field armies,

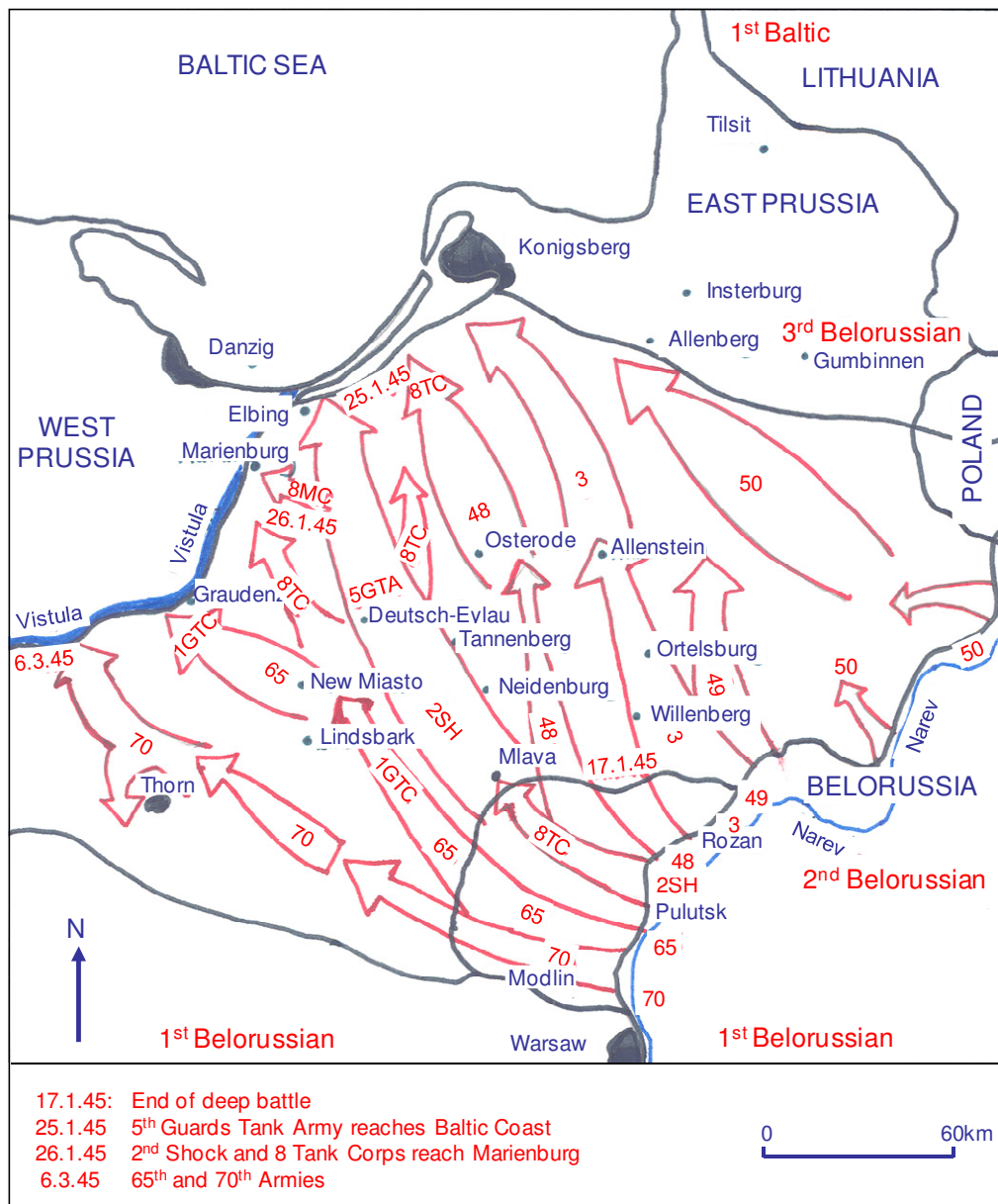


already short of infantry, were forced to imitate Triandafillov's flawed shock army. In essence, the same formations were asked to conduct both deep battle and deep operations against the resistance of German soldiers who fought with astonishing tenacity and courage. It is hardly surprising the Don Front struggled, at least initially, to overwhelm Sixth German Army. It was only Rokossovskiy's determined and agile command, in conjunction with German exhaustion that eventually enabled the Don Front to split Sixth German Army and achieve operational victory.

Operation Kol'tso was a difficult operation and, given the flawed Don Front intelligence, Rokossovskiy was fortunate that Kol'tso was launched in mid January 1943, not early December 1942. It is unlikely that 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army could have fully compensated for such a dramatic intelligence error against a more physically and spiritually robust enemy. By 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943, encirclement, cold, malnourishment and the reality of abandonment after Christmas 1942 had sapped the moral and physical stamina of German troops. Operation Kol'tso was successful and celebrated as a great turning point in the war, but against Rokossovskiy's wishes it was a grinding operation that wore down, rather than shattered the physical and psychological cohesion of Sixth German Army. Nevertheless, Operation Kol'tso is most instructive in revealing Rokossovskiy's natural operational style, namely his inclination to use the frontal blow in order to ensure a rapid breakthrough followed by deep strikes designed to splinter, fragment and shattering the enemy's operational cohesion.

Two years later, approximately 2,000 kilometres north-west of Stalingrad, on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1945, in the wake of an intense deep battle, Rokossovskiy unleashed 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army into East Prussia. It crashed into the German operational rear, reached the Baltic and cut off German troops from the rest of Germany.<sup>34</sup> This was a powerful dividing strike, a deep operation designed to strike deep into the enemy's operational rear and shatter his operational cohesion by fragmenting German forces. However, in overall terms the East Prussian Operation was a frontal blow. It was influenced by purely physical and systemic considerations,

but there was also an overt psychological dimension. It was clearly Rokossovskiy's intention to reach the Baltic and isolate East Prussian forces and people from the Reich. The 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army executed the main deep strike but Rokossovskiy also synchronised five other deep operations designed to splinter and fragment German forces already ripped apart by 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army.



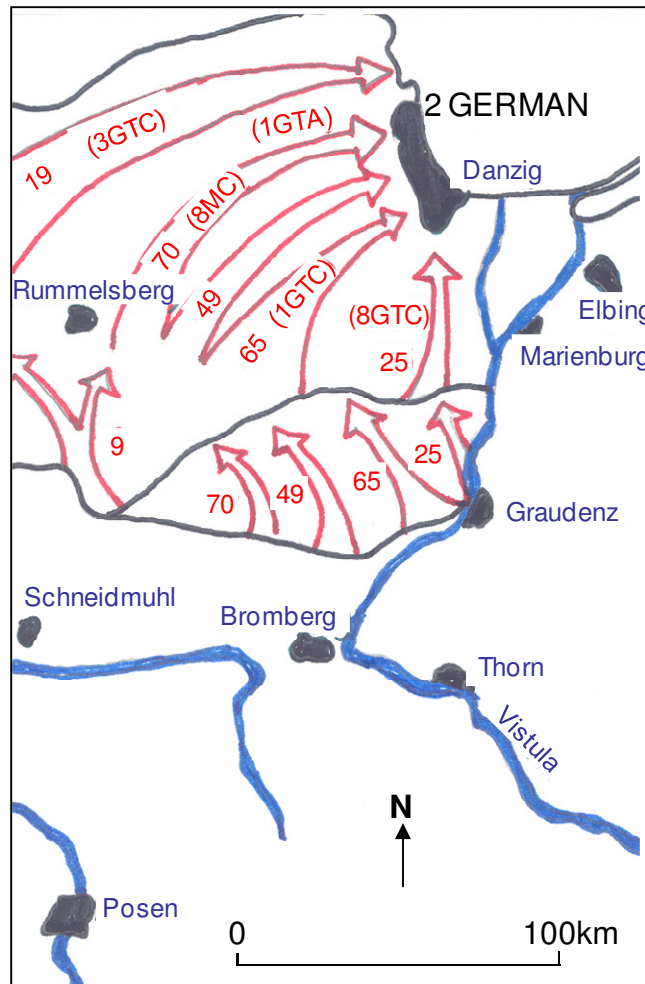
**Figure 114: 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front, East Prussia: 14<sup>th</sup> -26<sup>th</sup> January 1945.**  
 (Stephen Walsh)

In an arc, running from due north-west to directly north, Rokossovskiy had 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps conducting a deep operation for 65<sup>th</sup> Army,<sup>35</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps for 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army,<sup>36</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps for 48<sup>th</sup> Army and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps for 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, all supporting the most powerful blow of all in the centre, 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army.<sup>37</sup> In summary, the East Prussian Operation was a frontal blow that sought the strategic division of East Prussia from Germany, the operational splintering of German military forces in western and eastern Prussia and the tactical fragmentation of individual German formations. In concept and execution the East Prussian Operation bore all the hallmarks of Rokossovskiy's operational style and was devastatingly successful.

At first sight the East Pomeranian Operation, ordered by *Stavka* on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1945,<sup>38</sup> appears to be an anomaly in Rokossovskiy's operational command. Its initial stages were dominated by a single, powerful, northerly blow by 19<sup>th</sup> Army towards Kesslin on the Baltic coast. The 19<sup>th</sup> Army was part of a broad front, deployed on the extreme western edge of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. This supports the idea that Rokossovskiy planned one powerful, dividing strike to protect his left flank and rear, before launching a deep operation by several formations designed to strike deep and secure the operational splintering and tactical fragmentation of German forces. It should also be borne in mind that immediately to the west Zhukov's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was simultaneously conducting what amounted to a joint operation in western Pomerania. Therefore, Zhukov's breakthrough operation effectively acted as a second strike for Rokossovskiy.

In a report to the General Staff, on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1945, Rokossovskiy outlined his operational plan for the East Pomeranian Operation. The plan was approved on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1945.<sup>39</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> Army's main blow was actively supported by all 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's formations, from west to east, 70<sup>th</sup> Army, 49<sup>th</sup> Army, 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army. It was followed by deep operations, in which each of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's field armies launched mobile groups synchronised by Rokossovskiy. On 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's left flank, the main deep operational

strike was led by 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Army<sup>40</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Corps, both moving east along the Baltic coast to Gdynia-Danzig, the systemic hub of German resistance in Pomerania. On their right flank, 8<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps acted as the deep operation force of 70<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Armies. Rokossovskiy's aim, as usual, was to shatter the operational cohesion of German forces in eastern Pomerania and induce the tactical fragmentation of individual German units, before splintering and subdividing the German garrisons at Gdynia and Danzig. Finally, 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps, acting for 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps for 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army, moved to isolate Danzig.<sup>41</sup>



**Figure 115: The East Pomeranian Operation: 10<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> March 1945**  
(Stephen Walsh)

The main strike, in conjunction with Zhukov's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front divided German Army Group Vistula in two, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations splintered the German forces in eastern Pomerania.<sup>42</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> March 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front reached the Gulf of Danzig. This fragmented the German force into three parts, with groups trapped in Gdynia and Danzig and a third group marooned on the Putziger-Nehrung spit, in the Baltic Sea. On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1945, amidst ghastly scenes of destruction, Gdynia fell, followed by the storming of Danzig, by 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock and 65<sup>th</sup> Army on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1945.<sup>43</sup> In addition, 19<sup>th</sup> Army ruthlessly hunted down German troops on the Baltic spit.<sup>44</sup> The German garrison at Danzig was crushed after it had rejected Rokossovskiy's surrender ultimatum.<sup>45</sup> In keeping with Rokossovskiy's operational style, during the last act, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's forces struck simultaneously from three sides in an attack that split the pocket into tactical fragments before finishing off the isolated pockets.

### **Operational Encirclement and Annihilation**

In December 1940, Timoshenko concluded his discussion of 'Brusilov's method' by arguing that it provided an excellent platform from which to encircle the enemy.<sup>46</sup> Yet, Rokossovskiy did not use the frontal blow in this manner. Indeed, Rokossovskiy argued that,

“in our time of mass armies with continuous frontlines it is not so easy to envelop an enemy. The forces of one army may prove insufficient to breach the enemy positions and it may take a large scale operation involving several army groups.”<sup>47</sup>

Rokossovskiy's style of operations emphasised depth and speed more than encirclement and annihilation of large numbers of enemy troops. Nor, in June 1916, did Brusilov pursue the encirclement of Austrian forces at the expense of greater depth of penetration. Yet, after World War Two it was claimed that,

“beginning with the operation at Stalingrad and in the course of the entire subsequent development of the Great Patriotic War, maneuver for the purpose of encirclement on operational and tactical scales acquired predominant significance in Red Army operations.”<sup>48</sup>

It was asserted that “the highest achievement of Soviet operational art was the conduct of operations to encircle large enemy groupings” and that “starting with the second period of the war, these operations became the usual form of front and armies operations.”<sup>49</sup> In fact, an analysis of Rokossovskiy’s style of operations makes it far from clear that “operations to encircle the main enemy groupings became the primary form of the Soviet Army’s offensive actions”<sup>50</sup> in World War Two. Indeed, Rokossovskiy’s style of operations was notable for its absence of operational encirclements.

It has been suggested that the Red Army did not possess enough officers of sufficient quality to execute the double envelopment.<sup>51</sup> Indeed,

“more often they were content with a single thrust or multiple thrusts, the objective being not so much to achieve a deep penetration along the line of advance as to force the opponent back on one front.”<sup>52</sup>

It is not suggested that Rokossovskiy was incapable of such operations indeed in January 1945 German intelligence marked him out as “a highly qualified leader.”<sup>53</sup> Rokossovskiy did not execute operational encirclements because he had a different style of operations and was not trying to imitate German methods.

The German approach to the conduct of operations in the field during World War Two drew on long established historical and military traditions. In strategic terms, the Prussian state of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries simply did not possess the social, economic, financial and military resources to fight long wars. Therefore it established a military tradition based about the strategic imperative that its wars must be short.<sup>54</sup> By the reign of Frederick the Great (1740-1786) this military culture had become firmly established, a tradition that was passed to the Prussian Army of the nineteenth century and absorbed into the wider German military culture following the unification of Germany in 1871. The German Army’s culture of military thought was well established and contained several key themes. First that the war must be short, aggressive and victorious. This was to be achieved by an absolute commitment to an aggressive

*bewegungskrieg* or a war of mobility designed to destroy the enemy.<sup>55</sup> This commitment to the destruction of the enemy armed forces was central to German military culture. In the wake of the Prussian/German victories of 1866 and 1870 the German Army became increasingly obsessed with destroying the enemy by means of physical encirclement and annihilation, the *kesselschlacht*. These military traditions survived the First World War and dominated the German approach to operations in the Second World War.

The German Army drew several lessons from World War One.<sup>56</sup> However, equipped with armour, airpower, radios and dynamic leadership, the Wehrmacht retained its faith in the tactical idea of the *kesselschlacht* or cauldron battle of annihilation. German fighting methods in World War Two have become known as ‘blitzkrieg’ and are widely, if erroneously, perceived as having constituted a revolution in warfare. However, German officers did not use the word ‘blitzkrieg’ because they were using tactical methods German forces had been using since the nineteenth century. The means, armour, airpower, radio, motorisation were different but served traditional aims, namely the encirclement and physical annihilation of the enemy army. German methods did not focus on the enemy system, or the brain of the army. In fact, quite the opposite, the Germans believed that systemic paralysis or collapse was a symptom of victory, not its catalyst. Victory was achieved by manoeuvre that created a physical encirclement followed by the physical annihilation of the enemy force in the field. Indeed, “the goal remained the destruction of the enemy army in a great *Kesselschlacht*; the means remained *Bewegungskrieg*.”<sup>57</sup> If the operational scale of these encirclements in 1941 was unprecedented, the underlying principles were not.

The *Polevoy Ustav* of 1936 believed that “in the attack, the enemy must be encircled and annihilated. The enemy must be pinned down in the entire depth of his position, encircled and destroyed.”<sup>58</sup> However, the 1936 *Polevoy Ustav* dealt with tactical, not operational matters. Equally, while Triandafillov endorsed tactical encirclement<sup>59</sup> it is far from certain that he endorsed operational encirclement. In ‘Tactics and Operational Art of the Workers and Peasants’ Red

Army at a New Stage' issued under Yegorov's name in 1932, the Red Army was committed to attacks "from the front and rear until full tactical encirclement is achieved"<sup>60</sup> but was vague about operational scale encirclement even when discussing army level, not front operations. In a similar way, Isserson and particularly Varfolomeyev advocated tactical encirclement of the enemy forces at the front but did not endorse operational encirclement, preferring to emphasise depth.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, just because Soviet tactical regulations endorsed encirclement and annihilation, it does not mean that the Red Army emphasised operational encirclement, at the expense of operational depth. Indeed, "the Russians insisted that the encirclement should never exceed tactical-operational dimensions."<sup>62</sup>

Article 181 of the 1936 *Polevoy Ustav*,

"stressed clearly that should an opportunity to encircle an enemy tactical grouping arise in the course of an operation, it should be left to a limited or secondary force to exploit it, while the main strike force (ERP or the DD tank grouping) should pursue the course of the main strike into the operational depth."<sup>63</sup>

However, there was a Germanic school of thought in Soviet military thinking that advocated operational scale of encirclement and annihilation. It followed in the footsteps of the Tsarist officer A.A. Neznamov, a contemporary of Svechin and an influential military thinker during the inter-war years. Neznamov agreed with Svechin's analysis concerning the emergence of the operational level and operational art. Nevertheless, "Neznamov's real preference was for the envelopment maneuver"<sup>64</sup> and he continued to regard the decisive engagement of annihilation as "the ideal of military art."<sup>65</sup> It was widely acknowledged that such ideas were Germanic in origin, indeed,

"a characteristic feature of German operational doctrine in the period preceding the First World War was the attempt at a decisive annihilating engagement, the basis of which was enveloping manoeuvre on the flanks



to encircle the enemy. The German General Staff and command cadre of the German Army were nourished on these ideas.”<sup>66</sup>

As a devotee of the Germanic school, Neznamov advocated the operational encirclement and annihilation of the enemy army. Equally, as Neznamov envisaged operations being carried out by two, three or even four armies, each in the region of 200,000 strong, there is little doubt that he was discussing the idea of operational annihilation by means of encirclement.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, Svechin was distinctly sceptical of the idea of annihilation, pointing out that it required “extraordinary victory.”<sup>68</sup> Svechin believed that “the significance which is given to the general operation for destroying an enemy in the strategy of annihilation seriously narrows the perspective of strategic thinking.”<sup>69</sup> Svechin rejected the idea of operational annihilation and was instrumental in developing a distinctly Russian-Soviet, rather than Germanic approach to the conduct of operations. This incorporated the idea of successive operations, deep operations and a distinction between the principles of tactics and operational art.

Therefore, the idea of achieving operational victory through deep operational manoeuvre against the enemy’s system and shattering his operational cohesion was not the only proposal for achieving operational success in the Red Army. Several notable Soviet thinkers such as Neznamov and Tukhachevskiy advocated the physical annihilation of the enemy force on an operational scale, as well as tactical scale. This important difference in Soviet theory and practice at the operational level played itself out between Tukhachevskiy and Svechin in debate, but also more significantly, on the Eastern Front, in the sharp contrast in operational styles between Zhukov and Rokossovskiy.

Tukhachevskiy was a firm advocate of annihilation. He believed in keeping with the Germanic style, that the operational destruction of the enemy’s armed forces was a pre-requisite of victory in war. Indeed, “the more fully such destruction is, the greater the degree of guarantee for the achievement of war aims.”<sup>70</sup> In Problems of High Command he argued,

“operations are conducted to annihilate the enemy’s vital armed forces; this is necessary to achieve war aims.....an attempt to annihilate enemy personnel forces the chief conducting the operation *to barely consider or completely disregard the acquisition or maintenance of territory.*”<sup>71</sup>

Svechin believed an excessive pre-occupation with annihilation was like a tyrannical compass needle. As a result, “the notion of annihilation compels us to recognize all secondary interests and trends, all geographic objectives as insignificant. Pauses in the development of military operations contradict the notion of annihilation.”<sup>72</sup>



**Figure 116: M. Tukhachevskiy**  
(tonnel.ru)

In 1923, Tukhachevskiy acknowledged it was impossible to annihilate a modern army in a single blow, but argued in favour of the progressive annihilation of the enemy through a series of successive operations.<sup>73</sup> At first sight, Tukhachevskiy appeared to be admitting the principle of cumulative attrition, in line with Svechin, but in reality the concept of attrition was merely incidental to Tukhachevskiy’s comments.

Tukhachevskiy’s idea of successive operations was really an argument for rolling annihilation. He argued only “a series of successively conducted offensive operations joined by continuous pursuit can replace the destructive engagement which was the best type of encounter in former armies.”<sup>74</sup>

Tukhachevskiy was trying to establish a credible concept of operational annihilation to replace the discredited notion of a single battle or single operation of annihilation, favoured by Neznamov. In essence, “Tukhachevsky considered that to fully defeat the enemy it was necessary that one offensive operation develop into another without any loss of time whatsoever.”<sup>75</sup> This was an operational idea, but it was unrealistic. Tukhachevskiy seemed prepared to repeat his gamble of 1920, that speed and shock would offset logistical frailty. In

summary, “he would have considered all successive operations as part of one large operation.”<sup>76</sup>

Pavlenko suggests that in this respect Tukhachevskiy was in agreement with Svechin who argued that,

“an annihilating offensive under complex conditions is a series of successive operations which, however, have such close internal ties that they fuse into one gigantic operation. The initial position for the following operations emerges directly from the aim achieved in the operation which has just been ended.”<sup>77</sup>

However, it is the opinion of this thesis that Tukhachevskiy and Svechin meant different things by successive operations. Svechin talked of efforts being “dosed out”<sup>78</sup> rather than the relentless all out offensive advocated by Tukhachevskiy. Equally, while Svechin talked of connecting a series of operations, Tukhachevskiy was talking of continuous attack in pursuit of operational annihilation.<sup>79</sup> This was not the same as Svechin’s vision of successive operations connected in terms of their aim, but punctuated by operational pauses. In summary, one might argue that Tukhachevskiy saw operational annihilation as one act with several scenes whereas Svechin saw successive operations as a number of acts linked by an overall theme.

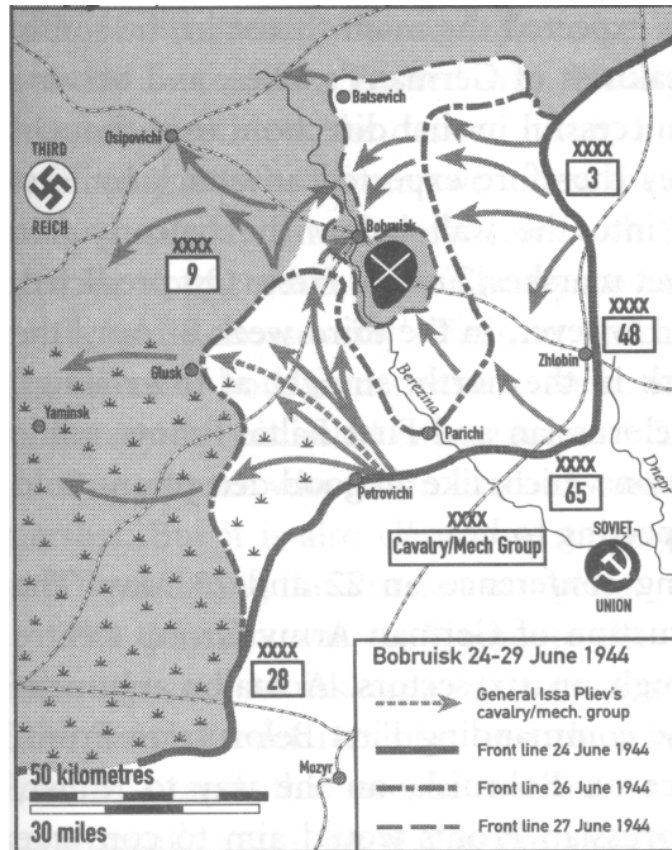
This theoretical argument played itself out in Rokossovskiy and Zhukov’s conduct of operations on the Eastern Front. Rokossovskiy was not obsessed with operational annihilation, more with denying the enemy’s ability to fight effectively, and to persuade him through a rapid combination of attrition and deep manoeuvre, that he could not fulfil his mission without risking annihilation. As Belorussia in 1943-44 demonstrated, Rokossovskiy used manoeuvre to lever out German formations, thus sustaining deep manoeuvre and operational momentum without a direct engagement of annihilation where everything halted to ensure the destruction of the pocket. Rokossovskiy’s frontal blow was designed to shatter cohesion, induce psychological and physical collapse, leading to a withdrawal and

inflicting severe casualties during the pursuit, without compromising deep operational manoeuvre.

This disinclination to engage in operational *kesselschlachts* was in keeping with Rokossovskiy's emphasis on disrupting the enemy's operational cohesion by deep operational manoeuvre. This style of operations was heavily dependant upon a high tempo and substantial operational momentum. The massive German encirclements of 1941-42 demonstrated that if an encircled force was prepared to fight, a considerable attritional engagement was likely to develop, such as Smolensk, in July-August 1941.<sup>80</sup> In short, the rapid and secure annihilation of such massive pockets was incompatible with forward momentum and deep operational manoeuvre. If, as in the case of the Wehrmacht, the acquisition of operational depth was less important than the physical encirclement of the enemy, this was problematic, but not vital. Yet, in Rokossovskiy's operational style, depth not annihilation was the main theme. Smaller tactical encirclements, carried out by deep battle forces had to be made compatible with *simultaneous* deep operational manoeuvre, designed to split the enemy force and shatter his operational cohesion.

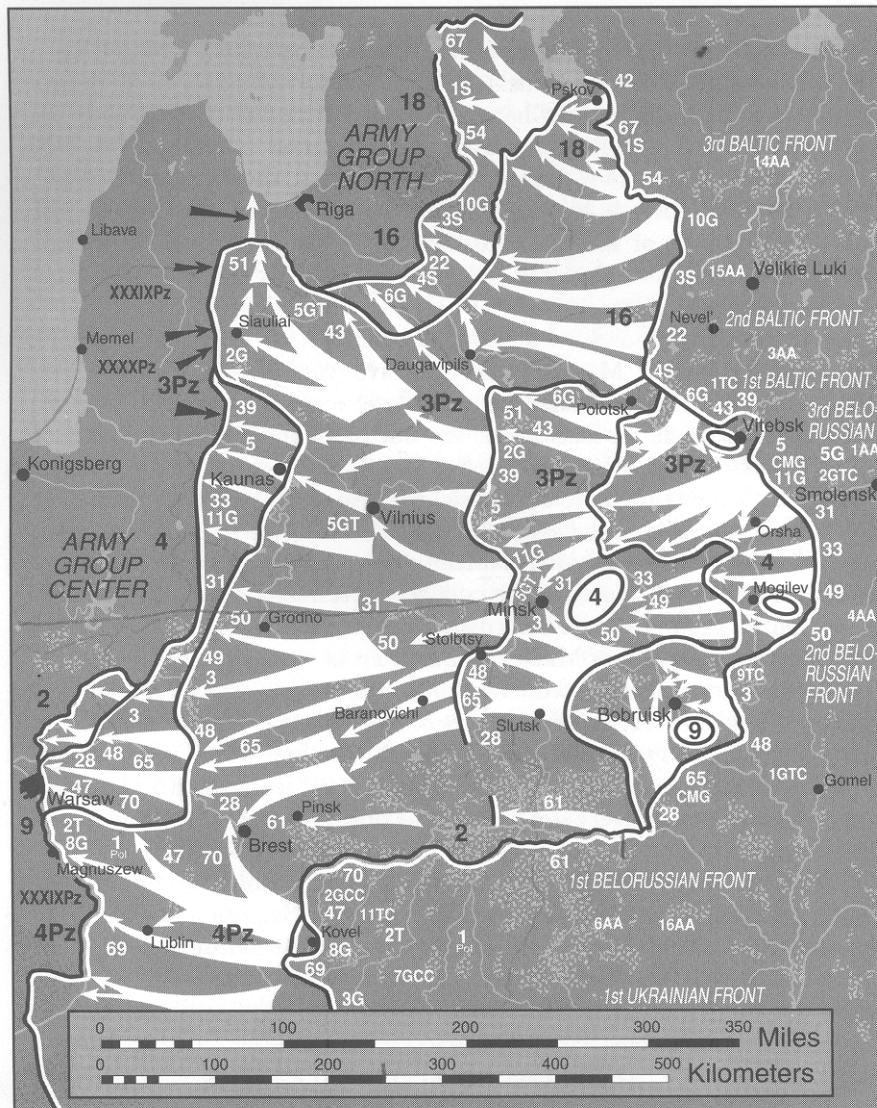
Rokossovskiy's ability to reconcile tactical encirclement with deep operation was a central theme of the Belorussian Operation (23<sup>rd</sup> June-29<sup>th</sup> August 1944). The original *Stavka* directive of 31<sup>st</sup> May 1944, ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian to destroy the German group at Bobruisk before conducting further deep operations.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's conduct of Operation Bagration contained a significant encirclement and annihilation of German troops. By 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944, just seventy-two hours into the operation, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front encircled Bobruisk<sup>82</sup> and trapped 40,000 troops. By 30<sup>th</sup> June 1944, the pocket had been annihilated, smashed into wandering fragments, physically and psychologically battered into defeat.<sup>83</sup> Bobruisk sat on the River Berezina and was a key road and rail junction, as well as Ninth German Army's command centre. The marshy and heavily forested terrain in Belorussia, together with numerous rivers meant that Bobruisk possessed an operational military importance out of all proportion to its

physical size. It was the systemic hub of Ninth German Army and the key to its operational cohesion. An effective defence of south-east Belorussia could not be sustained without it but nor could a deep operation.



**Figure 117: Bobruisk, 24-29 June, 1944**  
(Adapted from Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.609.)

Bobruisk's capture by encirclement and annihilation does not mean that Rokossovskiy had changed his style from frontal blow to operational encirclement and annihilation. The ultimate purpose of the Bobruisk Operation was not the annihilation of German soldiers. It was the facilitation of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations. Equally, Rokossovskiy's insistence on two blows, at Parichi and Rogachev, was not designed solely to create an encirclement, but to deal with the problematic nature of the ground east of Rogachev.



**Figure 118: The Belorussian Operation and advance to the Vistula: June-July 1945**  
(Glantz and House, *When Titans Clashed*, 1995, p.200.)

On 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944, 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps coming from the north-east of Bobruisk met 65<sup>th</sup> Army coming from the south and west. The encirclement was completed by 48<sup>th</sup> Army to the east and south-east of the town. The orders issued by Rokossovskiy at this stage of the Belorussian Operation confirm that he considered Bobruisk a tactical encirclement designed to facilitate 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations, not distract or divert them. The pocket was to be annihilated, but the *front's* main priorities were the deep operation on Minsk and CMG Pliev's deep operation on the systemic rear of Army Group Centre. First,

“Army General Rokossovskiy, the *front* commander, assigned Lieutenant-General Romanenko's 48<sup>th</sup> Army the mission of destroying the encircled

enemy grouping and chose 65<sup>th</sup> Army's 105<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps to assist.

Meanwhile, the *front's* main forces were to continue the offensive to the west and northwest to capture Minsk and Slutsk within the next few days.”<sup>84</sup>

Second, Rokossovskiy emphasised that “the *Front's* main forces were to advance as far as possible, on Osipovichi, Pukhovichi and Slutsk and we also had to mop up the surrounded enemy forces.”<sup>85</sup> Therefore, Rokossovskiy's priority was not the tactical annihilation of the Bobruisk pocket. In fact, Rokossovskiy had set 48<sup>th</sup> Army a very stiff task. There were at least fifteen breakout attempts by German troops.<sup>86</sup> However, Rokossovskiy refused to divert troops from 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operation. He smashed the pocket by using 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army.<sup>87</sup>

Several wandering pockets of German soldiers did escape from Bobruisk. Rokossovskiy ignored them and concentrated on deep operational manoeuvre.<sup>88</sup> This was a style of operation more in tune with the frontal blow than operational encirclement and annihilation. The Ninth German Army had been scattered. Its retreating forces posed no operational threat and were intent upon survival. In fact they contributed to the general collapse of Ninth German's position and increased the momentum of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's deep operation.

Therefore, despite appearances, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's initial contribution to Operation Bagration was not an operational encirclement, nor was it a massive anomaly in Rokossovskiy's operational style. It was a frontal blow operation that incorporated a tactical encirclement that was less important to Rokossovskiy than deep operational manoeuvre against key systemic points. In the words of the Soviet General Staff,

“having completed the encirclement of the large grouping of German-fascist forces in the Bobruisk region, the *front* commander left a third of his forces (48<sup>th</sup> and the 65<sup>th</sup> Army's 105<sup>th</sup> Corps) to destroy it, and he dispatched the other two-thirds to pursue the enemy to Minsk and Baranovichi. The 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps had already reached Minsk on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, and the cavalry-mechanized group engaged in battles on the

approaches to Baranovichi on 4<sup>th</sup> July. This aggressiveness in pursuit not only prevented the enemy from aiding his encircled forces in the Bobruisk region but also denied him the possibility of organizing serious resistance in the depth, using reserves that were brought forward.”<sup>89</sup>

In contrast, Zhukov’s main operational priority was the annihilation of enemy troops, usually by operational encirclement; the compass needle of his operations. The historical record provides significant evidence of Zhukov’s obsession with operational encirclement and annihilation. It was his preferred method of operation at Khalkin-Gol in August 1939, the attempted encirclement of Army Group Centre in January 1942, Operation Mars in November 1942 and the planned, but not executed Operation Jupiter, in December 1942,<sup>90</sup> which again concentrated on Army Group Centre. It was followed in February-March 1943, by an abortive operation involving Rokossovskiy’s Central Front, Bryansk Front and the Western Front, designed to trap and annihilate Army Group Centre.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Zhukov planned Operation Polar Star,<sup>92</sup> an operation cancelled in March 1943, but designed to encircle and annihilate the German forces at Leningrad.<sup>93</sup> In January 1944, Zhukov co-ordinated Vatutin’s 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front, in the Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy Operation,<sup>94</sup> an operation marked by the encirclement and annihilation of a substantial number of German troops. Later, in March 1944, in command of 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front, Zhukov oversaw the encirclement of Hube’s 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Army, although most of it escaped annihilation.<sup>95</sup>





**Figure 119: The Red Army's cosmic strategic plan showing Zhukov's massive planned encirclements in Mars and Jupiter: Winter 1942-1943.**  
 (Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.530.)

It is interesting to note that the only major operation in which Zhukov's troops split the enemy and engaged in deep operational manoeuvre, rather than operational encirclement and annihilation, was the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's Vistula-Oder Operation of January-February 1945. This was the obvious operational method given the lack of depth in the German defences or possibly Zhukov inherited an operational concept from Rokossovskiy, or Rokossovskiy's former staff officers who remained with 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front in November 1944. It is an intriguing thought and impossible to prove. However, the Vistula-Oder Operation does represent something of an anomaly in Zhukov's *modus operandii*, if not in Rokossovskiy's. In summary, Zhukov's planning, supervision and active operational command was notable for his natural inclination towards the operational encirclement and annihilation of the enemy, a form of operation commonly associated with the Wehrmacht.

Rokossovskiy and Zhukov's different operational styles reflect a profound difference in attitude towards the question of operational depth. If operational victory was to be achieved by striking deep to shatter the enemy's operational cohesion and ability to achieve his objectives, then rapid manoeuvre to operational depth was imperative, not optional, in order to undermine the source of effective, sustainable military power. It was this school of thought that informed Rokossovskiy's operational style. Thus, operational depth was the key principle of Rokossovskiy's operational method, not operational encirclement and annihilation.

In contrast, operational depth was coincidental to Zhukov's style of operations. If maximum physical annihilation was the key to victory, then depth of manoeuvre was only related to the need to encircle enemy troops. If the enemy lacked depth the encirclement would be shallow but if it was a massive force the depth of the penetration would be deeper. Therefore, in Zhukov's operational method depth was a means to an end, something designed to bring about operational encirclement and annihilation. The dominant theme was annihilation, not depth. Therefore, Rokossovskiy's operational style makes it far from obvious that

operational encirclement and annihilation were the dominant theme of Soviet operational art or a superior form of operational command. It was, ironically, post-war Soviet claims about the Red Army's inclination towards encirclement and annihilation that encouraged the idea that it was simply a pale imitation of the Wehrmacht.

In summary, it is one of the stranger ironies of history, that Zhukov, in many eyes the epitome of a Soviet commander, was committed to an operational style that was Germanic, whereas Rokossovskiy, the Pole, possessed an operational style more in keeping with the Russian-Soviet tradition of Brusilov, Svechin and Varfolomeyev. It is clear that Rokossovskiy and Zhukov had very different operational, as well as leadership styles, that reflected a very significant difference in their interpretation of Soviet operational thinking and the conduct of operational art. Two of the Red Army's most senior commanders possessed a far greater divergence in their operational methods than any comparable German commanders. There is no doubting the brilliance of Manstein, Model and Guderian, but the German high command remained obsessed with the idea of encirclement and annihilation, despite clear evidence, as early as December 1941, that the Red Army had grown used to their methods.<sup>96</sup> German commanders demonstrated remarkable tactical creativity but were predictable in their *modus operandii*. At the very least, the stark differences between Rokossovskiy and Zhukov, two of the Red Army's most senior commanders, challenges the image of a Soviet command stifled by uniformity, lacking in operational creativity while reliant on numbers and firepower.

### **The Obkhod or Turning Move**

The destruction of the psychological will to fight was important to Soviet military theory and a central theme of the frontal blow. Rokossovskiy's inclination towards the frontal blow and his creative *maskirovka* indicate he appreciated of the interaction between the physical and psychological dimensions of fighting power. This interaction was present in the frontal blow and, in a cruder form, during operational encirclement and annihilation, but Rokossovskiy also

conducted a form of operation that explicitly targeted the psychological will of the enemy to fight: the *obkhod* or turning movement.<sup>97</sup>

An *obkhod* involved a deep physical thrust into the enemy rear. It was designed to threaten the key points of the enemy system as well as the potential physical annihilation of the enemy. It was not a direct physical attack on the flank, known in Russian as an *okhvat*, but an attempt to turn the enemy's mind from the achievement of his primary mission, to one of survival. Therefore, it was aimed at the enemy commander's mind and his troops psychological fighting power. First, a turning movement aimed to persuade the enemy commander that his mission was no longer possible. Second, to persuade him the survival of his force was at stake. Third, to create a sense of imminent catastrophe designed to shatter the role of hope in sustaining psychological fighting power, thereby destroying the enemy as an organised fighting force

In the aftermath of World War Two, operational encirclement and annihilation was clearly recognised as linked to the German idea of the *kesselschlacht*. Therefore, it is possible that German and western ignorance of the *obkhod* may have induced some commentators to assume operations, designed as turning movements, were actually indicators of the Red Army's inability to execute operational encirclements.<sup>98</sup> It is also possible that many Red Army operations planned as double envelopments, and subsequently lauded for their ability to manoeuvre the Germans out of a position, by a turning move, were simply encirclements that failed.

In a purely physical sense, at first sight, a turning move and a double envelopment appeared to have much in common: their intent was quite different. A more direct form of military operation than encirclement and annihilation is difficult to imagine. Its aim was to trap, encircle and physically annihilate. The primary aim of the *obkhod* was not the physical annihilation of the enemy, but by using the threat of annihilation, and, if necessary doing it, induce the enemy to abandon his mission and concede the area. The *obkhod* was not a modern phenomenon<sup>99</sup> or an

overtly intellectual theory of manoeuvre dreamed up by the Red Army. On the contrary,

“the Russian liking for the form of indirect approach known as the ‘turning movement’ probably stems from the tradition of Genghis Khan; certainly it has long been fundamental to Russian military thinking.”<sup>100</sup>

It had played a role in Mischenko’s deep raid in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The raid failed to achieve its objectives but Svechin’s analysis argued,

“the psychological effect produced by the appearance of cavalry in the rear is incomparably greater when the army is engaged, when psychological and physical exhaustion lead to such tension that a single spark is sufficient to bring about panic among even the most disciplined troops.”<sup>101</sup>

Ironically, Clausewitz, the intellectual authority behind the German obsession with physical annihilation of the enemy army also acknowledged that “possible engagements are to be regarded as real if they have the same consequences.”<sup>102</sup> In essence, if the enemy can be persuaded to give up his mission because of the threat of being annihilated, the objective has been achieved.

In April 1944, in the proposed Kovel’ Operation, Rokossovskiy appeared to depart from his usual operational style and recommended a massive operational/strategic encirclement, driven by the need to circumvent the terrain of south-eastern Belorussia. The plan proposed to fix Second and Ninth German Armies in south-eastern Belorussia. Simultaneously, two Soviet tank armies from 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front’s left flank would move north before turning in a great arc, from west to east. At first sight the operation suggested by Rokossovskiy seems to have the explicit aim of trapping and physically annihilating two German field armies and shattering the strategic rear of Army Group Centre.

However, it can be argued that, more in keeping with his habitual operational style, Rokossovskiy was actually trying to induce the collapse and withdrawal of Second and Ninth Armies, rather than their physical annihilation, an almost impossible task given the nature of the terrain. The Belorussian Forests were infested with partisans who harried German troops and regularly disrupted the rail

and road lines essential to Second and Ninth German Armies. These German armies had responded very nervously to previous deep operations by Rokossovskiy's Belorussian Front and were acutely aware of their lack of depth and their vulnerability to being trapped in the forests of Belorussia. Equally, Rokossovskiy knew that since Stalingrad all German troops feared encirclement.

Therefore, by invading Army Group Centre's strategic rear, infiltrating the operational rear and cutting the supply lines of Second and Ninth German Army, Rokossovskiy's aim was to manipulate the threat of annihilation in the Belorussian marshes, to persuade German commanders to withdraw and take the most obvious route to survival, west, regardless of the overall German position in south-eastern Belorussia. Certainly, an operation of this size would have posed a credible threat of encirclement and annihilation to Second and Ninth German Armies. However, operational annihilation on this scale would have been an anomaly in Rokossovskiy's normal operational style. In contrast, a simultaneous use of attrition and manoeuvre designed to turn the enemy's mind and induce fragmented withdrawal is much more in keeping with Rokossovskiy's operational inclinations and the concept of the *obkhod*.

As early as November 1941, Rokossovskiy used a turning move to ease 16<sup>th</sup> Army's position at Volokalamsk, west of Moscow. It successfully forced 10<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division away from Skirmanovo, where it had threatened 16<sup>th</sup> Army's lines of supply and communication.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in December 1941, Rokossovskiy was concerned during the Moscow counter-offensive, that the Germans might stabilise their position on the River Istra.<sup>104</sup> He wanted to bounce the Istra, but

“on the approaches to the Istra sector the enemy's resistance began to stiffen and I felt we would be unable to effect a swift crossing.

Accordingly, I concentrated on strengthening the enveloping forces: F. Remizov's on the right and M.Y. Katukov's on the left.”<sup>105</sup>

As the Germans blew up the Istra dam, Rokossovskiy used the two armoured mobile groups to lever the Germans out of the Istra position, thus restoring and

sustaining the momentum of 16<sup>th</sup> Army's counter-attack. In his words, "striking from the north and south, Remizov and Katukov forced the enemy back, thus helping the infantry divisions perform their tasks. The outcome of the battle was decided in our favour."<sup>106</sup>

The Germans were turned in both a physical and psychological sense and manoeuvred out of an important position without a prolonged attritional encounter. It is possible, but unlikely that Rokossovskiy intended this as a tactical battle of encirclement and annihilation which achieved partial but not complete success. It is more likely it was planned and executed as an *obkhod*. At that stage of the Moscow counter-offensive Rokossovskiy's primary aim was momentum and Rokossovskiy's natural instinct was to create momentum through deep operational manoeuvre.

Therefore, trapping the enemy in an encirclement and annihilation operation made less sense than threatening an envelopment, a psychological message any German commander would have understood, in order to lever him out. Rokossovskiy understood that given their failure to take Moscow and the scale of the Red Army's counter-offensive that German troops in early December 1941 were distinctly susceptible to fears of disaster, central to the idea of an *obkhod*. To the German soldier, encirclement, or worse being taken prisoner was an appalling prospect. If an opportunity to withdraw and fight another day presented itself many took it, particularly as the traditional flexibility of German defensive doctrine made such a course of action entirely rational.

The turning move, either as part of a frontal blow, or as an operational method in itself, was a regular aspect of Rokossovskiy's operational command during the war. Rokossovskiy's style endeavoured to persuade the enemy, through a mixture of attrition and manoeuvre that sustained fighting at such a disadvantage, risked complete destruction. Indeed, throughout the war, Rokossovskiy displayed a talent for the more subtle psychological dimensions of command yet, Rokossovskiy knew that a purely psychological threat, presented by a formation

marauding around behind German lines, was never going to turn over a German force, unless it had the raw, physical fighting power to make the threat of annihilation, inherent in the *obkhod* concept, a credible one. Therefore, the psychological concept of the *obkhod*, perhaps the purest form of operational manoeuvre, relied heavily on physical fighting power. A small force could be ignored: a big, powerful force could not. Similarly, the credibility of the threat rested on an understanding that Rokossovskiy's threat was no bluff. As Moscow, Stalingrad and later Kursk showed, all German commanders understood that Rokossovskiy, if necessary, could and would systematically annihilate a German formation if it did not withdraw.

In 1943-45, Rokossovskiy's psychological credibility and the physical power of the forces he commanded enabled Rokossovskiy to lever out German units from key positions, thus retaining operational momentum. In Belorussia, during 1943, this did not produce the operational collapse Rokossovskiy's desired in Belorussia in autumn 1943 because his forces did not have the fighting power to uproot an entire German army. The various attempts Rokossovskiy made to force the Germans out of Kalinkovichi, between October 1943-January 1944 are a particularly good example of how the psychological concept of the *obkhod* was directly related to physical fighting power. In 1944-45, the underlying themes of Rokossovskiy's operations in 1944-45 were very similar, but in this period Rokossovskiy possessed the cavalry-mechanised groups and tank armies to implement turning moves of operational, indeed strategic dimensions. In addition, Rokossovskiy's meticulous planning always ensured with the exception of February 1943, that operations were properly prepared and that his forces undertook *obkhod's* in good logistical shape, not exhausted at the end of an operation. Therefore, both Rokossovskiy's reputation and the forces he commanded carried the psychological and physical fighting power to sustain an *obkhod's* credibility.<sup>107</sup>

It is tempting to regard the *obkhod* as a purely theoretical concept. However, on several occasions the remarkably resilient Wehrmacht showed signs of being



susceptible to turning moves conducted by Rokossovskiy. Indeed, a combination of factors made German forces on the Eastern Front peculiarly vulnerable, in both a physical and psychological sense to the *obkhod*. First, in the aftermath of Stalingrad, a definite “Stalingrad complex” emerged.<sup>108</sup> Second, German soldiers had a pronounced dread of capture by the Russians. Third, as German resources dwindled, the lack of depth and reserves made them vulnerable to quick, deep Soviet breakthroughs and being cut off, annihilated or taken prisoner.

A turning move began with a broad front deployment, *maskirovka* and a simultaneous general assault accompanied by the rapid, localised annihilation of the enemy. Deep operation forces moved against the enemy’s operational rear focussing on key systemic points. As the breach widened and the depth of the operation became greater, more forces moved through to increase the physical power and sustainability of the blow. The initial purpose of the operation was to sever and disrupt the timely flow of information when enemy tactical commanders and soldiers needed it most. The aim was to shatter the soldier’s faith that the situation was under control. As a commander who had experienced the Red Army’s mauling in 1941, Rokossovskiy fully understood the profound psychological impact upon soldiers forced to operate under extreme duress without effective command, without secure supply lines and without control or proper knowledge of the enemy except that he is behind you and threatening to close off hope of escape. Furthermore, as a man who had lived through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Red Army’s collapse in 1919, the Purge and the military defeats of 1941, few knew better than Rokossovskiy how a combination of fear, lack of sleep and systemic collapse could induce an implosion in the will to fight.

Rokossovskiy keenly appreciated the psychological dimensions of war. Indeed, several of Rokossovskiy’s operations seem almost designed to send psychological messages to German commanders. The systematic targeting of key towns, command points, river lines, rail junctions and routes of escape seems to have been a pronounced aspect of Rokossovskiy’s operational style. In the Loyev Operation of October 1943, Rokossovskiy’s turning move on Gomel was

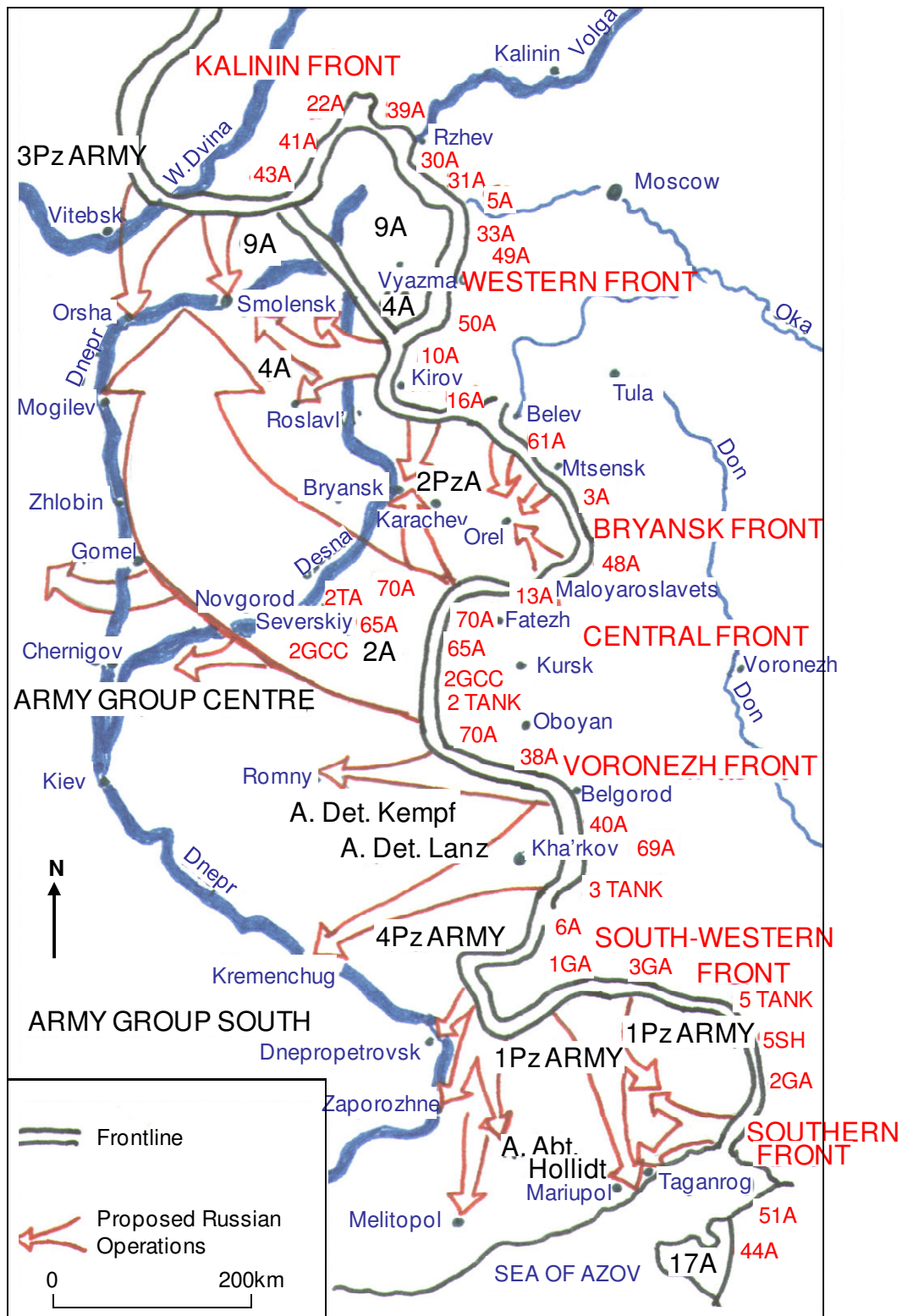
specifically designed to play on German minds. Gomel was a key systemic point of communication, mobility and supply. It was critical to the operational position of Second German Army and Ninth German Army. It was also central to the maintenance of strategic links between Army Group Centre and Army Group South. If Gomel was threatened or taken, the entire German position in south-eastern Belorussia was in danger of being compromised.

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 1943, Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army crossed the Dnepr and carried the town of Loyev. As 65<sup>th</sup> Army surged on "with the imminent threat of our forces coming out in the rear of the whole Gomel group, the enemy had to start withdrawing his units from the Sozh-Dnieper area."<sup>109</sup> It was no accident that Field Marshal von Kluge, the commander of Army Group Centre, made scarce reserves available to prevent 65<sup>th</sup> Army enveloping Gomel.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, "on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1943, Kluge and Model discussed taking Ninth Army and Second Army back to the Dnepr below Mogilev."<sup>111</sup> This would have been a remarkably successful *obkhod*. The Germans were saved by Rokossovskiy's lack of resources courtesy of *Stavka's* strategic prioritisation of the Ukraine at the expense of Belorussia.

Rokossovskiy's most ambitious *obkhod* occurred in February-March 1943. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1943, just twenty-four hours after the German surrender at Stalingrad, *Stavka* informed Rokossovskiy that the Don Front was being moved to the Bryansk area.<sup>112</sup> As early as 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943, *Stavka* had already issued orders that Don Front's 21<sup>st</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Army were to move in to the Bryansk area.<sup>113</sup> On 4<sup>th</sup> February 1943, Rokossovskiy was ordered to re-deploy to the central sector of the Eastern Front. There, under his command, the newly formed Central Front<sup>114</sup> was to launch a massive north-easterly operation where "in co-operation with the Bryansk Front it was to execute a deep turning movement in the general direction of Smolensk and Gomel aimed at the flank and rear of the enemy's Orel group."<sup>115</sup>

*Stavka* Directive No: 30043 issued on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1943 revealed the massive scope of the proposed operation. The Central Front using 65<sup>th</sup> Army,<sup>116</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps was to cross the Dnepr, split Second German and Second Panzer Army and move through Gomel and on to Smolensk, deep in the rear of Army Group Centre. At the same time, Western and Bryansk Front would launch an operation to encircle and annihilate Second Panzer Army in the Orel region.<sup>117</sup> In the words of Rokossovskiy, “this beautifully planned operation had been timed for February 15.”<sup>118</sup>

Rokossovskiy was charged with an *obkhod* of massive strategic significance. It would split the entire Eastern Front, invade the systemic rear of Army Group Centre and facilitate the annihilation of the German Orel group. If the Central Front’s deep turning move managed to reach Smolensk, the Red Army would be astride the land bridge between the Dnepr and the western Dvina. This land bridge acted as the entry to, and exit from, central European Russia. The Smolensk land bridge, on the main road to Moscow, was possibly the most important piece of strategic ground on the entire Eastern Front. It was absolutely pivotal to the Wehrmacht ability to wage war on the Eastern Front and without this systemic hub Army Group Centre could not have sustained itself west of Moscow. Therefore, the physical and psychological implications of Rokossovskiy’s *obkhod* for Army Group Centre were considerable. Smolensk was the keystone of Army Group Centre’s strategic rear, the foundation stone of the German position on the Eastern Front. Furthermore, in the aftermath of Stalingrad, Army Group Centre’s position as the Wehrmacht’s strategic anchor on the Eastern Front, was more important than ever if the Germans were going to stabilise their position.



**Figure 120: The Central Front's February 1943 Obkhod (Turning Move) on Smolensk.**  
(Stephen Walsh)

In early February 1943, the German strategic position in southern Russia appeared on the edge of total collapse. Army Group A was fleeing the Caucasus, pursued by Soviet troops, having been given Hitler's permission to withdraw on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1943, itself deeply indicative of the sheer scale of the German strategic crisis in January 1943. Simultaneously, the South-Western Front's Operation Gallop was moving south on Rostov and into the eastern Donbass region, an area of vital industrial importance.<sup>119</sup> Further north, the Voronezh Front's Operation Star<sup>120</sup> was moving towards Khar'kov, a key systemic point in the eastern Ukraine. The Romanians had been crushed in Operation Uranus in November 1942. The 8<sup>th</sup> Italian Army had been destroyed in the Middle Don Operation of December 1942.<sup>121</sup> Equally, 2<sup>nd</sup> Hungarian Army had suffered massive losses at the hands of the Voronezh Front, during the Ostrogorzhk-Rossosh Operation of January 1943, an operation that "ripped a huge and gaping hole in the German front from south of Voronezh to Voroshilovgrad."<sup>122</sup> In summary, a whole series of simultaneous and successive operations in southern Russia threatened to engulf the Wehrmacht.

In this strategic and psychological context, a major turning move by Rokossovskiy's Central Front into the rear of Army Group Centre would have constituted a military earthquake on the Eastern Front. It would have forced Army Group Centre to turn away from Moscow and contemplate fighting the Central Front to its west, the Western Front to its east and the Bryansk Front to the south-east, thus relieving Moscow, the defence of which, at Stalin's insistence, had tied down many Red Army forces. It is hardly surprising that *Stavka* urged this extraordinarily ambitious *obkhod* upon Rokossovskiy with little time for the effective re-deployment and preparation of the Central Front.

The Central Front was to be made up of the Don Front's armies at Stalingrad, plus 70<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army<sup>123</sup> from *Stavka* reserve.<sup>124</sup> The sheer size of this potential force indicates the scale and significance of the operation. However, Rokossovskiy's Central Front was plagued by problems of re-deployment, logistic chaos, appalling weather and inadequate time for preparation.<sup>125</sup> Rokossovskiy issued his first preliminary orders on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1943. He outlined the concept

of the operation, the main lines of attack for 65<sup>th</sup> Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, 70<sup>th</sup> Army, 21<sup>st</sup> Army and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army. He also revealed that *Stavka* proposed an extraordinarily ambitious *obkhod* of approximately 500 kilometres in depth.<sup>126</sup>

Rokossovskiy issued further instructions on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1943. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was to deploy in the middle of the Central Front, with 65<sup>th</sup> Army to its right and Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps to the left. It was to be ready for action by the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1943.<sup>127</sup> The 65<sup>th</sup> Army was to deploy on the right with 13<sup>th</sup> Army of Bryansk Front on its northern flank, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army to its left. The 65<sup>th</sup> Army was to attack, a day later than 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, on the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1943.<sup>128</sup> Kryukov's Cavalry Rifle Group was to deploy on the left wing, with 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army on its northern flank and 60<sup>th</sup> Army of the Voronezh Front, to the south. It was given the key objective; a deep operation on the German supply point of Novgorod-Severskiy on the river Desna. It was to attack on the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1943.<sup>129</sup>

Rokossovskiy secured a postponement until 25<sup>th</sup> February 1943, but the offensive began in heavy snow, with piecemeal deployment of forces as they arrived, very much out of keeping with Rokossovskiy's normal style.<sup>130</sup> However, due to the practical difficulties of getting combat units concentrated with their supplies, the timetable began to slip. By early 24<sup>th</sup> February 1943, the first echelon of 65<sup>th</sup> Army had deployed, but other units were in transit. Rokossovskiy reported that forward detachments would probe German lines on 26<sup>th</sup> February, but that the first echelon would not attack until 27<sup>th</sup> February 1943, with other units being fed in piecemeal. In a similar way, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army would begin reconnaissance on 24<sup>th</sup> February but the main attack would not develop until 26<sup>th</sup> February. Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Group would begin operations on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1943. The 21<sup>st</sup> Army had not yet completed its redeployment from Stalingrad. The 70<sup>th</sup> Army had more or less finished its deployment, but all Central Front units were short of artillery, fuel, ammunition, transport vehicles and tractors.<sup>131</sup>

The improvised, *ad hoc*, downright chaotic preparations for the February 1943 *obkhod* may initially have worked in the Central Front's favour. It guaranteed surprise. The Second German Army did not anticipate an extraordinarily ambitious Soviet offensive, launched with virtually no preparation in the middle of a blizzard with waist deep snow. However, as Central Front's forces drove deeper they met stiff resistance. As Army Group Centre recognised the menacing nature of Rokossovskiy's intent, German reserves flooded into the area. The improvised nature of Central Front's preparations left Rokossovskiy's forces short of heavy fighting power. As intelligence reports began to warn of German reserves, Rokossovskiy was faced with an "acute shortage of food, fodder, fuel and ammunition"<sup>132</sup> against an enemy who "had quite obviously edged ahead of us in the concentration and deployment of forces."<sup>133</sup> Rokossovskiy reported to Stalin that,

"in the circumstances the Front would be unable to carry out its task. Shortly, afterwards the task was changed, and we were ordered to strike northwards towards Orel with the 21<sup>st</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Armies and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army. The aim was to rout the enemy's Orel grouping in co-ordination with the Bryansk Front and the left wing of the Western Front."<sup>134</sup>

The *Stavka* bowed to the inevitable and reigned in its ambitions, a little. The deep *obkhod* through Gomel to Smolensk was abandoned. However, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1943, *Stavka* issued new orders to Rokossovskiy's Central Front. In conjunction with the Bryansk Front, the Central Front was to move north in order to encircle and annihilate German forces belonging to Second Panzer Army in the Dmitriev-Orlovskiy area. The Central Front was then to move on Roslavl north-east of Smolensk, in a shallower turning move of German Army Group Centre.<sup>135</sup>

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1943, Rokossovskiy issued orders for the new operation against Second Panzer Army. The 21<sup>st</sup> Army was to wheel north, with 13<sup>th</sup> Army of Bryansk Front on its right flank and Central Front's 70<sup>th</sup> Army on its left. On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1943 at 21.00 hours, 21<sup>st</sup> Army was to begin its attack and move into the Orel region.<sup>136</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1943, 70<sup>th</sup> Army was to attack north, with 21<sup>st</sup> Army

on the right flank and 65<sup>th</sup> Army to the left. It was to co-operate with 21<sup>st</sup> Army and establish control of the Orel region, before cutting the Orel-Karachev road, the key systemic target of a deep operation. Rokossovskiy warned them to be mindful of German counter-attacks coming from the west.<sup>137</sup>

The 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army were to wheel north, cut the Orel-Bryansk road and invade the German operational rear around Dmitriev-Orlovskiy. On the extreme left wing of the Central Front, 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps was to cut the Orel-Karchev road further to the west.<sup>138</sup> It was also to continue its attack in a more westerly direction towards Novgorod-Severskiy, on the Desna, a systemic target that if captured would significantly undermine the combat power of the German reserves. However, as Rokossovskiy issued these orders, to the west, German reserves led by 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, were already concentrating against Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps.

On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943, 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division counter-attacked east of Novgorod-Severskiy.<sup>139</sup> Simultaneously, at 01.30 hours on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943, *Stavka* significantly increased Rokossovskiy's combat power, on his eastern flank, by transferring 3<sup>rd</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Army from the Bryansk to the Central Front.<sup>140</sup> However, as Manstein's counter-offensive in the Kharkov area gathered momentum, Rokossovskiy's 21<sup>st</sup> Army was diverted to the Voronezh Front.<sup>141</sup> The *Stavka* also diverted 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army, 24<sup>th</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup>, 62<sup>nd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Armies, some of which, but not all, had been earmarked for Rokossovskiy's Central Front. Now, they were ordered to bolster the Soviet position further south.<sup>142</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps withdrew east under heavy German pressure and the German counter-attack was halted on the River Sev by Rokossovskiy's diversion of substantial forces from 65<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army. The Central Front dug in on ground that would become the northern and western face of the Kursk bulge.

In summary, the turning move assigned to Rokossovskiy's Central Front was intended to be a very significant operation. Yet, the fact that the operation did not fulfil its promise indicates that the *obkhod* was no more immune to the realities of



physical fighting power than any other form of operation. The sustained resistance of Sixth German Army at Stalingrad was of great significance in delaying Rokossovskiy's operation and *Stavka's* unrealistic timetable meant that operational planning was rushed, improvised, lacking in foresight and characterised by *ad hoc* adjustments during the operation. Rokossovskiy was acutely aware of this<sup>143</sup> and tried to ameliorate the consequences of unseemly haste but was undone by logistic reality. A turning move of such depth and strategic significance could not be improvised, however talented the operational commander and *Stavka's* gamble turned into a bluff.

A careful balance, requiring fine judgement, had to be struck in determining whether an *obkhod* was an appropriate form of operation to achieve an objective. First, as the February 1943 operation demonstrated, it had to be well prepared and sufficiently powerful. Second, the target of the turning move had to be carefully selected. If the target was so important the enemy could not operate without it, the enemy had to stand, fight and risk destruction, because the alternative was more unpalatable. In February 1943, Smolensk and the Dnepr-Dvina land bridge were too important to be given up without a fight to the death. If the Central Front had possessed the time to plan and prepare an operation of the skill and power required to carry through the February 1943 *obkhod*, Rokossovskiy would have found himself in a monumental struggle, assailed on all sides by German forces desperate to recover the Smolensk land bridge. To the Germans the idea of abandoning this key strategic sector would have been demoralising at any time; in the immediate aftermath of Stalingrad it might have provoked a strategic rout. It was simply too important to abandon.

In conclusion, the psychological undermining of the enemy was an important element in Rokossovskiy's operational style. Rokossovskiy used turning moves against key systemic points such as road and rail junctions, or in a more direct sense to induce a sense of psychological panic at fear of being cut off by a physical barrier as in the East Prussian and East Pomeranian Operations. These operations were designed to induce an implosion in fighting spirit, rather than to

deliberately trap and annihilate forces on an operational scale. Rokossovskiy wanted the enemy force to disintegrate and waste away, thus increasing the momentum and effectiveness of the deep strike, designed to split the enemy and shatter his operational cohesion. It is in this sense that Rokossovskiy's attitude to the turning move should be understood indeed, that Rokossovskiy's whole style of operations should be understood.

### **The Nature of Rokossovskiy's Deep Operations and Use of Mobile Groups**

The aim of deep operations was to transform tactical success into operational victory. A deep operation was designed

“to prevent or delay the arrival of his (the enemy's) operational reserves by defeating these units in detail; to surround and destroy those units still at the front; and to continue the offensive into the defender's operational depth.”<sup>144</sup>

Triandafillov believed that, in modern operations,

“the art of the attacker is to unleash the entire mass of forces quickly enough to break out to the flank and rear area of the enemy force, to cut his withdrawal routes and disrupt any new grouping of forces the enemy is preparing.”<sup>145</sup>

These concepts were central themes of Soviet military thinking from the early 1930's and a dominant principles of the Red Army's wartime operations. A Soviet operation, be it a frontal blow, an *obkhod* or an operational encirclement and annihilation, consisted of two phases: the tactical deep battle and the deep operation, a period of manoeuvre designed to act as the catalyst of operational victory. It was the job of front commanders such as Rokossovskiy to blend both phases. Nevertheless, regardless of the specific focus of a deep operation all *front* commanders used mobile groups to achieve their objectives.

In the First World War cavalry had proved hopelessly inept at translating tactical success into operational victory. In contrast, in the Russian Civil War cavalry had played an important operational and even strategic role, raiding deep behind enemy lines, although this was a symptom of the peculiarly low ratio of force to

space that characterised the Russian Civil War.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, on a conceptual level, the cavalry operations of the Civil War had a substantial influence on the notion of deep operations. Isserson's entire military career was based around depth in military operations. Indeed, "Isserson's *idée fixe* was the greatly enhanced role which the factor of depth had come to play in military affairs at all levels."<sup>147</sup> Isserson's 300,000 strong shock army was organised into an attack echelon (*eshelon ataki: EA*), charged with smashing through the enemy's tactical defences and a breakthrough development echelon (*eshelon razvitiia proryva: ERP*), configured for mobility.<sup>148</sup> It developed the offensive into the enemy's operational depth.

Isserson outlined three variants concerning operations by the breakthrough development echelon (ERP). The first variant envisaged the tactical encirclement of the enemy's frontline soldiers, with only a few units left to strike deep. In the second variant, working in conjunction with airpower and airborne forces, the ERP would strike deep, approximately one hundred kilometres in depth and engage enemy reserves while simultaneously blocking the withdrawal of retreating enemy units. This 'deep variant' has more in common with Rokossovskiy's wartime deep operations which emphasised depth, disruption, shattering the enemy's cohesion and systemic targets. Isserson's third, or combined variant, envisaged two ERP's striking deep on converging routes in order to create an operational encirclement.<sup>149</sup> This was not a variant favoured by Rokossovskiy although it was clearly a prominent feature of Zhukov's operations.

Varfolomeyev, "divided his shock army into two echelons, distinguished by their differing objectives."<sup>150</sup> The first echelon, the tactical breakthrough echelon, was composed of rifle corps supported by a second echelon of army reserves. It was designed to breakthrough the enemy's tactical defences to a depth of 15-20 kilometres. The tactical breakthrough echelon was essentially an attritional fighting force devised to fight deep battle. In the wake of a successful tactical breach in the enemy line, a Soviet commander was to commit the operational breakthrough echelon. Its task was to transform tactical success into operational

victory. It was to strike deep, defeat enemy reserves, disrupt enemy supply, command and control and communications while simultaneously engaging in the tactical encirclement of the enemy's frontline forces. The historical evidence suggests that Rokossovskiy's operational style and the nature of his deep operations had more in common with Varfolomeyev's ideas than any other inter-war theorist.

Inter-war theorists provided a basic framework of ideas. Nevertheless, on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1942, when Stalin issued Order No: 325,<sup>151</sup> the Red Army did not actually have the instruments, or commanders, to implement deep operations. It took a year of experimentation by commanders, such as Rokossovskiy, before the Red Army developed the ability, capacity and physical forces to conduct effective deep operations. By 1944, the general name for a Soviet deep operation force was a mobile group. There were basically three types: the all-arms tank army, the cavalry-mechanised group and the mechanised corps. The most prestigious was the tank army, the elite military formation of the Red Army.<sup>152</sup> It was an all-arms force, made up of two tank corps and a mechanised corps, with a multitude of supporting units.<sup>153</sup> It was designed to fuse fighting power with manoeuvre. The cavalry-mechanised group (CMG) was usually made up of one cavalry corps with a full complement of all arms and a mechanised corps. It was often named after its commander and invariably used as a mobile group in difficult terrain. In the Belorussian Operation of June-July 1944 CMG Pliyev played a crucial role as Rokossovskiy's main mobile group. Similarly, in January 1945, CMG Oslikovskiy played a key role in 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian's East Prussian Operation.<sup>154</sup>

In 1943, Rokossovskiy frequently used individual cavalry corps, considerably smaller than a cavalry-mechanised group, as his mobile groups, in the difficult terrain of Belorussia. These cavalry corps, such as Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps were agile and mobile in the conduct of operations, often striking deep into the German operational rear, but lacked the sustained fighting power to sustain deep operational manoeuvre. As we have seen in the spring and autumn of 1943, Rokossovskiy repeatedly created brilliant deep operations that struck deep at the

systemic heart of German formations but was unable to capitalise due to the limited punching power of cavalry corps.

A Soviet mechanised corps was rarely used as a mobile group on its own, but consisted of one tank division and two mechanised divisions. It was often used in support of an army and straddled the transition between the tactical annihilation of deep battle and the rapid manoeuvre of deep operations. By 1944, the fusing of mechanised corps and cavalry corps as CMG's created a powerful instrument of deep operations that combined fighting power and remarkable mobility over very problematic terrain. This was the type of mobile group Rokossovskiy desperately needed in Belorussia during autumn 1943. Indeed, in Operation Bagration, 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Corps, deployed on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1944,<sup>155</sup> played a significant role in 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's deep operations, negotiating particularly difficult terrain in the Pripyat Marshes.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, in the East Pomeranian Operation of March 1945, 8<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps acted as the mobile group of 70<sup>th</sup> Army, part of Rokossovskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>157</sup>

In whatever form it took, during the period October 1942-May 1945, a Soviet mobile group, under the overall command of a *front* commander, such as Rokossovskiy had several tasks. These were

- pre-emption of enemy defence lines
- the defeat and disruption of enemy reserves
- securing bridgeheads and crossings
- seizure of key ground and systemic points
- threatening of enemy retreat and approach units
- exercising psychological leverage upon the enemy
- by-passing enemy strongpoints and forces
- inflicting losses on the enemy<sup>158</sup>

It is against this yardstick that Rokossovskiy's operational style and the nature of his deep operations should be judged.

The key issue for Rokossovskiy or any other *front* commander was the timing of a mobile group's committal to an operation. In Isserson's opinion this was "one of the most complex and responsible decisions"<sup>159</sup> faced by a commander. It was the pivotal moment in an operation, the time when a *front* commander such as Rokossovskiy made his move to transform tactical success in deep battle into operational victory. In the 1930's Isserson studied a variety of committal scenarios in exhausting detail.<sup>160</sup> Rokossovskiy had no hard and fast rules concerning the committal of mobile groups, being more concerned with a rapid tactical breach and a deep operational strike. On several occasions Rokossovskiy did not wait, in the approved doctrinal manner, until a clear breach in the line had been created. In his absolute commitment to avoid grinding attrition, on at least two occasions Rokossovskiy used mobile groups to complete the breach in order to restore manoeuvre to a situation, generate operational momentum and start a deep operation.

In August 1943, Rokossovskiy used both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Armies in an attempt to slice through the German lines, create momentum and deep strikes designed to undermine the Germans ability to conduct an organised fighting withdrawal.<sup>161</sup> Equally, on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1944, after two days of grinding battle,<sup>162</sup> Rokossovskiy formally ordered 3<sup>rd</sup> Army's commander Gorbатов, to use his mobile group, 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps to complete the tactical penetration of the German defences at Rogachev. The 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps smashed the German line, broke free of the Rogachev quagmire and rapidly encircled the German garrison at Bobruisk. Furthermore, in January 1945, Rokossovskiy used 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps to complete the tactical deep battle begun by Fedyuninskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army.

However, for an operational commander whose natural instinct, as early as Operation Kol'tso, in December 1942, was to launch deep, uninterrupted strikes against systemic targets designed to split the opponent and shatter his operational cohesion, Rokossovskiy was seriously inhibited in his conduct of deep operations during 1942-43. He conducted a series of operations that, although successful, did not deliver as much as they promised or as Rokossovskiy intended. First, in

1942-43, the Red Army lacked armoured, mobile formations, capable of sustaining manoeuvre into the enemy's operational depth. In 1943, Rokossovskiy frequently used individual cavalry corps, considerably smaller than a cavalry-mechanised group, as his mobile groups, in the difficult terrain of Belorussia. These cavalry corps, such as Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, were agile and mobile, often striking deep into the German operational rear, but lacked sustained fighting power. Rokossovskiy repeatedly struck deep at the systemic heart of German formations but was unable to capitalise due to the limited punching power of cavalry corps. Rokossovskiy's experiences at Stalingrad and in Belorussia during autumn 1943 demonstrated that Soviet armoured and cavalry corps did not have the fighting power and mobility provided by tank armies and cavalry mechanised groups from August 1943-May 1945.

Secondly, in 1943, Rokossovskiy was forced to use mobile groups in less than ideal circumstances. The circumstances of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's actions in February 1943, Kursk and Operation Kutuzov in July-August 1943, followed by the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation of August 1943 were distinctly problematic. In each of these operations weather, rushed preparations, deep defences, enemy resistance and poor *maskirovka* made it difficult to create a clean breach and launch deep operations of the power and momentum Rokossovskiy desired. In Belorussia, in autumn 1943, using cavalry corps Rokossovskiy was able to overcome the awkward terrain and launch deep operations but could not drive them home to achieve complete operational victories.

For example, in March 1943, 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps reached Novgorod-Severskiy, one hundred and sixty kilometres behind the German frontline. Novgorod-Severskiy was a key German supply base and represented key ground on the River Desna. It offered the opportunity to establish a bridgehead of substantial tactical and operational significance. Therefore, it was a target of considerable physical and psychological importance, a point borne out by the speed of the German reaction. It was a natural target for one of Rokossovskiy's deep operations. Yet, although 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps demonstrated the

mobility and skill to strike deep and reach Novgorod-Severskiy, it did not have the fighting power to take and hold it.

The remarkably successful deep operations Rokossovskiy's conducted from June 1944-May 1945, with CMG's and tank armies make it reasonable to suggest that had Rokossovskiy possessed a tank army or, in particular, a cavalry-mechanised group of the 1944 vintage, it would have possessed the fighting power and mobility to hold Novgorod-Severskiy and Kalinkovichi long enough for the rest of the Central Front to pull up and consolidate. In 1944-45, the new Soviet mobile groups, helped by thousands of American Dodge trucks, transformed the capacity of the Red Army to sustain deep operations. In the period June 1944-May 1945, Rokossovskiy finally had the instruments to realise his vision of deep operations, a vision that remained constant throughout the war. However, it was a long journey in theory and practice from Operation Kol'tso in January 1943 to the slashing deep operations that fragmented and splintered the Germans in East Prussia and Pomerania in 1945.

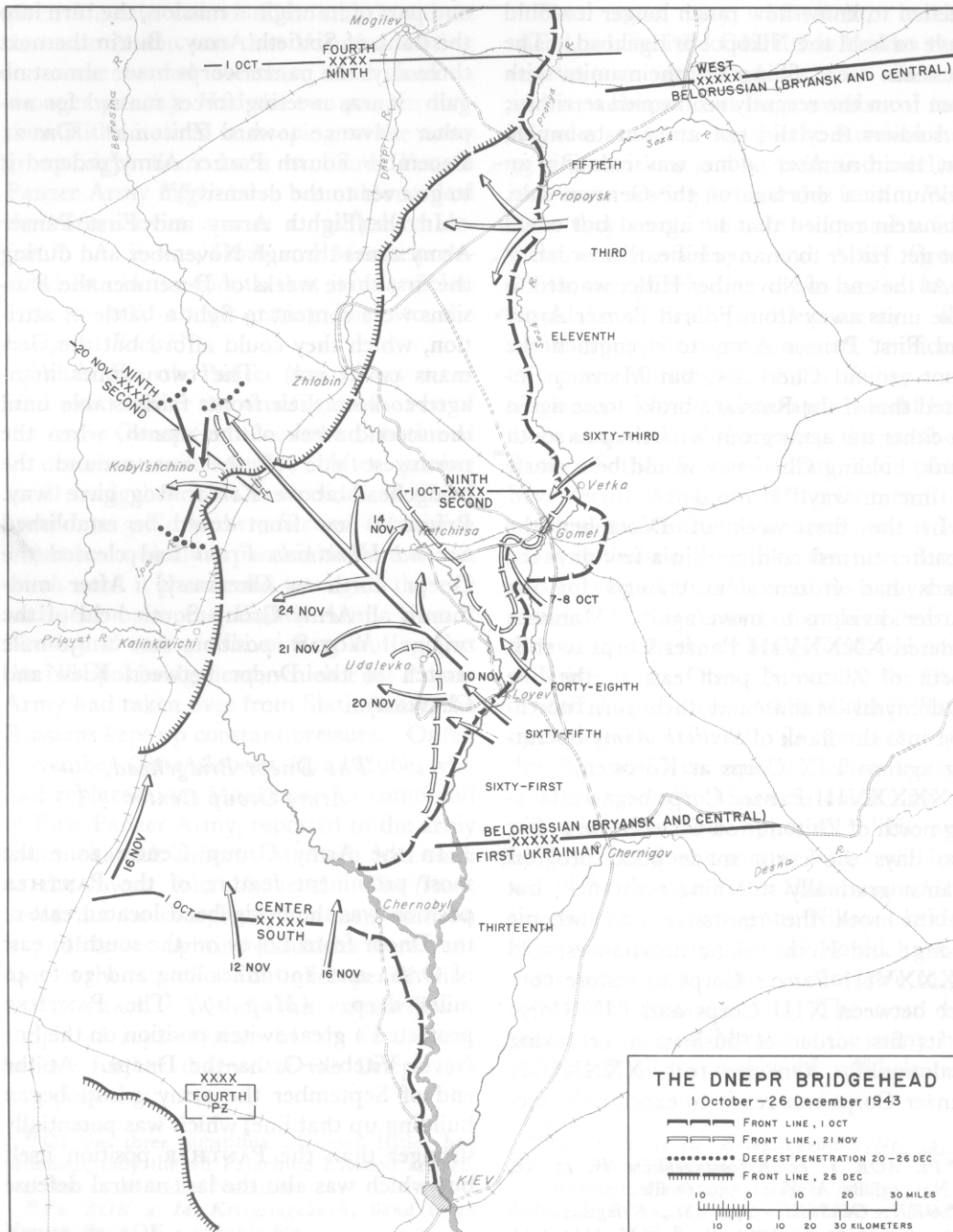
To some "the Russians for their part, cared less for speed or the final stroke; they were content to wear the enemy down blow by blow."<sup>163</sup> This is not an accurate reflection of Rokossovskiy's deep operations. The entire concept of Operation Kol'tso was to pre-empt the German defence lines and shatter the German force, not grind out a victory. Equally, in the Kromy Operation of July-August 1943 Rokossovskiy was driven by the desire to pre-empt the enemy's defence lines. In a similar way, Rokossovskiy's deep operations utilised physical points such as rivers in Chernigov-Pripyat Operation of August 1943, marsh in the Belorussian Operation, forest in the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi Operation of January 1944 and the Baltic coast in East Prussia, East Pomerania and in the Oder-Elbe Operations of January-May 1945. In addition, Rokossovskiy's entire campaign from autumn 1943-April 1944 was driven by the desire to avoid attritional war and create the possibility of manoeuvre. The manoeuvrist nature of Rokossovskiy's deep operations was the dominant theme of the Belorussian campaign.



This commitment to the conduct of manoeuvre and deep operations in highly problematic circumstances reveals Rokossovskiy military style and the nature of his deep operations. In the course of several operations Rokossovskiy targeted the key systemic points that sustained Second and Ninth German Armies in south-eastern Belorussia. Gomel, the key point of command, supply and movement was repeatedly threatened, as were the vital rail junctions of Rechitsa and Kalinkovichi. These rail junctions serviced the troops, weapons and fortifications required to make the Panther Line a deep, powerful position that would have required a series of systematic, attritional operations to penetrate. Therefore,

“a thrust across the Dnepr towards Rechitsa could outflank both the Panther position and confront 2<sup>nd</sup> Army with the unhappy task of trying to create a front in the partisan infested woods and swamps west of the Dnepr.”<sup>164</sup>

The encirclement and annihilation of German forces in Belorussia would have required sustained preparation and considerable reserves, neither of which Rokossovskiy possessed. Gradual attrition, wearing the enemy down blow by blow, would have been understandable but expensive. Furthermore, it would have given the Germans the time to consolidate the Panther Line and engage in the kind of *stellungskrieg*, or war of position and attrition,<sup>165</sup> they desired, at this stage of the war, to recover from the calamitous strategic reverses of the period November 1942-September 1943. In contrast, Rokossovskiy went out of his way to deny the Germans time and the opportunity to conduct positional and attritional operations. These were not the actions of a commander content to wear the enemy down.



**Figure 121: Belorussian autumn 1943 showing Rokossovskiy's inclination to strike deep at systemic targets.**

(Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, 1987, p.190.)

Nevertheless, if the operations of autumn 1943 demonstrate the underlying conceptual nature of Rokossovskiy's deep operations, it is the actual Belorussian Operation of June-July 1944 that most clearly demonstrates Rokossovskiy's ability to turn theory into practice. In spring 1944, *Stavka* began to plan a strategic offensive for the summer of 1944.<sup>166</sup> It involved ten major operations.

The overall aim was to drive the Wehrmacht from Soviet Union and cripple German fighting power. All operations were designed to achieve operational success in their own right, but were deliberately linked in time and space to create optimum conditions for subsequent or simultaneous operations. The centrepiece of this strategic offensive was the Belorussian Operation (23<sup>rd</sup> June-29<sup>th</sup> July 1944).<sup>167</sup> In a series of devastating deep operations Rokossovskiy's forces pre-empted several German defence lines, defeated and disrupted German reserves, seized key ground and systemic points, threatened the enemy retreat and approach routes and exerted massive psychological leverage on the enemy by repeatedly by-passing the enemy in order to strike deep.

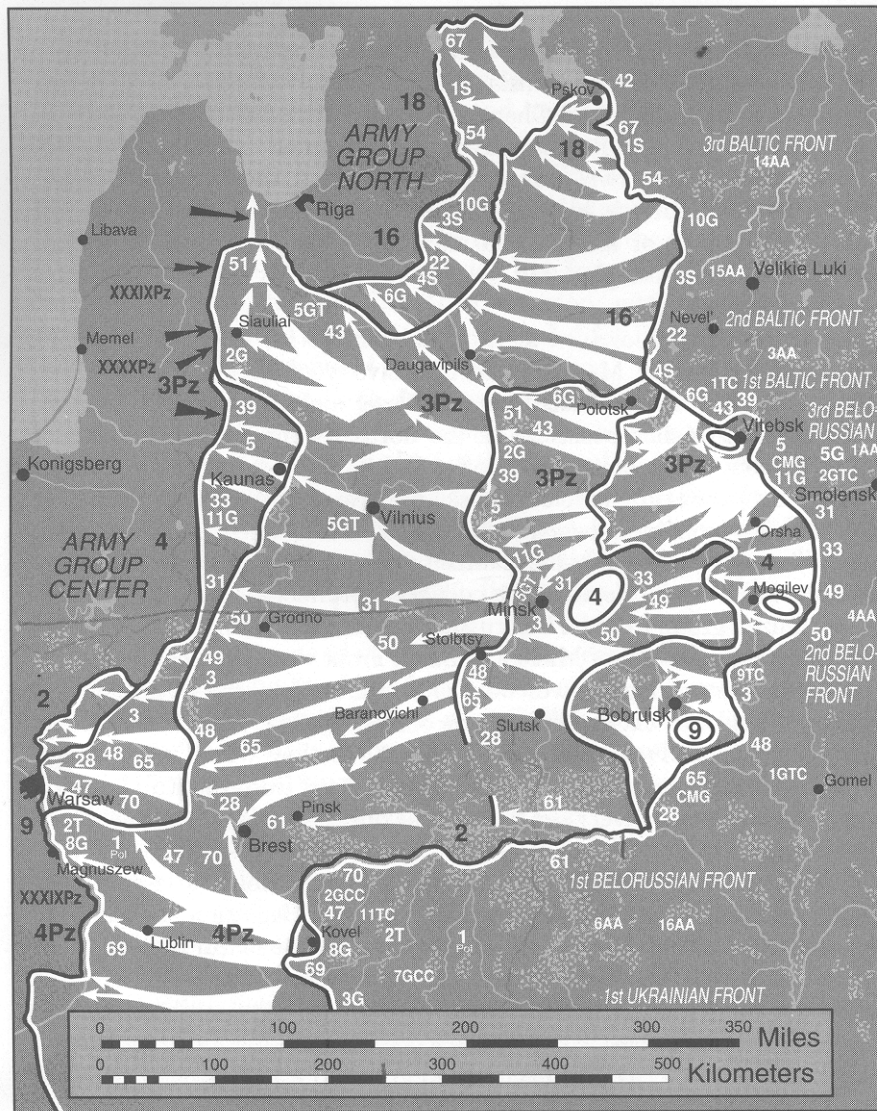
*Stavka* had ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front to destroy the German group at Bobruisk before conducting deep operations.<sup>168</sup> In the space of approximately ten days the Belorussian Operation destroyed German Army Group Centre as an effective fighting force. In addition to three other Soviet *fronts*, 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front played a pivotal role in the destruction of Army Group Centre. In particular, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian destroyed Ninth German Army before conducting deep operations that harassed Fourth German Army, liberated Minsk and undermined Army Group Centre by cutting its lines of communication and supply south-west of Minsk. Rokossovskiy conducted a frontal blow operation that contained a classical deep battle, the rapid tactical encirclement and annihilation of Ninth German Army and three simultaneous deep operations that targeted the systemic lifeblood of Army Group Centre and sought, indirectly, to turn over Fourth German Army. In essence, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations in Operation Bagration were a master class of operational art. The Belorussian Operation was Rokossovskiy's finest hour and represents a singular example of Rokossovskiy's operational style, particularly the systemic nature of his deep operations.

The use of cavalry by the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War is often greeted with disbelief by those unaware of the fighting power and versatility of a Soviet cavalry-mechanised group. In the Belorussian Operation, Cavalry Mechanised

Group (CMG) Pliyev made up of 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps and 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Corps transformed tactical success into operational victory. On 25<sup>th</sup> June 1944, just twenty-four hours into 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's operation, CMG Pliyev had already launched a deep operation. It moved through the breach created by 65<sup>th</sup> Army at Parichi. Rokossovskiy's target was a series of key systemic points designed to undermine the operational and strategic cohesion of Ninth German and Army Group Centre.

The initial target was Slutsk<sup>169</sup> because "Slutsk was on the main road from Bobruysk to Baranovichi and was the rail center for German divisions coming from the south."<sup>170</sup> Therefore, a successful deep strike on Slutsk had serious operational implications for Army Group Centre, undermining German mobility and "depriving the German command of the possibility of organizing a defence on the Minsk-Slutsk line."<sup>171</sup> In short, Rokossovskiy was determined to pre-empt the Germans ability to use Slutsk in order to organise defences south-west of Minsk.<sup>172</sup>

By 29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, CMG Pliyev's forward detachments were on the outskirts of Slutsk,<sup>173</sup> followed by 65<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Army. At dawn, CMG Pliyev attacked Slutsk from the north, east and south, while 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Corps came from the south-west and 28<sup>th</sup> Army from the south. After a brief, but intense battle "our forces occupied Slutsk at 11.00 hours on 30 June, having completely driven the enemy from the town."<sup>174</sup> Slutsk was taken and the German objective of stabilising the line south-west of Minsk pre-empted.<sup>175</sup> The Germans withdrew to Baranovichi, a key rail junction. Rokossovskiy ordered aggressive pursuit and the capture of Baranovichi.<sup>176</sup>



**Figure 122: Rokossovskiy's deep operations during the Belorussian Operation on Slutsk, Stoltzby, Baranovichi and Minsk in July 1944.**  
(Glantz and House, *When Titans Clashed*, 1995, p.200.)

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1944, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front struck further powerful systemic blows against Ninth German Army and Army Group Centre. The 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, also part of CMG Pliyev, captured in quick succession, the towns of Stoltzby, Mir, Gorodzei and Nesvizh.<sup>177</sup> As a result “we had severed the most important lines of communication from Minsk to Baranovichi, Brest and Luninets.”<sup>178</sup> This was a major operational, indeed strategic, setback for Army Group Centre. Therefore, in a textbook example of deep operations, following Rokossovskiy's orders, CMG Pliyev had seized key ground, pre-empted a major defence line, captured an enemy strongpoint and disrupted the enemy's tactical,

operational and even strategic mobility by severing the rail links between Minsk, Baranovichi and Brest. If Rokossovskiy's style of operations had not emphasised depth and the targeting of systemic points, German forces trapped in Bobruisk would have been utterly annihilated, but 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front would have faced greater resistance south and west of Minsk. It was the operational pre-emption and disruption of these German plans that generated further momentum for the Belorussian Operation and created a German strategic catastrophe on the Eastern Front.

The systemic nature of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations was also revealed by Rokossovskiy's orders to 65<sup>th</sup> Army. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1944, the very day the encirclement at Bobruisk was secured, Rokossovskiy actually ordered 65<sup>th</sup> Army to move away from Bobruisk. It was ordered to take Osipovichi and cut the main Minsk-Bobruisk line. On 29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, 65<sup>th</sup> Army took Osipovichi, moved on Slutsk and then following CMG Pliyev's capture of Slutsk, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1944, 65<sup>th</sup> Army moved on Baranovichi, ninety miles west of Slutsk. Baranovichi was a key rail junction, south-west of Minsk. It was of absolutely critical importance in feeding in German reserves already on the move from other sectors of the Eastern Front in an attempt to stabilise Army Group Centre. Its operational, indeed strategic significance was not lost on the German high command. Indeed, such was Baranovichi's importance to Army Group Centre, that on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1944, the day Soviet troops actually entered Minsk, Field Marshal Model still "concentrated his forces to delay the Soviet drive southwest toward the rail center at Baranovichi."<sup>179</sup>

Rokossovskiy knew the entire German position in Belorussia hinged on Baranovichi and without it Army Group Centre would be in mortal jeopardy.

"The German command hurriedly reinforced its Baranovichi grouping by transferring the 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division to it. The remnants of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 383<sup>rd</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, 269<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Divisions were hurriedly regrouped and organized a defense around Baranovichi. Our forces began to be subjected to ever increasing enemy air attacks."<sup>180</sup>

The Germans wished to use Baranovichi as a platform to introduce reserves and drag 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front into a positional struggle, thus creating more time to deploy further German reserves. Rokossovskiy was determined to prevent the need to capture Baranovichi from curtailing 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's operational momentum. It was never going to be conceded to an *obkhod* as Baranovichi was too important. On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1944, Rokossovskiy ordered 65<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Armies to take Baranovichi by concentric attack, supported by 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps and 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Corps. Simultaneously, CMG Pliyev was to envelop Baranovichi from the north while sustaining the depth of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's advance.<sup>181</sup>

The relationship between the rapid capture of Baranovichi the Soviet deep operation and the Germans desire to halt Rokossovskiy's offensive became even more acute on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1944. The *Stavka* formally ordered Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front to develop its offensive deep into the operational and strategic rear of Army Group Centre. It was to take Baranovichi and Luninets, no later than 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July 1944, before moving on Brest, a key systemic point, upon which German hopes of stabilising the situation in Belorussia depended. The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was also to cross the River Bug and establish a bridgehead. These were extraordinarily ambitious objectives.<sup>182</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> July 1944, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian faced fierce resistance in Baranovichi. The fighting intensified on 6<sup>th</sup> July as Rokossovskiy launched attacks on Baranovichi from the north-west, north, east and south supported by airpower.

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1944, with five hundred bombers,<sup>183</sup> Soviet armour and infantry fought their way into Baranovichi. The attack splintered the defenders and drove them out through the western gateway deliberately left open by Rokossovskiy. In short, Rokossovskiy knew he would have to fight for Baranovichi but wished to flush them out, rather than trap them in order to preserve depth and operational momentum. On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944, two days earlier than demanded,<sup>184</sup> Baranovichi was cleared by Soviet troops and 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front resumed its pursuit of German forces towards Brest.

Simultaneously, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front also conducted a deep strike on Minsk. It is the contention of this thesis that with its destruction of Ninth German Army, its assault on Army Group Centre's systemic rear and the deep operation on Minsk, Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front played a key tactical, operational but also strategic role in the Belorussian Operation, the greatest Soviet victory in World War Two.<sup>185</sup> By 26<sup>th</sup> June 1944, just four days into Operation Bagration, it was already clear that the Red Army had launched an operation of tremendous magnitude. However, it was not inevitable that the defeat of individual armies, such as Ninth German Army, should lead to the systemic implosion of Army Group Centre. The city of Minsk was pivotal to the question of whether Bagration was tactically and operationally successful, in that individual German armies were defeated or strategically successful by inducing the collapse of an entire German army group. Minsk was the capital of Belorussia and the administrative, communications, supply and command headquarters of Army Group Centre. It was the brain that controlled the mass of Army Group Centre. It was, therefore, a natural target for Rokossovskiy.

Minsk lay at the heart of the regional rail and road network in a region notoriously bereft of both, littered with forests, rivers and marshes all infested with partisans. If Minsk held, then German reserves could be deployed quickly, in a relatively organised manner, enabling the Germans to establish a defensive position on the Berezina. It was this strategic issue that made the operational question of Baranovichi so important, for without Baranovichi, the German position around Minsk would be pre-empted and seriously compromised. If Minsk fell, Army Group Centre faced collapse and with it a German strategic crisis on the Eastern Front. Therefore, the strategic question of Minsk was directly related to the operational question of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations on Slutsk and Baranovichi. This is why Rokossovskiy had prioritised the acquisition of operational depth rather than the destruction of German troops in the Bobruisk pocket.



The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was also connected to the fate of Fourth German Army, deployed east of Minsk, in eastern Belorussia. By early 26<sup>th</sup> June 1944, Fourth German Army's position was extremely difficult but not catastrophic. To the north, Third Panzer Army was adrift, pursued by 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front; to the east, Fourth German Army was directly engaged by 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front, which after seventy-two hours had finally managed to punch a hole in Fourth German Army's defences. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front was about to launch two deep operations targeted at Fourth German Army's operational rear, on the Berezina, east of Minsk. In the south-east, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front confronted Fourth German Army. Its three armies, 33<sup>rd</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> fixed the German forces in continuous, attritional fighting.<sup>186</sup>

Naturally, 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations on the Berezina represented a serious operational threat to the German idea of a coherent fighting withdrawal. By 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944, it was clear that despite its fighting prowess, on its own Fourth German would struggle to contain a combination of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front, east of the Berezina. However, although Fourth German Army confronted a problematic situation, its position was not utterly hopeless. Its southern divisions were conducting a highly efficient rearguard operation against 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. If Fourth German managed a coherent fighting withdrawal to the Berezina, if Baranovichi and Minsk held, then with the help of German reserves there was a chance that the German line could be stabilised.

However, in many respects the fate of Fourth German Army was just as dependent upon the outcome of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations. By 29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, the imminent collapse of Ninth German Army and 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations were already beginning to exert considerable influence on Fourth German Army and Army Group Centre. A rapid, deep strike by 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, up the west bank of the Berezina, towards Minsk, could trap Fourth German Army, east of the Berezina. To be gradually pushed out of eastern Belorussia by 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front, while conducting a fighting withdrawal, in the psychological expectation of German reserves in Minsk was

one thing. To be trapped east of the Berezina between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian to the east and 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front coming from the south and south-west, risked complete annihilation. If Fourth German Army collapsed, then Army Group Centre was lost. Furthermore, regardless of the situation east of the Berezina, if Baranovich was lost, Army Group Centre would struggle to find sufficient reserves to stabilise the German line east of Minsk.

The original Soviet General Staff plan for Bagration of 20<sup>th</sup> May 1944 formally included the idea of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian conducting an *obkhod* on Minsk.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, in keeping with the *obkhod* theory, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operation on Minsk targeted the will of Fourth German Army's and the brain of Army Group Centre. It began on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1944, and quickly began to have a psychological impact out of all proportion to its actual size. Rokossovskiy ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps to move on Minsk with clear instructions to by-pass enemy formations. On 29<sup>th</sup> June 1944, 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps by-passed German blocking units at Talka, a hundred kilometres south of Minsk, and resumed its advance up the Bobruisk-Minsk highway.<sup>188</sup> Equally, in keeping with the *Stavka* directive of 31<sup>st</sup> May 1944,<sup>189</sup> Rokossovskiy ordered 3<sup>rd</sup> Army to systematically harass the southern divisions of Fourth German Army.<sup>190</sup> As German units disengaged from 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's Mogilev sector they came under attack from Gorbатов's 3rd Army infiltrating the marshes.<sup>191</sup> On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1944, CMG Pliyev took Slutsk and moved on the key junctions of Stoltzby and Baranovich.

In this sense, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations south-west of Minsk exerted a powerful psychological and physical influence upon the operational situation east of Minsk, as well as the strategic fate of Army Group Centre. Therefore, Rokossovskiy's prioritisation of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations and their systemic focus transformed the operational and strategic dilemma confronted by Fourth German Army and Army Group Centre. First, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was already on the *western* bank of the Berezina. Secondly, it was moving north, up the Berezina, on Minsk, to cut off Fourth German's route of escape. Third,

further west, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was in the process of disrupting the movement of German reserves into Minsk, to stabilise Army Group Centre.

As early as 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944, Army Group Centre understood the operational and strategic implications of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations. The 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, rushed into Minsk, was not sent east to support Fourth German Army. It was sent south to protect the southern approaches to Minsk, against 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. Therefore,

“on 28 June most of the fresh 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division had arrived at Marina Gorka on the Ptich River, 50 kilometers northwest of Osipovichi and 55 kilometers south of Minsk. The panzer division had three possible courses: first, to help delay Panov's 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps in moving up the main road to Minsk from Bobruysk; second, to delay Bakharov's 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps from threatening the southern flank of Tippelskirch's 4<sup>th</sup> Army; and, third, to move down to Slutsk to help 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division to stop the Pliev Horse-Mechanized Group that had broken through north of Herrlein's LV Corps. The decision was made to use the 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division along with Battle Groups von Bergen and Lindig to stop Panov's 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps and Batov's 65<sup>th</sup> Army at Talka on the main road to Minsk.”<sup>192</sup>

Army Group Centre recognised that Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front threatened a strategic calamity, whereas 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front, if they could be held on the Berezina, threatened a severe, but manageable operational defeat. In the period 29<sup>th</sup> June - 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1944, 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer fought a series of tactical actions that delayed, but did not halt 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations. Thousands escaped Bobruisk but 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer was by-passed because it could not operate effectively in the marshes and forests west of the Berezina.<sup>193</sup> In contrast, as part of his meticulous preparations, Rokossovskiy had specifically trained his armoured forces for such conditions.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1944, as 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division fended off 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army, other units of 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front by-passed the German rearguard and took Borisov, on the Berezina. The Fourth German Army was split in two: half on the western bank and half on the eastern bank.<sup>194</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1944, as 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian forces entered Minsk from the north and east, they met up with 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps, coming from the south.<sup>195</sup> German units streaming away to the south-west from Minsk found their escape routes already severed by Rokossovskiy's CMG Pliyev. It had taken Stoltzby, identified by the General Staff as a key objective,<sup>196</sup> on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1944.<sup>197</sup>

Operation Bagration represents the pinnacle of Rokossovskiy's operational career. It was an operation that brought together all aspects of Rokossovskiy's operational style with deep operations that shattered the enemy's operational cohesion and undermined his ability to fight effectively. The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front played a critical tactical, operational and strategic role in the Belorussian Operation turning it from a hugely impressive operational success into a victory of shattering strategic proportions. In short, "for the German army in the east, it was a catastrophe of unbelievable proportions, greater than that of Stalingrad, obliterating between twenty-five and twenty-eight divisions, 350,000 men in all."<sup>198</sup>

In conceptual terms, there was little to choose between the systemic nature of Rokossovskiy's deep operations in February and November 1943 with the shattering blows he inflicted on the Germans in July 1944. Rokossovskiy's deep operations were marked by speed and depth designed to shatter the enemy's operational cohesion by targeting systemic points upon which effective enemy resistance depended. At the same time, Rokossovskiy also focussed on the psychological turning of German minds by presenting them with the imminent threat of catastrophe. In summary, with greater resources Rokossovskiy was finally able to realise the true nature of his deep operations, first revealed in his original plan for Operation Kol'tso in December 1942, continued in Belorussia in 1943 but not refined until 1944-45.

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- <sup>1</sup> G.A. Koltunov and B.V. Solov'ev, *Kurskaya Bitva*, (Moscow, 1983), pp. 72-92.
- <sup>2</sup> A.M. Vol'pe 'Frontalnyi Udar' (Frontal Blow) in A.B. Kadishev in *Voprosy Strategii i Operativnogo Iskusstva*, op. cit. p. 362-373. Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 97. Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. pp. 213-215 discusses the different forms of frontal blow.
- <sup>3</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1976), p. 577 provides an excellent schematic of the frontal blow with an outstanding article by Marshal Ogarkov, Chief of the Soviet General Staff.
- <sup>4</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development Russian-Soviet Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 78.
- <sup>5</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. pp. 16-19.
- <sup>6</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 109.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> It is ironic that when in charge of South-Western Front in the May 1942 Kharkov Operation this is exactly what happened to Timoshenko's forces. In Operation Fredericus, the Germans absorbed the initial blow and then counter-attacked the shoulders of the penetration trapping Soviet forces in a cul-de-sac. The Soviet forces lost over 200,000 troops in a week and Timoshenko never recovered Stalin's confidence.
- <sup>10</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 109.
- <sup>11</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 214.
- <sup>12</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 192.
- <sup>13</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 214.
- <sup>14</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 109.
- <sup>15</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 63.
- <sup>16</sup> See Bruce W. Menning, 'The Deep Strike in Russian and Soviet Military History', *Journal of Soviet Military History*, Vol. 1, No.1, April 1988, p. 9-25.
- <sup>17</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 323.
- <sup>18</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 198.
- <sup>19</sup> K.K. Rokossovskii, 'Dva Glavnykh Udara,' (Two Main Blows), *Voyenno Istroicheskii Zhurnal*, (Moscow, 1964), No.6, pp. 13-18, this pp. 14-15.
- <sup>20</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 215.
- <sup>21</sup> N. Varfolomeyev cited in Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 270.
- <sup>22</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 2294. d. 1. l. 47-51 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), p. 565. 'Doklad Predstavatelya Stavki No: 15 Verkhovnomu Glavnomanduyushchemu Plana Ispol'zovaniya 2-y Gvardeyskoy Armii Dlya Likvidatsii Okruzhennoy V Stalingrade Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Report No: 15 Of The Stavka Representative On The Plan To Utilise 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army To Liquidate The Encircled Enemy Grouping In Stalingrad).
- <sup>23</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Na Pobede Na Volge*, op. cit. p. 304.
- <sup>24</sup> Bernd Wegner, *Germany and the Second World*, op. cit. pp. 1140-1147.
- <sup>25</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 217.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 222.
- <sup>27</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede Na Volge*, op. cit. p. 430.
- <sup>28</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobede Na Volge*, op. cit. p. 432.
- <sup>29</sup> *Tsentrallyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 16-A. op. 1002. d. 1. l. 26-29 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 568-569. 'Doklad Predstavatelya Stavki Verkhovnomu Glavnomanduyushchemu Plana Razgroma Okruzhennoy V Stalingrade Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Report Of The Stavka Representative To The Supreme Commander On The Destruction Of The Encircled Enemy Grouping At Stalingrad), 27 December 1942.
- <sup>30</sup> Bernd Wegner, *Germany and The Second World War*, op. cit. p. 1168. These were 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured, 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Armoured and 16<sup>th</sup> Armoured Corps.
- <sup>31</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 25.
- <sup>32</sup> Louis Rotundo, ed., *Battle for Stalingrad, The Soviet General Staff Study*, (Pergamon-Brassey's, 1989), p. 153.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

- <sup>34</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2430. d. 1369. l. 233-236 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), p. 312-313. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shataba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Razvitiy Nastupleniya i Vykhode Podvizhnykh Chasey Fronta K Yuzhnomu Poberezh'yu Danzigskey Bukhty V Rayone Severnee El'binga' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Development Of The Offensive And Movement Of Front Mobile Formations To The Southern Coast Of The Bay Of Danzig In The Area North Of Elbing), 26<sup>th</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>35</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2430. d. 72. l. 335-344 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 307-308. 'Operativnaya Svodka Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Boevykh Deystviyakh Voysk Fronta' (Operational Summary Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Combat Actions Of The Front's Forces), 24<sup>th</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>36</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 190-193 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 307-308. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Proryve Yuzhnogo i Yugo-Zapadnogo Sektorov Vneshnego Obvoda Vostochno-Prusskoy Polosy Oborony Protivnika' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Breakthrough Of The Outer Defences Covering The Southern And South-Western Sectors Of The Enemy's East Prussian Defence Zone), 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>37</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1961), pp. 104-105 has a map that provides a clear indication of how the fragmenting and dividing strikes were linked into one frontal blow operation.
- <sup>38</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 213. l. 25 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 198. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:11021 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Perenose Osnovnykh Usiliy Fronta V Vostochnuyu Pomeraniyu' (Stavka VGK Directive No:11021 To The Commander Of 2nd Belorussian Front Concerning The Intensification Of Efforts To Move Forces To The East Pomeranian Front).
- <sup>39</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 213. l. 32 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 201. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:11026 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta Ob Utverzhdenii Plana Ispol'zovaniya 19-y Armii i 3-go Gvardeyskogo Tankogo Korpusa' (Stavka VGK Directive No:11026 To The Commander Of 2nd Belorussian Front Concerning Approval Of The Plan To Utilise 19th Army and 3rd Guards Tank Corps).
- <sup>40</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 213. l. 45 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 206. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:11035 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Razvitiye Operatsii V Vostochnoy Prussii' (Stavka VGK Directive No:11035 To The Commander Of The 2nd Belorussian Front On Developing The Offensive Into East Prussia).
- <sup>41</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 237. op. 2394. d. 1526. l. 33-35 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), 'Operativnaya Direktiva 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta No:00110/OP' (Operational Directive Of 2nd Belorussian Front), 14.30, 17th December 1944. pp. 329-330.
- <sup>42</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 5, Map 4.
- <sup>43</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 419.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 422.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.
- <sup>46</sup> S.K. Timoshenko, 'Closing Speech of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR' in Harold S. Orenstein, op. cit. p. 111.
- <sup>47</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 307.
- <sup>48</sup> Major General N. Talenskiy, 'The Development of Operational Art According To The Experience Of Recent Warfare' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 158.
- <sup>49</sup> Colonel N.N. Fomin, 'Soviet Operational Art: Birth and Primary Stages of Development' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. II, op. cit. p. 186.
- <sup>50</sup> Lieutenant General V. Zlobin, 'The Triumph of Soviet Operational Art in the Great Patriotic War,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 232.
- <sup>51</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 145.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 507.
- <sup>54</sup> Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years War to the Third Reich*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005), p. xiii.

- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.
- <sup>56</sup> See Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel*, (Cornell, 2003). Robert M. Citino, *Quest for Decisive Victory*, (University Press of Kansas, 2002), pp. 193-210.
- <sup>57</sup> Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War*, op. cit. p. 240.
- <sup>58</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 106.
- <sup>59</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 192.
- <sup>60</sup> A.I. Yegorov, 'Tactics and Operational Art of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army at a New Stage' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 325.
- <sup>61</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 290.
- <sup>62</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 213.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 239.
- <sup>64</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 54.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 57.
- <sup>66</sup> Major General N. Talenskiy, 'The Development of Operational Art According To The Experience Of Recent Warfare,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 145.
- <sup>67</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 59.
- <sup>68</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 9.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 10.
- <sup>70</sup> Major General N. Pavlenko, 'Some Questions Concerning The Development of Strategic Theory In The 1920's in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. p. 81.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 9.
- <sup>73</sup> Colonel R. Savushkin, 'On The Question of the Origin of the Theory of Successive Offensive Operations (1921-29), in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. p. 246.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> Major General N. Pavlenko, 'Some Questions Concerning The Development of Strategic Theory In the 1920's in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. p. 83.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 10.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 13.
- <sup>79</sup> Major General N. Pavlenko, 'Some Questions Concerning The Development of Strategic Theory I The 1920's in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. p. 83.
- <sup>80</sup> Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East*, (London, Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 66-73. The Germans encircled Smolensk on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1941, but it took weeks of bitter fighting before the Germans reduced the pocket.
- <sup>81</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 139. l. 212, 213 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 93. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220111 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta Ob Izmenenii Sostava 3-y i 48-y Armiy.' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220111 To The Commander Of 1st Belorussian Front Concerning The Change Of Formation Of 3rd And 48th Armies)
- <sup>82</sup> See V. Panov, 'Okruzheniye i Unitozheniye Krupnykh Gruppirovki Protivnika v Belorusskoy Operatsii', (Encirclement and Annihilation of Substantial Enemy Forces in the Belorussian Operation', *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.6, (June 1974), pp. 18-26, this pp. 22-24.
- <sup>83</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad To Berlin*, op. cit. pp. 322-323.
- <sup>84</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 103.
- <sup>85</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 336.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 337.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 338. See also, Komarov, G.O. et al., *16-ya Vozdushnaya: Voenno-Istoricheskiy Ocherk O Boyevom Puti 16-y Vozdushnoy Armii (1942-1945)*, (16<sup>th</sup> Air Army: A Military-Historical Study of the Combat Path of the 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army), (Voenizdat, 1973), p. 178.
- <sup>88</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *Soviet Blitzkrieg, The Battle for White Russia*, (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 200.

- <sup>89</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 204.
- <sup>90</sup> David M. Glantz, *Zhukov's Greatest Operational Defeat*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999), p. 23.
- <sup>91</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 3. op. 11556, d. 12. l. 81, 82 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 26 'Direktiva Stavka VGK No:30043 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta Na Vykhod V Tyl Rzhevsko-Vyazemsko-Bryanskoy Gruppirovke Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive No:30043 To The Commander Of The Central Front On The Movement Into The Rear Of The Rzhev-Vyazma-Bryansk Group Of Enemy Forces).
- <sup>92</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 1691. d. 233. l. 63, 64 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 282-283 'Doklad Predstavatelya Stavki No:43 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu Predlozhenii O Perenose Srokov Nachala Operatsii "Polyarnaya Zvezda"' (Report No:43 Of The Stavka Representative To The Supreme Commander Concerning The Start Time Of Operation "Polar Star").
- <sup>93</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, op. cit. note 1, p. 389.
- <sup>94</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 167.
- <sup>95</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 189.
- <sup>96</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, *Moscow-The Turning Point*, (Oxford, Berg, 1992), pp. 206-207 provided compelling evidence to show how, at Moscow, Zhukov clearly concentrated his forces on the right and left wings of Western Front, in anticipation of the German pincer movement that duly revealed itself as the German method of attack.
- <sup>97</sup> *Sovetskaya Voenneya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), p. 676.
- <sup>98</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. endnote 99, p. 205 is quite scathing about western ignorance of this concept.
- <sup>99</sup> See Chris Bellamy, 'Heirs of Genghis Khan: The Influence of the Tartar-Mongols on the Imperial Russian and Soviet Armies', *The Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, CXXVIII, No1, March 1983, pp. 54-55.
- <sup>100</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle*, op. cit. p. 33.
- <sup>101</sup> Cited in Christopher Bellamy, *The Evolution of Land Warfare: Theory and Practice*, op. cit. p. 136.
- <sup>102</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 181.
- <sup>103</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 104.
- <sup>104</sup> M.E. Katukov, *1-ya Gvardeyskaya v Boyakh Pod Moskvoy*, (1<sup>st</sup> Guards (Tank Brigade) in the Battle for Moscow) in Sokolov, E. Ed., *Bitva za Moskvu*, (The Battle for Moscow), (Rabochniy, Moscow, 1966), p. 200 makes it clear that this was in response to a specific order from Rokossovskiy.
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- <sup>107</sup> The exception to this was the February 1943 Operation but this cannot really be attributed to Rokossovskiy, more to Stavka's unrealistic timetable.
- <sup>108</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 238.
- <sup>109</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 310. Batov, op. cit. pp. 360-368.
- <sup>110</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 192.
- <sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>112</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3409. d. 8. l. 33, 34 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 61. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:46039 Komanduyushchim Voyskami Donskogo I Bryanskogo Frontov O Perediskatsii Upravleniya, Frontovikh Chastey I Uchrezhdeniy Donskogo Fronta' (Stavka VGK Directive No:46039 To The Commanders Of The Don And Bryansk Fronts Concerning The Re-Deployment Of The Headquarters, Front Formations And Establishment Of The Don Front).
- <sup>113</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3409. d. 8. l. 30 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 58. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:46038 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Donskogo Fronta O Vykhode V Reserv Verkhovnogo Glavnokomandovaniya Upravleniy 21-y i 64-y Armiy' (Stavka VGK Directive No:46038 To The Commander Of The Central Front About The Withdrawal In To The Supreme Command's Reserve Of The 21st and 64th Armies Headquarters).
- <sup>114</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3763. d. 142. l. 31, 32 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 70. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:46056 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Donskogo Fronta Ob Obrazovanii Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta' (Stavka VGK



Directive No:46056 To The Commander Of The Don Front Concerning The Formation Of The Central Front).

<sup>115</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. p. 253.

<sup>116</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3409. d. 8. l. 30 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 64 replaced 64<sup>th</sup> Army with 65<sup>th</sup> Army. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:46046 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Donskogo Fronta O Vykhode Upravleniya, Armeyskikh Chastey I Uchrezhdeniy 65-y Armii V Reserv Verkhovnogo Glavnokomandovaniya' (Stavka VGK Directive No:46046 To The Commander Of The Don Front Concerning The Withdrawal Of The Headquarters, Army Units And Establishment of 65<sup>th</sup> Army Into The Reserve Of The Supreme Command).

<sup>117</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 103. l. 263-265 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 73-74. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30043 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta Na Nastupleniye s Tsel'yu Vykoda V Tyl Rzhnevskoy-Vyazemskoy-Bryanskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive No:30043 To The Commander Of The Central Front On The Offensive With The Aim Of Moving Into The Rear Of The Rzhnev-Vyazma-Bryansk Enemy Grouping).

<sup>118</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. p. 253.

<sup>119</sup> David M. Glantz, *From the Don to the Dnepr*, (Frank Cass, 1991), pp. 82-150 gives an excellent account of this operation.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-214.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>122</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 32.

<sup>123</sup> Anan'ev I.M., *Tankovye Armii v Nastuplenii*, (Tank Armies on the Attack), (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988), p. 60 indicates that 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was formed by Stavka order on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943 from 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Army of the Bryansk Front.

<sup>124</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3763. d. 142. l. 31,32 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 70 included them in the Don Front's establishment. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No: 46056 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Donskogo Fronta Ob Obrazovanii Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta' (Stavka VGK Directive No:46056 To The Commander Of The Don Front Concerning The Formation Of The Central Front).

<sup>125</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. pp. 253-255.

<sup>126</sup> TSAMO f. 62. op. 321. d. 18. l. 6-11 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 280-283. 'Plan Nastupatel'noy Operatsii Voysk Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta Na Smolenskom Napravelenii' (Plan Of Offensive Operations Of The Central Front On The Smolensk Direction), 15<sup>th</sup> February 1943.

<sup>127</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 5. l. 20,21 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 284. 'Boevoye Rasporyazheniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:0022 Komanduyushchemu 2-y Tankovoy Armii Na Zanyatiye Iskhodnogo Polozheniya Dlya Hastupleniya' (Battle Instructions Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commander Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army On The Occupation Of Jumping Off Positions For The Offensive), 18.30 Hours, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1943.

<sup>128</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 5. l. 22,23 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 285. 'Boevoye Rasporyazheniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:0023 Komanduyushchemu 65-y Armii Na Zanyatiye Iskhodnogo Polozheniya Dlya Hastupleniya' (Battle Instructions Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:0023 To The Commander Of 65<sup>th</sup> Army On The Occupation Of Jumping Off Positions For The Offensive), 18.30 Hours, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1943.

<sup>129</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62, op. 321. d. 5. l. 24-25 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 285. 'Boevoye Rasporyazheniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:0024 Komanduyushchemu Konno-Strelkovoy Gruppy Na Zanyatiye Iskhodnogo Polozheniya Dlya Hastupleniya' (Battle Instructions Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:0024 To The Commander Of The Cavalry-Infantry Group On The Occupation Of Jumping Off Positions For The Forthcoming Offensive), 18.30 Hours, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1943.

<sup>130</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. p. 257.

<sup>131</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 33. l. 26-31 in ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 286-287. 'Spravka O Polozhenii i Sostoyanii Voysk Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta K Utru 24.2.1943 g' (Information About The Situation And Condition Of The Forces Of The Central Front On The Morning Of 24<sup>th</sup> February 1943), 24<sup>th</sup> February 1943

- <sup>132</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 257.
- <sup>133</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>134</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 258.
- <sup>135</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 3. op. 11556. d. 12. l. 258-259 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 47 'Direktiva Stavka VGK No:30067 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta Na Razgrom Dmitrovsko-Orlovskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive 30067 To The Commander Of The Central Front On The Destruction Of The Enemy Dmitrov-Orlovsk Group), 7<sup>th</sup> March 1943.
- <sup>136</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 5. l. 55,56 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 293.(No.297) 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No:0072 Komanduyushchemu 21-y Armiyey Na Perekhode V Nastupleniye' (Order Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commander of 21<sup>st</sup> Army On The Transition To The Offensive), 13.00 Hours, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1943.
- <sup>137</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 5. l. 57-59 in ed. Zolotarev, RA;VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 293-294. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No:0073 Komanduyushchemu 70-y Armiyey Na Razvitiye Nastupleniya' (Order Of The Central Front Commander No:0073 To The Commander of 70<sup>th</sup> Army On The Development Of The Offensive), 13.00 Hours, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1943
- <sup>138</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 5. l. 60-63 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 294-295. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No:0074 Komanduyushchim 65-y i 2-y Tankovoy Armiyami Na Razvitiye Nastupleniya' (Order Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:0074 To The Commanders of 65<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army On The Development Of The Offensive), 18.30 Hours, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1943.
- <sup>139</sup> David M. Glantz, 'Prelude to Kursk: Soviet Strategic Operations, February-March 1943, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, (Vol.8, No.1, March 1995), p. 25.
- <sup>140</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 3. op. 11556. d. 12. l. 267,268 in ed. Zolotarev, RA;VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 50. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:30070 Chlenu GKO G.M. Malenkov, Predstavitel'yu Stavki A.I. Antonovu, Komanduyushchim Zapadnogo, Bryanskogo i Tsentral'nogo Frontov O Radformirovanni Bryanskogo Fronta' (Stavka Directive VGK 30070 To Member Of The State Defence Committee GKO, G.M. Malenkov, Stavka Representative, A.I. Antonov, And To The Commanders Of The Western, Bryansk and Central Fronts About The Abolition Of The Bryansk Front), 01.30 Hours, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943.
- <sup>141</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 3. op. 11556. d. 12. l. 270,271 in ed. Zolotarev, RA;VO, Vol. 15-4 (3), (Moscow, 1997), p. 51. 'Direktiva Stavka VGK No:30072 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta Na Razgromgruppirovki Protivnika Severnee Khar'kova' (Stavka Directive No:30072 To The Commander Of The Central Front On The Destruction Of The Enemy Grouping North Of Khar'kov), 02.00 Hours, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943.
- <sup>142</sup> David M. Glantz, 'Prelude to Kursk: Soviet Strategic Operations, February-March 1943,' *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, (Vol.8, No.1, March 1995), p. 27.
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 23. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 257.
- <sup>144</sup> N. Varfolomeyev, 'Operativnoye Iskusstva na Sovremennom Etape,' (Operational Art at the Contemporary Stage), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, (Red Star), 3 June 1932, p. 2 cited in Richard Harrison, *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904-1940*, op. cit. p. 195.
- <sup>145</sup> V.K. Triandafillov, cited in Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 125.
- <sup>146</sup> Bruce W. Lincoln, *Red Victory*, (Cardinal, 1989) really does convey the sheer scale of this war.
- <sup>147</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 282.
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 284.
- <sup>149</sup> G. Isserson, 'The Development of the Theory of Soviet Operational Art in the 1930's' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. II, op. cit. pp. 41-42.
- <sup>150</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 271.
- <sup>151</sup> See *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, 'Prikaz NKO No: 325' (Order No: 325), No.10, October 1974, pp. 68-73 for the text of Order No:325.
- <sup>152</sup> Anan'ev I.M., *Tankovye Armii v Nastuplenii*, (Tank Armies on the Attack), (Voyenizdat, Moscow, 1988), pp. 63-123 has a comprehensive discussion on the development of the new tank armies of 1943, their structure and their role in offensive operations.
- <sup>153</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonthan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 155. Also David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 145.

- <sup>154</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 386 mentions the contribution of Oslikovskiy's 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps in taking Allenstein and fighting off numerous counter-attacks. He does not mention the mayhem and havoc they caused.
- <sup>155</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3410. d. 11. l. 342 I ed. Zolotarev, RA; VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 218. 'Komanduyushchemu Bronetankovymi i Mekhanizirovannymi Voyskami Krasnoy Armii i Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta, 1-go Mekhanizirovannogo Korpusa O Peredache Korpusa v Sostav Fronta' To The Commanders of the Armoured and Mechanised Forces of the Red Army, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front and 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Corps Concerning The Transfer of the Corps In To The Establishment of the Front.). Order No:293756, 03.30 Hours, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1944.
- <sup>156</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 137.
- <sup>157</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 408.
- <sup>158</sup> P.A. Kurochkin, 'Operations of Tank Armies in Operational Depth,' *Selected Readings From Military Thought, 1963-1973*, (Washington, 1982), p. 65.
- <sup>159</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art*, op. cit. p. 286.
- <sup>160</sup> G. Isserson, 'The Development of the Theory of Soviet Operational Art in the 1930's,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol.II, op. cit. pp. 41-42.
- <sup>161</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 234-236 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997). pp. 185-186. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentral'nogo Fronta No: 00525/Op Komanduyushchim 3 Gvardeyskoy i 2 Tankovymi, 16-y Vozduhnoy Armiyami Na Razvitiye Nastupleniya V Napravleniye Shablykino.' (Order Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders of 3 Guards and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Armies, 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On The Development Of The Offensive In The Direction Of Shablino). 23.50 Hours, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943.
- <sup>162</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 101.
- <sup>163</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 145.
- <sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- <sup>165</sup> Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War*, (University Press of Kansas, 2005), pp. 236-237 discusses this concept and elsewhere on pp. 71, 192, 223, 242, 243, 266-267, 275, 287 and 311.
- <sup>166</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed*, op. cit. p. 195.
- <sup>167</sup> A. Vasilevskiy, 'Belorusskaya Strategicheskaya Operatsiya,' (The Belorussian Strategic Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.9, September 1970, pp. 47-58 and A. Vasilevskiy, 'Belorusskaya Strategicheskaya Operatsiya', (The Belorussian Strategic Operation), No.10, October 1970), pp. 63-76 offer an extremely detailed account of the preparation, co-ordination and execution of the Belorussian Operation.
- <sup>168</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 139. l. 212.213 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p.93. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220113 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Razgrom Bobruyskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive No: 220113 To The Commander Of The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front On The Destruction Of The Enemy Bobruisk Grouping).
- <sup>169</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 139. l. 212,213 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 93. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220113 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Razgrom Bobruyskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220113 To The Commander Of The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front On The Destruction Of The Enemy Bobruisk Grouping)
- <sup>170</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *Soviet Blitzkrieg, The Battle for White Russia*, op. cit. p. 214.
- <sup>171</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 133.
- <sup>172</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza, (History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, Vol. 4, (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1963), p. 179.
- <sup>173</sup> I.A. Pliyev, 'Na Ostriya Udara,' (On the Main Strike), in A.M. Samsonov, ed., *Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii 1944*, (The Liberation of Belorussia) (Moscow, 1944), p. 432.
- <sup>174</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 136.
- <sup>175</sup> I.A. Pliyev, 'Na Ostriya Udara,' in A.M. Samsonov, ed., *Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii*, op. cit. p. 433.

- <sup>176</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 137.
- <sup>177</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, Vol. 4, (Moscow, 1963), p. 180. I.A. Pliyev, 'Na Ostriya Udara,' in A.M. Samsonov, ed., *Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii*, op. cit. p. 435.
- <sup>178</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 137.
- <sup>179</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *Soviet Blitzkrieg*, op. cit. p. 203.
- <sup>180</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 138.
- <sup>181</sup> I.A. Pliyev, 'Na Ostriya Udara,' in A.M. Samsonov, ed., *Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii*, op. cit. p. 440.
- <sup>182</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 388 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 102. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220127 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta, Predstavitel'yu Stavki O Razvitiy Nastupleniya Na Baranovichy i Brest' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220127 To The Commander Of 1st Belorussian Front And Stavka Representative Concerning The Development Of The Offensive On Baranovichy And Brest).
- <sup>183</sup> Komarov, G.O. et al., *16-ya Vozdushnaya: Voennoy-Istoricheskoy Ocherk O Boyevom Puti 16-y Vozdushnoy Armii (1942-1945)*, (16<sup>th</sup> Air Army: A Military-Historical Study of the Combat Path of the 16<sup>th</sup> Air Army), (Voenizdat, 1973), p. 185.
- <sup>184</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>185</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p.227
- <sup>186</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *Soviet Blitzkrieg*, op. cit. pp. 163-170 gives an excellent account of this fighting.
- <sup>187</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 96a. op. 1711. d. 7a. l. 258-261 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), pp. 205-206. 'Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu Doklad Zamestitelya Nachal'niku General'nogo Shtaba Plana "Operatsii Bagration." (To The Supreme Commander, Report of the Deputy of the Chief of the General Staff on the Plan of Operation Bagration), 20<sup>th</sup> May 1944.
- <sup>188</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *Soviet Blitzkrieg*, op. cit. p. 200.
- <sup>189</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 139. l. 212,213 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 93. 'Direktiva Stavki No:220113 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Razgrom Bobruyskoy Gruppirovki Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220113 To The Commander Of 1st Belorussian Front On The Destruction Of The Enemy Bobruisk Grouping)
- <sup>190</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 176.
- <sup>191</sup> A.V. Gorbato, *Gody i Voyny*, (Years and War) op. cit. pp. 295-300.
- <sup>192</sup> Rolf Hinze, *East Front Drama-1944*, Edited and Translated by Joseph G. Welsh, (J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing, 1996), p. 37.
- <sup>193</sup> Walter S. Dunn, *The Soviet Blitzkrieg*, op. cit. p. 199.
- <sup>194</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 227.
- <sup>195</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>196</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 96a. op. 1711. d. 7a. l. 258-261 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 23-12 (4), *General'nyi Shtab*, (Moscow, 2001), p. 205-206.
- <sup>197</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 227.
- <sup>198</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 228.

## CHAPTER 8: CONDUCTING THE RED ORCHESTRA

### **Operational Synchronisation: Conducting The Orchestra**

Once commissioned by *Stavka* to conduct an operation, Rokossovskiy was essentially cast as composer and conductor.<sup>1</sup> Rokossovskiy had to visualise the operation and foresee the interaction of individual forces in order to achieve the objectives laid down by *Stavka*. The ability to create a plan and blend different forces together in its execution was the essence of operational art. It explains why creative foresight and meticulous preparations were such an intrinsic element of Rokossovskiy's operational style. Operational synchronisation, at least in the hands of an accomplished commander, was not a mindless attempt to ensure all units did the same thing at the same time. Formations did not duplicate, but complement each other in pursuit of the operational objective. As the conductor Rokossovskiy had to blend his forces into an operational whole to achieve the operational objective

Once an operation began, the conductor or commander had to synchronise the individual parts in order to make them into one coherent whole. All members of an orchestra are capable musicians, but some are more talented and significant than others. Nevertheless, all subject themselves to the conductor, who must cue, blend and co-ordinate the various instruments in pursuit of an effective performance. Furthermore, all players accept the authority of the conductor and recognise that unscripted individual initiative will produce chaos. It is the commander's job to pick the right people and the right instruments for the right task and to deploy his forces in the right order to maximise their individual strengths for the greater benefit of the whole.

Naturally, the music may emphasise one instrument or formation while others play a supporting role, but in unison with other instruments, not at their expense. Therefore, in a sense, mobile groups were the Red Army soloists, capable of devising their own concerto within a wider operation. The insertion of a mobile

group was written into an operational plan but its precise moment was a matter of instinct, not a mechanical rendition of notes. In contrast, as Rokossovskiy's plan for the Orlovka Salient Operation of October 1942<sup>2</sup> and his report of 21<sup>st</sup> August 1943 to the Chief of the General Staff, concerning the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation<sup>3</sup> reveal, the more methodical deep battle lent itself to a more scripted composition than deep operations.

During the inter-war years, a Soviet theorist, N.N. Movchin, defined individual army operations as 'simple' because an army could only pursue one operational objective. *Front* operations were labelled as 'complex' because they simultaneously pursued several goals.<sup>4</sup> These questions of operational synchronisation, involving the constant juggling of forces, were directly related to complex front operations. Movchin went on to argue that "the theory of a series of consecutive operations is the theory of a series of front (complex) operations."<sup>5</sup> Operation Bagration and the Lublin-Brest Operation of July 1944, simultaneously fulfil Movchin's criteria of successive and highly complex operations, indicating the difficulties involved in operational synchronisation, namely conducting the orchestra, even under the most favourable conditions.

Operational synchronisation of forces on the scale commanded by Rokossovskiy was a highly demanding intellectual task and difficult to achieve in practice. Rokossovskiy had to constantly monitor units in relation to each other and the operational plan. If discrepancies arose, Rokossovskiy had to assess if they were temporary problems or more fundamental matters that seriously threatened the operation. A serious problem required Rokossovskiy to decide what action to take, when, and which forces to slow and which forces to speed up or whether, as in the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation of August 1943, to alter the whole operational plan. In this respect, the improvised operation of February 1943 was as Rokossovskiy knew full well, entirely at odds with the idea of operational simultaneity. In many respects Rokossovskiy's 'command' of this operation was defined by his attempts to impose operational synchronisation. It proved

extremely difficult to conduct the orchestra and blend the instruments at the same time as writing the music.

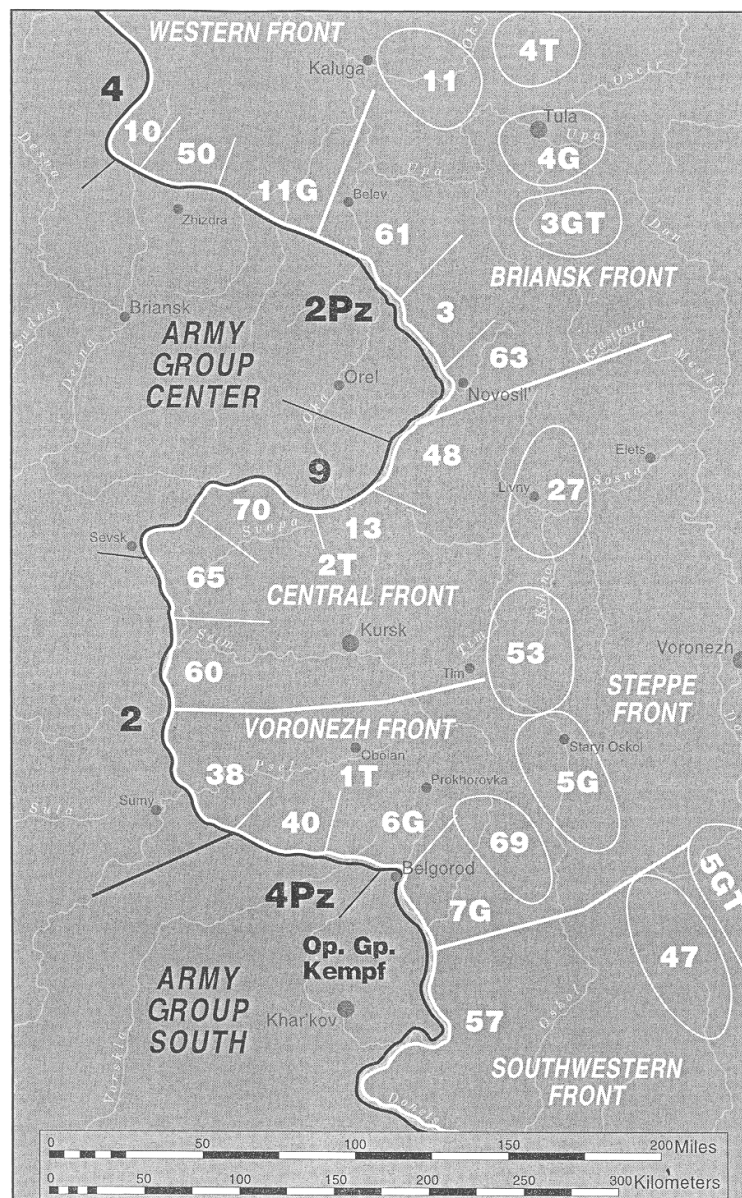
However, in matters of operational synchronisation Rokossovskiy's judgement was invariably sound. Although, he was a meticulous planner, Rokossovskiy was not unreasonably obstinate if an operation was not going according to plan. Indeed, within the established parameters of an operational plan Rokossovskiy was adept at finessing the operational synchronisation of forces engaged with the enemy. In January 1943, Rokossovskiy changed a core component of Operation Kol'tso. He also intervened in the deep battle of the East Prussian Operation, but refrained from major changes in terms of operational synchronisation. This meant that on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1945, Vol'skiy's 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army was committed on schedule, if not as planned.<sup>6</sup> In Belorussia between autumn 1943-spring 1944 Rokossovskiy's conduct of the Belorussian campaign was marked by the outstanding operational synchronisation of his forces. Equally, in Operation Bagration of June 1944, Rokossovskiy's ability to synchronise the vast force under his command reached new heights and played a critical role in the rout of Army Group Centre.

Operational synchronisation was the litmus test of operational art and command during an operation, a point recognised by Tukhachevskiy. In essence,

“mindful of the natural differences in speeds that existed among the various combat arms and operational elements, Tukhachevskii focussed the essence of generalship at that level on the ability to achieve synchronization within the framework of a single operation.”<sup>7</sup>

Tukhachevskiy was not a delegator. He was a charismatic authoritarian.<sup>8</sup> At first sight Rokossovskiy's instinct to delegate appeared to flatly contradict Tukhachevskiy's prescription but operational synchronisation was a high priority for Rokossovskiy. He was very critical of South-Western Front's commander, Kirponos, on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1941, for his failure to synchronise an attack by the *front's* four mechanised corps.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in the planning and execution of Operation Kol'tso, during January 1943, “I was mainly concerned with the question of co-

ordination between Batov's and Christiakhov's armies."<sup>10</sup> Rokossovskiy's criticism of Vatutin at Kursk amounted to an accusation that Vatutin had failed to synchronise and co-ordinate the defensive operation of the Voronezh Front. To Rokossovskiy, the essence of operational command was the ability to receive information, analyse it and make decisions based on an overview of the operational objective. It was the operational commander's job to ensure the overall co-ordination of the various battles fought by a *Front*, in order to achieve operational objectives laid down by *Stavka*.



**Figure 123: The Central Front at Kursk indicating the scale of Rokossovskiy's task in synchronising operations.**

(Glantz and House, *The Battle of Kursk*, 1999, p. 82.)



In his memoirs Rokossovskiy explicitly analysed the difference between tactical and operational command. In effect, he defined it as operational synchronisation,

“the battle of Kursk made me reflect again upon the place of the commander. Many top-ranking generals held the view that the Army or Front commander who spent most of his time at the CP, in his headquarters was not up to the mark. This is a view that I cannot accept. As I see it there is only one rule: the commander’s place is where he finds it better to control his troops. All through the defensive campaign from beginning to end, I had never left my CP. There I could constantly feel the development of events at the front, keep my fingers on the pulse of the battle and react promptly to changes in the situation. I consider that as a rule visits to the troops in a complex and highly fluid situation can serve no useful purpose; on the contrary, the Front commander is likely to lose sight of the overall picture, making it impossible for him to lead his forces correctly, and this may lead to defeat. This is not to say, of course, that the commander should in all circumstances sit it out at his headquarters. The commander’s presence among the troops can be of tremendous importance - it all depends on the time and situation.”<sup>11</sup>

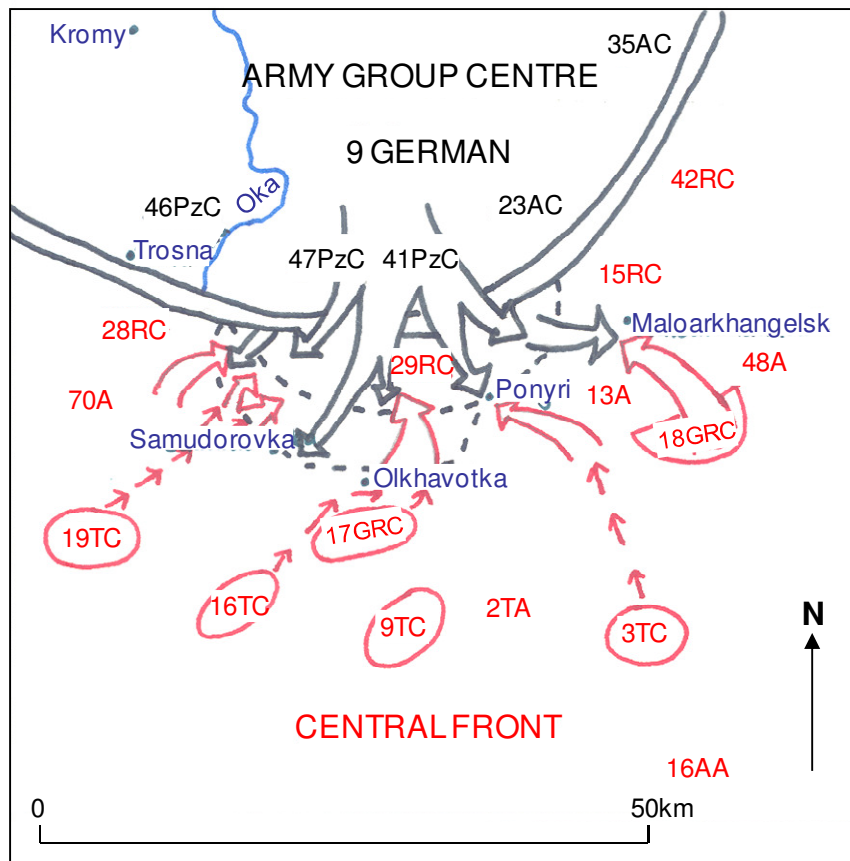
At Kursk,<sup>12</sup> Rokossovskiy had to synchronise and co-ordinate four separate battles as part of one defensive operation. All four battles, Olkhavotka Ridge, Samudorovka, Ponyri and Maloarkhangelsk<sup>13</sup> were clearly linked and defeat in one could have compromised success in the others, or rendered them meaningless, thus jeopardising the entire defensive operation.<sup>14</sup> The Wehrmacht did not begin the battle of Kursk, Rokossovskiy did. On the night of 4<sup>th</sup> –5<sup>th</sup> July 1943, the Central Front captured German sappers, removing Russian mines, in the defensive sectors of 13<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Armies. In the light of questioning “they declared that the offensive was scheduled to start at 03.00hrs and German forces had already occupied the line of departure.”<sup>15</sup> Rokossovskiy faced a dilemma. Kursk had been planned as a defensive operation, yet Rokossovskiy had the chance to tactically pre-empt Ninth German Army.

There was no time to contact Moscow and Zhukov, not a man known for his inclination to delegate, 'generously' left the decision, and the responsibility, to Rokossovskiy. Rokossovskiy "ordered the Front Chief of Artillery to open fire at once."<sup>16</sup> Central Front's pre-emptive barrage did little physical damage to Ninth German Army, but it must have been a disconcerting psychological experience.<sup>17</sup> This is often characterised as a bold decision by Rokossovskiy and so it was, but it is important to remember that the Germans were going to attack. The battle of Kursk was inevitable: Rokossovskiy in tune with his dynamic, creative instincts engaged in a piece of tactical pre-emption, but he did not start a battle that did not have to be fought. It was a bold decision but along with other Soviet commanders in the Kursk region, Rokossovskiy had been warned on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1943<sup>18</sup> and again, in the early hours of 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943,<sup>19</sup> that the German attack was imminent.

The 48<sup>th</sup> Army's battle, on the eastern perimeter at Maloarkhangel'sk, was less intense, but a quick German breakthrough would have threatened the rear of Central Front's forces fighting further west at Ponyri, Samudorovka and Olkhavotka Ridge. Maloarkhangel'sk was a significant road and rail junction. It was also on the boundary line of 13<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>20</sup> However, this German assault was primarily a feint, designed to draw Soviet reserves and attention away from the key German objectives, further to the west, namely Ponyri and Olkhavotka Ridge. Rokossovskiy had anticipated this: the village of Maloarkhangel'sk was strongly defended, but he did not unduly commit his forces.

During the defensive phase of the Central Front's operations at Kursk (5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July 1943), at different times all of Rokossovskiy's army commanders requested reserves, but as an operational commander, Rokossovskiy had to synchronise all four battles, not just one, react to current events but also anticipate the likely course of the individual battles and how their interaction affected the Central Front's ability to carry out its defensive operation. The truly formidable nature of

ensuring the operational synchronisation of forces fighting four separate battles in an engagement of this magnitude is revealed by the archival evidence concerning Rokossovskiy's command at Kursk.



**Figure 124: The Four Simultaneous Battles of the Central Front's Defensive Operation at Kursk: 5<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> July 1943.**  
(Stephen Walsh)

At 10.30 on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy informed his army commanders that three German infantry divisions and three panzer divisions were attacking 13<sup>th</sup> Army, across its whole front. He issued orders that 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army should concentrate its forces for a counter-attack, approximately eighteen hours later, at dawn on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943. The counter-attack was to be launched against German forces assaulting 13<sup>th</sup> Army's left flank.<sup>21</sup> It was to be a co-ordinated counter-attack, delivered in conjunction with 13<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>22</sup> At 01.00 hours on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy reported to *Stavka* that the main German assault was focused on 13<sup>th</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Army, in particular N.P. Pukhov's 13<sup>th</sup> Army, being attacked

by 400 German tanks. Since midnight on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy's staff had counted 2220 air attacks by Luftwaffe units operating in groups ranging from 15-150 aircraft. Yet, in the western section of the Kursk salient, 65<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Army reported that their sectors were not under sustained assault.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, in the period 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> July 1943, on 13<sup>th</sup> Army's right wing, a battle of extraordinary intensity developed for possession of Ponyri.<sup>24</sup> Ponyri was an important regional rail junction, on the centre right of 13<sup>th</sup> Army's defensive position, while the Olkhavotka Ridge lay 10 miles west of Ponyri. This high ground, especially Hill 274, dominated the surrounding area, as far south as the town of Kursk. Rokossovskiy had anticipated the nature of the German attack and implemented variant No.2, of his plan.<sup>25</sup> In the next three days, the Central Front's 13<sup>th</sup> Army, especially 307<sup>th</sup> Division,<sup>26</sup> fought a ferocious battle for Ponyri. Time after time German forces attacked, were driven back or secured part of the town, only to lose it to Soviet counter-attacks.

In his report to *Stavka*, given at 22.00 hours on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Rokossovskiy indicated that fierce fighting had developed for Ponyri. The 307<sup>th</sup> Division had suffered heavy losses and he had sent reserves, 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, to support it and maintain cohesion with 48<sup>th</sup> Army's left wing, which had also been attacked five times.<sup>27</sup> In the next three days, 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Ponyri changed hands several times. However, while Rokossovskiy gave reserves to 13<sup>th</sup> Army, he did not become inordinately pre-occupied by events at Ponyri at the expense of Samudorovka and Olkhavotka, especially Olkhavotka Ridge. These Rokossovskiy correctly discerned were the main German objectives and the key to operational victory or defeat. If these were lost, a tactical victory at Ponyri would be of little account.

In the same report, Rokossovskiy revealed 13<sup>th</sup> Army had regrouped, but 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's counter-attack had met heavy opposition, led by Tiger tanks. The Soviet 107<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade lost sixty-seven tanks.<sup>28</sup> However, although 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army had not driven the Germans back, it had stifled their assault, with part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank

Army, 16<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps holding the critical high ground, Hill 274, between Ponyri to the east and the Olkhavotka Ridge to the west.<sup>29</sup> At the same time as Rokossovskiy was monitoring the battle for Ponyri, 13<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's counter-attack, the 70<sup>th</sup> Army<sup>30</sup>, came under attack from two German infantry divisions with one hundred tanks. Equally, further to the east at 11.30, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Corps had engaged in a tank battle.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to understand this all happened on one day, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943. It is highly unlikely that Rokossovskiy had much sleep between the interrogation of German prisoners in the early hours of 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943 and the time he delivered his report to *Stavka* at 22.00 hours on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943.<sup>32</sup> This sequence of events vividly reveals the sheer complexity of operational command as well as the punishing physical and psychological demands of operational synchronisation. Rokossovskiy's commitment to delegation and the use of initiative by his commanders, within clear parameters, made his practical system of operational synchronisation compatible with Tukhachevskiy's theoretical concept.

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1943, the Central Front fought defensive battles across the entire northern face of the Kursk salient. It was fighting seven German infantry divisions and five panzer divisions. Simultaneous fighting raged to the east at Ponyri, where 13<sup>th</sup> Army faced five assaults, and in the west, where German troops attacked the junction of 70<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, near Samudorovka in search of Hill 257, where according to Rokossovskiy, the Germans attacked sixteen times. The fighting was ferocious but Rokossovskiy reported to *Stavka* that "all enemy attacks in the course of the day were successfully repelled by our troops."<sup>33</sup> The Central Front was being gradually forced back but its front had not been pierced. However, at Ponyri and Olkhovotka "the eighth of July proved to be the crisis point in both key sectors of the Soviet defense north of Kursk."<sup>34</sup>

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943, Ninth German Army made a monumental attempt to break the Soviet resistance at Samudorovka and Ponyri. On Hill 257, 17<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle

Corps, supplied with timely reserves by Rokossovskiy,<sup>35</sup> fought 20<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division to a standstill. Soviet troops conceded ground but held the line against four German assaults. At Ponyri, on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943, 307<sup>th</sup> Division, exhausted after 72 hours of fighting began to wilt.<sup>36</sup> Finally, German troops captured most of Ponyri, but thanks to 18<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Corps and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Corps their progress was contained. A similarly bitter struggle developed west of Ponyri, where 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 70<sup>th</sup> Army fought for the Olkhovatka Ridge and Samudorovka.<sup>37</sup>

On the left, at 08.00 hours, on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943, 13<sup>th</sup> Army came under fierce attack from three German infantry divisions and four hundred tanks, supported by airpower and heavy artillery. After five German attacks, Hill 257, four kilometres north of the Olkhavotka Ridge was taken. Simultaneously, to the west Rokossovskiy had to contend with a massive German attack that smashed into the right wing of 70<sup>th</sup> Army. After artillery preparation and Luftwaffe bombing over two hundred tanks led by 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division and the Tigers of 505<sup>th</sup> Panzer Detachment smashed into the Russian lines. In the course of thirteen attacks, the Germans cut through to Samudorovka and the village of Teploe. It is clear from his report that Rokossovskiy was seriously concerned about developments in this sector.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, ironically, although Rokossovskiy could not know it at the time, by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943, the Soviet crisis on the northern face of the Kursk bulge had actually peaked. Nevertheless, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1943, stubborn but indecisive fighting for Ponyri continued, while another massive German aerial and ground assault on the Olkhavotka Ridge was beaten off. Rokossovskiy reported that heavy fighting had taken place, mainly in 13<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Army's sectors, but, that in contrast to the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943 the Germans did not achieve success.<sup>39</sup>

In summary, at Ponyri Olkhavotka, Samudorovka and Maloarkhangelsk, Ninth German Army ground out tactical successes but did not achieve an operational breakthrough. By 10<sup>th</sup> July 1943, in all four battles, the Central Front had either

prevailed or fought the Ninth German Army to a standstill. This amounted to a significant operational victory. The Central Front's defensive operation was an extraordinarily demanding phase of fighting. Yet, Rokossovskiy managed to synchronise the operation in a relatively efficient manner that bought time and a degree of control to the Central Front's operation. The Central Front faced several crises, but its defensive battles were not marked by the degree of improvised panic that seemed to infect the Voronezh Front. This is not to suggest that Rokossovskiy's operational synchronisation was exemplary. The Central Front's counter-attacks on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943 stalled the Germans in a tactical sense, but did not achieve all their objectives, partly because 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army deployed and attacked in a piecemeal fashion, either because its commanders were lacklustre or Rokossovskiy did not issue his orders in a timely manner.<sup>40</sup> However, on the whole, Rokossovskiy's operational synchronisation of the Central Front, through five days of ferocious fighting, was calm and efficient.

The significance of the Lublin-Brest Operation has been overshadowed by the destruction of Army Group Centre in Operation Bagration and the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944. The Lublin-Brest Operation began on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1944.<sup>41</sup> It was carried out by the left wing of Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front and explicitly planned as a successive operation to exploit the success of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's right wing in Operation Bagration.<sup>42</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's deep operations were carried out in an operational climate where Rokossovskiy's forces clearly controlled the tactical and operational initiative. At the end of July 1944, the Lublin-Brest Operation had been successful. Lublin had been taken and two bridgeheads at Magnuszew and Pulawy had been established over the Vistula. Yet, Rokossovskiy's ability to synchronise his forces was tested to the limit as he sought to reconcile the competing needs of his forces in order to achieve the ambitious objectives set by *Stavka*.

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1944, Chuikov's 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army broke the German line. Rokossovskiy launched 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army on a deep operational manoeuvre supported by several mobile corps. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was to split the German

front, scatter opposition, strike deep for Lublin and then move on the Vistula, east of Warsaw. Simultaneously, other 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front forces, 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army and 69<sup>th</sup> Army, were to force the Vistula at Magnuszew and Pulawy respectively. In addition, 70<sup>th</sup> Army and 47<sup>th</sup> Army, in conjunction with 11<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps was to advance on the key road, rail and communications point of Brest. As if this was not enough, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's right-wing was expected to capitalise on the German's pre-occupation with the Lublin-Brest Operation. It was to fight through the forests of Belorussia before establishing a bridgehead over the River Narev, north of Warsaw. This was certainly as Movchin would have termed it a 'complex' operation. Speed was essential, both to exploit the German disorder in the wake of Bagration, but also to bounce the Vistula and pre-empt the ability of German reserves to stabilise the situation.

Rokossovskiy's operational synchronisation of his forces was made even more 'complex' because *Stavka* took away two of his right wing armies. On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1944, it ordered the transfer of 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, all ten divisions, to 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>43</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was to assist 49<sup>th</sup> Army in the pursuit of German troops and in mopping up drifting pockets.<sup>44</sup> It was not returned. Equally, on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1944, the day after the Lublin-Brest Operation began *Stavka* ordered that 61<sup>st</sup> Army was to be placed in *Stavka* reserve.<sup>45</sup> In addition, 70<sup>th</sup> Army was to be taken into reserve after the fall of Brest.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, despite being in complete control of the tactical and operational initiative, Rokossovskiy did not have enough forces to achieve the objectives set by *Stavka*. This lack of correlation between ends and means became particularly acute when significant German reserves deployed east of Warsaw and the Vistula. The problems Rokossovskiy encountered in late July and early August 1944 indicate the sheer complexity and intellectual demands of operational synchronisation on this scale, with insufficient forces in a fluid, fast moving, but unlike Kursk, generally benign and favourable operational environment. It was a formidable test of Rokossovskiy's operational art.

In the last days of July 1944, Chuikov's 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army approached the Vistula. In a good example of delegation and empowerment, Rokossovskiy allowed



Chuikov to choose his own crossing site at Magnuszew. However, a series of contradictory orders from Rokossovskiy, initially authorising 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army to advance, then stop, then advance again, before halting on, but not crossing the Vistula, illustrate that Rokossovskiy was facing significant problems in the operational synchronisation of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>47</sup> It was highly unusual for Rokossovskiy to act in this manner, for as Kursk, Belorussia in autumn 1943 and Bagration demonstrated he was invariably highly adept in matters of operational synchronisation. In fact, Rokossovskiy was deeply concerned that events to the north of Chuikov's 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army might leave it isolated on the western bank, if it crossed the Vistula.

On 26<sup>th</sup> July 1944, Rokossovskiy received intelligence indicating there maybe substantial German reserves in the Warsaw region.<sup>48</sup> However, two days later at 24.00 hours on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1944, *Stavka* issued still more ambitious orders to Rokossovskiy. In the wake of the fall of Brest, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's right-wing was to develop its offensive on Warsaw. It was to seize control of Praga, the eastern suburb of Warsaw where Rokossovskiy had lived as a boy and establish a bridgehead, over the Narev, north of Warsaw, at Pulutsk, in co-operation with 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front with a view to future operations in Poland and East Prussia.<sup>49</sup> Simultaneously, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was also to establish a bridgehead in the centre of its front, south of Warsaw, at Deblin. These objectives were to be achieved no later than 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> August 1944<sup>50</sup> and bore no relation to reality. To make matters even more difficult, at 24.00 hours on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1944, *Stavka* issued another directive that bore the unmistakable personal imprint of Stalin. It was issued to Rokossovskiy of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian and Konev at 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front. It demanded the forcing of the Vistula and stressed that massive importance and great significance attached to this task, the essential nature of which was to be impressed upon all commanders. It emphasised those first across the Vistula would be in line for the coveted status of Hero of the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, in late July 1944, despite the apparently seamless progress of the Lublin-Brest Operation, Rokossovskiy had much to consider. In a period of little

more than twenty-four hours, Rokossovskiy faced key decisions concerning 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army's assault over the Vistula at Magnuszew, the presence of significant German reserves *east* of Warsaw, 69<sup>th</sup> Army's assault on the Vistula at Pulawy and a major German counter-attack. All this against a backdrop of increasingly strident demands from *Stavka* and Stalin based on the assumption that Warsaw would be taken. In these circumstances, rather than hesitant, Rokossovskiy's authorisation of 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army to cross the Vistula at Magnuszew was a bold decision.

These objectives demanded the careful operational synchronisation of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's forces as they approached the Vistula, in order to ensure that they could provide mutual support. This would disperse German reserves and increase the chances of a sustainable operational crossing of the Vistula and the Narev, rather than creating a set of isolated, tactical bridgeheads. It was the complexities of operational synchronisation in such circumstances that provoked Rokossovskiy's contradictory orders to Chuikov. It is not surprising, given his tactical perspective that Chuikov was irritated by Rokossovskiy's contradictory orders and being forced to give up three divisions to help 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, while 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army was battling for the Magnuszew bridgehead.<sup>52</sup> To Chuikov, an army commander, it was as Movchin put it a 'simple' matter, but for Rokossovskiy, as a *front* commander charged with the operational synchronisation, it was definitely a 'complex' affair.

On 29th July 1944, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army received intelligence<sup>53</sup> that German panzer divisions were in the area, but carried on its advance. On 30<sup>th</sup> July 1944, as 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's spearheads approached Warsaw<sup>54</sup> the world assumed the fall of Warsaw to Rokossovskiy's 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front was imminent. However, on 1st August 1944, in dire need of logistic replenishment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army came under attack between ten and twelve times<sup>55</sup> from the Herman Goring, SS Viking, SS Totenkopf and elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Panzer Divisions. On 3rd August 1944, these attacks evolved into a sustained counter-offensive.<sup>56</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank

Army was driven back fifty miles from the Vistula and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Corps more or less destroyed.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, in addition to the events immediately east of Warsaw, Rokossovskiy had to monitor events east and north-east of Warsaw where 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's right wing was facing renewed German resistance. On 16<sup>th</sup> July 1944, two days before the Lublin-Brest Operation, Rokossovskiy had ordered 70<sup>th</sup> Army and CMG Pliyev to take Brest.<sup>58</sup> Brest was a major fortified German defence region and a highly significant road, rail and communications centre. Its capture would undermine the German aim of rebuilding their front in western Belorussia and enable Rokossovskiy to unify the two wings of the stretched 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, giving him more scope to synchronise the approach to the Vistula.

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 1944, CMG Pliyev reached the western Bug and cut German communications between Brest and Bialystok.<sup>59</sup> CMG Pliyev began "deeply enveloping the enemy's Brest Fortified Region from the north-west."<sup>60</sup>

Rokossovskiy had ordered the encirclement and annihilation of Brest because he assumed, given its defensive importance, the Germans would fight to the bitter end. He would have preferred a major turning move to maintain operational momentum, but the loss of 61<sup>st</sup> Army on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1944, in addition to 3<sup>rd</sup> Army meant he did not have forces of sufficient power to induce the Germans to abandon Brest. Rokossovskiy was relying on the psychological momentum of Bagration and the progress of the Lublin-Brest Operation towards the Vistula, deep in the rear of Brest, to turn German minds. However, he did not have the physical forces required to make that psychological unease sufficiently compelling to induce a withdrawal.



Warsaw was blocked to them. The German forces at Brest resisted our advancing formations stubbornly.”<sup>62</sup>

The encirclement at Brest began on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1944. It lasted until 28<sup>th</sup> July 1944<sup>63</sup> because “eight German divisions, the remnants of the German Second and Ninth Army, hung on to Brest-Litovsk for as long as possible, the garrison reinforced with tanks moved up from Warsaw.”<sup>64</sup> This delay proved crucial in ensuring the relative isolation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1944 as it approached Warsaw. It was proving impossible for Rokossovskiy to synchronise the left and right wing of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front.

To complicate matters still further on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1944, in the forests of Belorussia, a German counter-attack crashed into Batov’s 65<sup>th</sup> Army. The situation was rectified but required a visit to 65<sup>th</sup> Army in order to clarify the situation and assess the implications.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1944, Rokossovskiy ordered Cavalry-Mechanised Group Sokolov, containing 11<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps and Kryukov’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, to capture the important junction of Siedlce<sup>66</sup> off the march before marching on the Vistula, an order that demonstrates Rokossovskiy understood the need to close up the two wings of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. Siedlce was sixty miles west of Brest-Litovsk and a key supply route. It is likely that Rokossovskiy was trying to use this assault on Siedlce to deepen the sense of physical and psychological isolation of the Brest garrison. However, 11<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps’ attempt to bounce the town met fierce resistance.<sup>67</sup> It forced CMG Sokolov to formally assault Siedlce. It did not fall until 31<sup>st</sup> July 1944, the same day that 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was hit by the German counter-attack.

Thus, in the last week of July 1944, Rokossovskiy had a lot to co-ordinate. As a result, the synchronised advance on the Vistula, Warsaw and the Narev did not materialise. There were several reasons for this. First, bitter German resistance undermined the ambitious timetable *Stavka* had set for 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. Second, because *Stavka* deprived Rokossovskiy of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Armies, in the last ten days of July 1944, the right-wing of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front on the Brest-Siedlce axis was robbed of fighting power just as German resistance was strengthening.

Third, the right-wing of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian had already been in action for nearly a month. If Rokossovskiy had retained 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, a well led and powerful army with ten divisions, in conjunction with 61<sup>st</sup> Army, these two armies could have invested the encirclement of Brest with substantially greater power, thereby releasing CMG Sokolov, 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 48<sup>th</sup> Army for an advance on the Vistula and Narev, a line they did not actually reach until early September 1944.<sup>68</sup> It then faced a bitter battle to hold the Narev bridgehead.<sup>69</sup> This combination of factors meant Rokossovskiy struggled to synchronise the two wings of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. The main body of the left wing, 47<sup>th</sup>, 69<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Polish and 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army gave each other mutual support and Rokossovskiy synchronised their approach to the Vistula well. However, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army on the northern edge of the left-wing, closest to Warsaw, was particularly exposed by the failure of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front's right-wing to close up to the Vistula.

In summary, operational synchronisation was an essential quality of operational art. At Kursk, in Belorussia, Bagration and later in East Prussia during January 1945, Rokossovskiy proved himself a master of reading the field. However, in the last week of July 1944, Rokossovskiy's ability to synchronise his forces confronted the basic fact that, despite the enormous size of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, he did not have enough forces to achieve the objectives set by *Stavka*. It was not the first or last time, that Rokossovskiy would face significant challenges in the operational synchronisation of his forces due to *Stavka's* inability to correlate ends and means. If anything, the East Prussian Operation of January 1945 would present Rokossovskiy with even greater challenges in terms of operational synchronisation. Nevertheless, the Lublin-Brest Operation reveals the considerable intellectual demands of synchronising a 'complex' *front* operation.

### **Operational Momentum: Harmonisation of Attrition and Manoeuvre**

The initial momentum of a Soviet operation was generated by a combination of *maskirovka*, surprise and localised tactical annihilation. This permitted a swift transition to deep operational manoeuvre. It was essential that this tactical momentum turned into sustainable operational momentum. Operational

momentum had a clear physical expression, but it was also a psychological phenomenon aimed at the enemy commander's mind. A force advancing deep into the enemy operational rear had the ability to deny the enemy time and to disrupt the organisation of enemy counterblows. In numerous operations such as the crossing of the Dnepr in September 1943, the Belorussian operations of autumn 1943, CMG Pliyev in Operation Bagration during June-July 1944 and East Prussia in January 1945, Rokossovskiy's operational momentum was able to keep German forces off balance by pre-empting, surprising and disrupting the enemy.

In essence, "a lively tempo helps to gain time, creates unexpected situations for the enemy, ensures the initiative and deprives the enemy of taking steps to stem the progress of the offensive."<sup>70</sup> This statement effectively summarises Rokossovskiy's attitude to operational momentum. However, it was also argued after the war that,

"a Front operation should progress without interruption. Victory is achieved by a series of powerful blows delivered with increasing momentum. The art of conducting an operation consists in the achievement of continuity of blows of ever increasing force. The final blow should be the mightiest blow."<sup>71</sup>

Rokossovskiy's attempts to synchronise the operations of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front in July 1944, were also undermined by the significant disparity in operational momentum between the left and right wing. The right wing lacked the forces, fresh or otherwise, to inject momentum into the deep operations of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front when it encountered sustained resistance at Brest. In contrast, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army had the mobility to surge ahead, but when it met serious opposition it did not have the fighting power to sustain the momentum of its advance. Rokossovskiy's meticulous preparations were related to his dislike of operational pauses, but his operational career clearly indicates that the last blow of an operation was often the weakest, not the mightiest, as demonstrated by 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army's experiences, east of Warsaw in July 1944. It was the natural unravelling

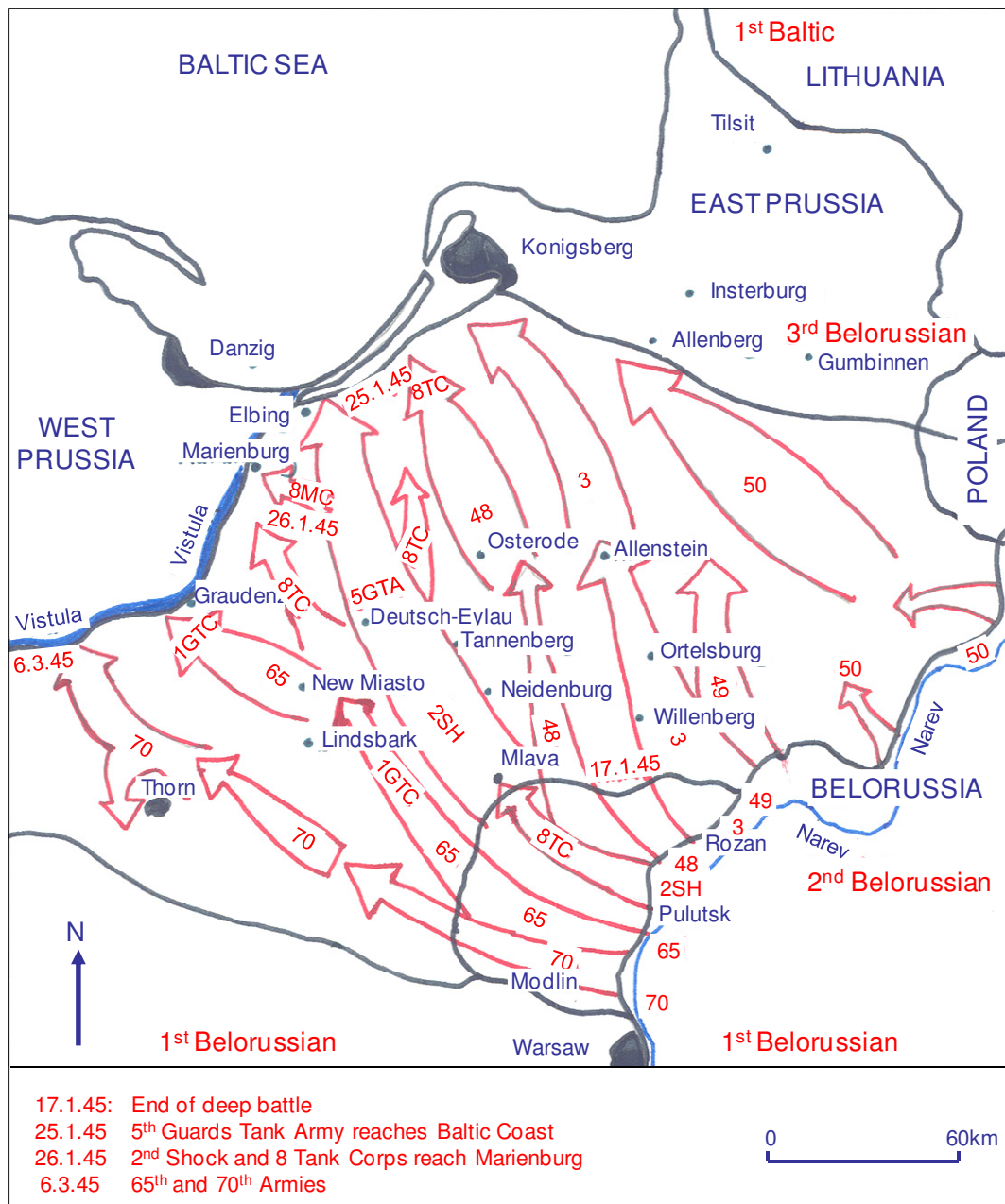
of fighting power as units sustained heavy casualties and moved away from their supply bases. Therefore, operational momentum was linked to a logistical reality that commanders ignored at their peril, as well as the natural exhaustion of units. In summary, increasing casualties, diminished supplies and greater enemy opposition all combined to place natural limits on an operation and undermine operational momentum. The ragged operations east of Warsaw notwithstanding, Rokossovskiy's operational command was marked by a desire to create sustainable operational momentum and curtail operations before exhaustion undermined the ability to retain control of objectives.

In response to the perceived need for operational momentum, Soviet theory emphasised the idea of deeply echeloned forces. During the inter-war years, Isserson had argued that depth in deployment was an essential pre-requisite of operational momentum. It was argued that "offensive combat demands a constant supply of manpower from depth. Therefore, the structure of combat order must be deeply echeloned and in correspondence with the depth of the enemy's defences."<sup>72</sup> However, the massive losses of 1941 had significant implications for Red Army's ability to develop operational momentum in the style of deep operations favoured by Rokossovskiy. In simple terms from August 1941-August 1943,<sup>73</sup> the Red Army did not have enough formations of sufficient balance, fighting power and speed, under effective leaders, to sustain the operational momentum. By 1944-45, Rokossovskiy possessed a powerful array of mobile forces<sup>74</sup> capable of conducting deep operations.<sup>75</sup> Equally, the greater mobility of Soviet infantry and artillery produced a significant rise in the speed, tempo, mobility and fighting power of Soviet deep operation forces.

Rokossovskiy's understanding of operational momentum was not just concerned with the speed of leading formations but the whole fighting force. As the adventures of Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps in February 1943 indicated, genuine operational momentum was not simply a product of speed and mobility but also fighting power. This was also a constant problem for Rokossovskiy in Belorussia in autumn 1943, but on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1944, a brigade sized forward



detachment, used by 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army to flush out German infantry, was able to develop a momentum out of all proportion to its size.<sup>76</sup> The forward detachment had agility and speed, but its fighting power and momentum were derived from its parent formation 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army. On its own, a forward detachment was simply a nuisance, buzzing around the German lines.



**Figure 126: Harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre through the use of front and army level mobile groups in conjunction with field armies: 14<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> January 1945.**  
(Stephen Walsh)

Operational momentum was developed, increased and sustained in the Lublin-Brest Operation of 1944 and the East Prussian Operation of 1945, because Rokossovskiy had several mobile corps capable of army level deep operations, as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army capable of *front* level operations. Indeed, in many ways these corps released the tank armies for genuinely deep operational strikes that generated operational momentum by shattering the enemy's operational, not just tactical cohesion. By 1944-45, the greater mobility and firepower of a whole Soviet *front*, not just its mobile groups, had a significant impact on operational momentum. It meant Rokossovskiy could launch deep operations confident in his ability to marshal the latent fighting power of the entire front, the end of the Lublin-Brest Operation being a salutary exception to this rule.

In East Prussia, the operational momentum of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front was sustained in the teeth of bitter opposition, by a combination of combat power and mobility. On 18<sup>th</sup> January 1945, 48<sup>th</sup> Army and 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army worked in tandem to smash through the East Prussian border and capture the key operational objective of Mlava.<sup>77</sup> Two days later they co-operated in taking the town of Neidenburg.<sup>78</sup> These events generated significant operational momentum for 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. Equally, after 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army's difficult positional and attritional start to the East Prussian Operation, its close co-operation with 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps<sup>79</sup> provided a more balanced combination of attrition and manoeuvre. This gave 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army greater operational momentum. On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945, as it began to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre with 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army advanced 25 kilometres.<sup>80</sup> By 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army and 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps had crashed through the East Prussian border and taken Deutsch-Eylau, a key German position.<sup>81</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army advanced 25 kilometres and was approaching Marienburg from the south, while 8<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps its new partner, was enveloping Marienburg from the north-east, with 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps as 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army's reserve.<sup>82</sup> At 21.00 hours, on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock's Army commander, Lt.General Fedyuninskiy reported that 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock was fighting its way into Marienburg from the south and

8<sup>th</sup> Mechanised from the north.<sup>83</sup> In six days, since 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945, it had advanced of 60 kilometres.

The key to Rokossovskiy's operational momentum was the ability to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre, both within individual formations and the *Front* as a whole. Indeed, "just as attack and defence are, at first sight, opposed concepts, which in fact exhibit constant interaction and harmony, so are manoeuvre and attrition."<sup>84</sup> The ability to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre was a particular hallmark of Rokossovskiy's operational command and a key task for any operational commander. The first phase of a Soviet operation, deep battle, was predominantly attritional in character, but purely as a means to an end, designed to create the right conditions for the second phase of an operation, the deep operation. Deep operations were predominantly manoeuvrist in character, but a mobile group drew its power and momentum from its combined fighting strength and mobility. In essence, it could harmonise attrition and manoeuvre.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, the whole concept of harmonisation and manoeuvre was a central theme of Soviet thinking. It was integral to Triandafillov's shock army, a force specifically designed to conduct attritional battle before embarking on deep operations. In a similar way, Varfolomeyev's shock front clearly incorporated the ideas of attrition and manoeuvre as did Isserson's massive shock army. The interaction of attrition and manoeuvre was explicitly advocated in the *Soviet Field Regulations* of 1944. The purpose of attrition was to create the opportunity for manoeuvre, with manoeuvre being responsible for creating the chance for further attrition. The 1944 *Polevoy Ustav* declared that

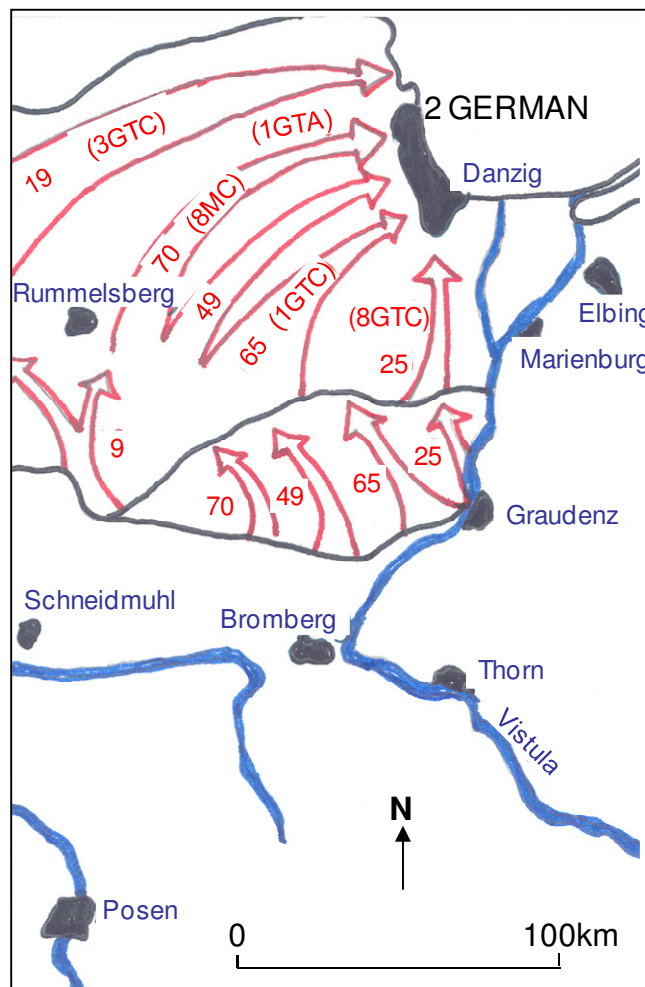
"maneuver is one of the most important conditions for achieving success. Maneuver consists of the organized movement of troops for the purpose of creating the most favourable grouping and in placing this grouping in the most favourable position for striking the enemy a crushing blow to gain time and space (for manoeuvre). Maneuver should be simple in conception and be carried out secretly, rapidly, and in such a way as to surprise the enemy."<sup>86</sup>

Manoeuvre was used to create a platform for the attrition of deep battle, which in turn created the right conditions for operational manoeuvre. In summary, Soviet thinking was not completely dominated by attrition. This was particularly true of Rokossovskiy's style of command, especially at the operational level.

Rokossovskiy sought to ensure the harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre for the whole *front*, but also for individual formations within the *front*. This ability to hold a *front* together, without curtailing its flexibility, made Rokossovskiy a very potent commander. It demanded foresight and the ability to distinguish between transitory factors and more significant ones that could seriously undermine the combination of attrition and manoeuvre that generated operational manoeuvre. In December 1941, the Moscow counter-offensive never really generated operational momentum because there was no balance between manoeuvre and attrition. The lack of armour, troop exhaustion and deep snow did not help, but many mistakes were also made in the counter-offensive. In January 1943, the lack of harmonisation between attrition and manoeuvre seriously undermined Operation Kol'tso. Similarly, in July 1943, the failure of Western, Bryansk and Rokossovskiy's Central Front to strike "the enemy a crushing blow to gain time and space"<sup>87</sup> made Operation Kutuzov a grinding slog, with no balanced interaction between attrition and manoeuvre.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, Rokossovskiy's effective harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre played a key role in the success of the Belorussian Operation, the Lublin-Brest Operation, East Prussia and East Pomerania.

Rokossovskiy intensely disliked prolonged attrition but was also uneasy about mobile groups that became disconnected from the main body. Rokossovskiy's desire to keep his front together did not mean he imposed a straitjacket on his commanders. He was not an unduly cautious commander, but Rokossovskiy appreciated that deep operations drew their power from the latent strength of the whole front as much as their own mobility and fighting power. The main forces of Rokossovskiy's front would rapidly close up and consolidate the position in order to defend it against enemy counter-attacks. It was this harmonisation of

attrition and manoeuvre, in conjunction with operational synchronisation of the whole *front* that marked the crossing of the Dnepr in September 1943, the Belorussian operations of 1943 and Operation Bagration. In this sense, the isolation and exhaustion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps in February 1943 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army in July 1944 were anomalies in Rokossovskiy's operational command, anomalies that appear to have influenced his handling of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front in the German campaign of 1945.



**Figure 127: Harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre to generate operational momentum in the East Pomeranian Operation; 10<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> March 1945.**  
(Stephen Walsh)

During the East Pomeranian Operation of February-March 1945<sup>89</sup> Rokossovskiy made a conscious effort to hold 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front together. A.P. Panfilov's 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Corps surged ahead but Rokossovskiy took a closer grip than

normal “sometimes even slowing down the tank corps’s advance when a risk arose of it being cut off from the main forces.”<sup>90</sup> Rokossovskiy ordered Panfilov to consolidate, while, “simultaneously I instructed Romanovsky(sic) to speed up the advance of his units.”<sup>91</sup> Rokossovskiy’s *front* was stretched “indeed for the first time in my experience as a Front commander, I had been left without reserves, and I must say that I did not like it at all.”<sup>92</sup>

Rokossovskiy’s aim was to generate sustainable operational momentum by harmonising attrition and manoeuvre. Rokossovskiy’s foresight enabled 19<sup>th</sup> Army and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Corps to win a pitched battle at Rummelsberg. In the wake of Rummelsberg, Rokossovskiy unleashed a deep operation very much in keeping with his operational style. By 5<sup>th</sup> March 1945,

“units of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Corps reached the Baltic Sea, slicing the enemy’s East Pomeranian group in half. A messenger arrived at HQ with three bottles of clear liquid, a gift from Panfilov’s tankmen to the Front Military Council. Curious, we tasted it. It was water, brackish water smelling of seaweed. Water from the Baltic Sea.”<sup>93</sup>

The harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre became easier as the war developed because of the greater power and mobility of Soviet forces. However, as Rokossovskiy’s problems east of Warsaw in July 1944 indicate, the generation of operational momentum through the harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre was not an elementary matter of procedure. There was a significant interaction between operational synchronisation, operational momentum, attrition, manoeuvre and deep operations. It was Rokossovskiy’s task as an operational commander to keep all these elements in balance. If one aspect of this matrix was substantially out of balance with the rest, such as in Operation Kol’tso, Operation Kutuzov and in the later stages of the Lublin-Brest Operation, it had discernible consequences for other aspects of an operation.

The most compelling evidence for Rokossovskiy’s desire to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre was his consistent aversion to grinding attritional operations or

prolonged positional fighting. As early as December 1941, Rokossovskiy revealed a pronounced dislike of protracted attrition as well as a determination that operations should combine attrition and manoeuvre. In December 1941, in the Moscow counter-offensive, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army endured a rapid transition from defensive operations to counter-attack with physically exhausted and depleted forces.<sup>94</sup>

The Moscow counter-offensive was a highly significant strategic event that changed the character of World War Two, but there was no rapid attrition, no quick breakthrough and no real harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre. Therefore, despite its apparent success, the Russian offensive developed relatively little sustainable operational momentum. The Soviet offensive and German exhaustion brought German Army Group Centre to the edge of collapse but the Red Army bludgeoned its way forward. The Red Army's lack of preparation, its exhaustion, deep snow and inexperience in major offensive operations all undermined its capacity to create and sustain operational momentum. Rokossovskiy successfully harmonised attrition and manoeuvre to avoid a prolonged positional encounter at Istra, but this was an isolated if impressive example. Subsequently, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army confronted a strong German defensive position at Volokalamsk that forced shattered troops to grind their way forward for every yard of ground, an event that signalled to Rokossovskiy, if not Zhukov and *Stavka* that the Germans were beginning to recover. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army's part in the Moscow counter-offensive "ended at the beginning of January."<sup>95</sup>

In February 1942, Western Front informed 16<sup>th</sup> Army that "while holding Sukhinichi firmly, the army will engage in offensive operations, continuing to wear down the enemy and denying him any opportunity of consolidating firmly and building up forces."<sup>96</sup> Rokossovskiy objected to this positional and attritional approach: he argued that his forces were exhausted the Germans outnumbered 16<sup>th</sup> Army and were already in strong defensive positions. Rokossovskiy recalled that "all our exhausted troops could do was force the enemy back at one point or another at the cost of great efforts and with negligible results. I

frequently visited various sectors and units to investigate the meagre results of our offensive actions. Everything I saw led to the conclusion that decisive success was beyond our reach.”<sup>97</sup>

In a detailed report to Zhukov, Rokossovskiy posed the question

“would it not be better, I thought, to make use of the breathing spell we had gained to assume the defensive in order to build up forces and means for a powerful offensive?”<sup>98</sup>

In Rokossovskiy words, “the reply was curt: carry out orders. There was nothing for us to do but work out the ways and means of carrying out our task.”<sup>99</sup>

In response, Rokossovskiy tried to impose his operational style by ensuring that individual battles had realistic objectives and were properly prepared to avoid unnecessary losses. “We had insufficient strength for extensive offensive operations, so we decided that in each case we would restrict ourselves to a definite, concrete objective.”<sup>100</sup> The whole series of minor tactical battles were linked together into a coherent operational sequence “because this overall defence system suggested the idea of striking consecutively at one point after another, concentrating as much strength as possible without excessively weakening other sectors.”<sup>101</sup> In summary, deprived of the resources to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre in pursuit of decisive success, Rokossovskiy did everything to avoid prolonged positional attrition. During February and early March 1942,

“our Army nibbled steadily at the enemy’s defences, weakening them now at one point, now at another. We were incapable of breaching the front, but we methodically pushed it southwards, taking village after village, forcing the Germans back to the River Zhizdra.”<sup>102</sup>

The desire to avoid prolonged attrition in favour of harmonising attrition and manoeuvre to create operational momentum was a persistent hallmark of Rokossovskiy’s operational style. On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1943, he exhorted 70<sup>th</sup> Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army to prevent German reserves from the north and north-west interfering with the Central Front’s operations.<sup>103</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943, when the Central Front finally crossed the Oka, Rokossovskiy emphasised that 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards



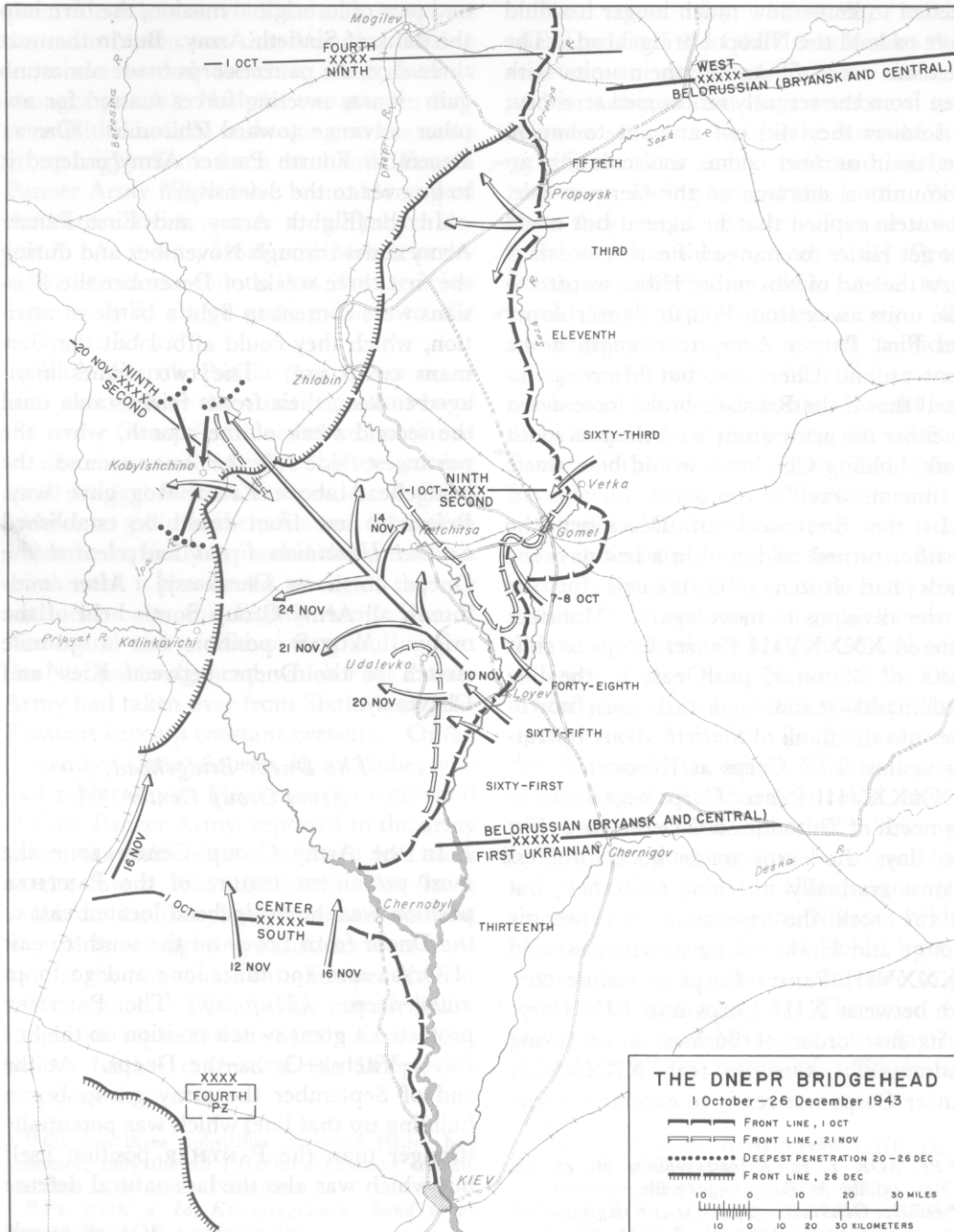
Tank Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army must not allow the enemy to settle into new defensive lines.<sup>104</sup> Finally, on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1943, as the Central Front began to leave behind the grinding attritional advance to the Oka, Rokossovskiy was determined that the new operation, planned for 11<sup>th</sup> August 1943, was not going to suffer from lack of operational momentum. He emphasised three times in his orders that the enemy must not be permitted to withdraw to new defensive lines.<sup>105</sup>

In many ways, the most impressive example of Rokossovskiy's ability to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre was the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation (10<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> November 1943). The Belorussian terrain and extensive German defences meant Rokossovskiy was faced with the possibility of a prolonged period of grinding, attritional operations. However, Rokossovskiy brilliantly utilised all of his forces in simultaneous attrition and manoeuvre, to generate operational momentum and deep operations. He grasped the initiative and forced the Germans out of key positions, splitting the enemy front and undermining German operational cohesion. There was a consistent refusal to pursue attrition as an operational aim in itself. On the contrary, attrition was used as a means to an end in order to create opportunities for manoeuvre and deep operations.

The aim of the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation was "to attack from the Loyev bridgehead, penetrate the enemy defences, take Rechitsa, Vasilevichi and Kalinkovichi and cut into the rear of the enemy's Gomel group."<sup>106</sup> The Central Front was deployed on a front of one hundred and sixty kilometres. However, three forces 63<sup>rd</sup> Army, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and 50<sup>th</sup> Army covered the northern half, while the southern half of the front contained 11<sup>th</sup> Army, 48<sup>th</sup> Army, 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 61<sup>st</sup> Army.<sup>107</sup> The main concentration of forces lay with 65<sup>th</sup> Army, supported by 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps and 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps, in addition to 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards and 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps' poised to engage in deep operations. Rokossovskiy was very keen to avoid a grinding, attritional victory that cost more than it gained,

"What we needed was a bold manoeuvre involving diversionary action to mislead the enemy. The initiative was in our hands and we could well

afford the risk of pretending to concentrate forces on one sector of the front while preparing to strike on another. This is just what we did.”<sup>108</sup>



**Figure 128: The Gomei-Rechitsa Operation and the operational harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre: 10<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup> November 1943.**  
 (Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, 1987, p.190.)

In order to create active *maskirovka* Rokossovskiy ordered Fedyuninskiy's 11<sup>th</sup> Army, east of Gomel, and its northern neighbour 63<sup>rd</sup> Army, to continuously attack "the enemy north of Gomel drawing his attention to the area while we prepared the main attack on the Loyev sector."<sup>109</sup> Simultaneously, 48<sup>th</sup> Army was to attack north-east, over difficult terrain, towards Rechitsa. It lay directly west of Gomel on the key Gomel-Rechitsa-Kalinkovichi rail line, a vital strategic point that linked Army Group South to Army Group Centre as well as Second and Ninth German Armies.

On 10<sup>th</sup> November 1943, without warning and with German attention focussed on Rokossovskiy's diversions, 65<sup>th</sup> Army<sup>110</sup> surged through German lines and launched a deep operation.<sup>111</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> November 1943, Batov took Rechitsa, virtually without a shot being fired, courtesy of a turning move.<sup>112</sup> This cut the Mozyr-Kalinkovichi-Rechitsa-Gomel rail link, the lifeblood of Second German Army's position. Therefore, in this one piece of harmonised attrition and manoeuvre, Rokossovskiy compromised Gomel and Second German Army's entire position. Second German Army was threatened indirectly from the west by 65<sup>th</sup> Army's deep operation, directly from the south and west by 48<sup>th</sup> Army, as well as from the east, by 11<sup>th</sup> Army. It continued to fight bitterly for Gomel, but despite Gomel's obvious significance, Rokossovskiy refused to be drawn into an attritional and positional contest. It would only give Army Group Centre time to marshal reserves, utilise the awkward terrain and stabilise the German position. In a classic exposition of deep operations, Rokossovskiy struck deep, confident that an advance on key systemic points in the German operational rear would increase the Belorussian Front's operational momentum and eventually compromise Second German Army's ability to hold Gomel, the loss of which would involve taking the entire German front back.

After beating off German counter-attacks on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1943, Rokossovskiy's left wing moved on Kalinkovichi, the supply centre for Second German Army. If Kalinkovichi was lost to a deep operation, Second German Army had just four days ammunition and two days fuel. Rokossovskiy's move caused consternation

in the highest echelons of the German high command.<sup>113</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> November 1943, Hitler permitted Second German Army to transfer all areas north of the Berezina and east of the Dnepr, an area that included Gomel, to Ninth German Army. In short, in operational terms, Second German Army could not sustain its position without Kalinkovichi. However, once again Rokossovskiy refused to be drawn into a prolonged attritional contest.

In order to increase operational momentum, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1943, Rokossovskiy gambled. In a dramatic move, ordered his forces, led by 65<sup>th</sup> Army and 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps to strike even deeper. He ordered them to by-pass Kalinkovichi and sever the main Mozyr-Kalinkovichi-Zlobin-Rogachev-Mogilev rail line. This was the main strategic line that connected Army Group Centre and Army Group South.<sup>114</sup> It was critical to the strategic mobility of German troops on the Eastern Front and fed the operational branch lines that sustained Second and Ninth German Army. In operational terms, Rokossovskiy's aim was to split Second and Ninth German Army deployed, respectively, on the southern and northern banks of the Berezina-Dnepr confluence. It was this final systemic blow that persuaded Hitler to authorise Second German Army to withdraw from the Dnepr in the Gomel region, thus conceding control of an important area of south-eastern Belorussia.<sup>115</sup> In short, Second German Army had been levered out by a deep operational strike that combined attrition and manoeuvre to develop powerful operational momentum.

As Rokossovskiy synchronised the deep operations on the left wing against Second German Army, he stunned Ninth German Army by launching an attack on the Belorussian Front's extreme right wing. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 1943, a few days earlier, Zeitzler, the Chief of the General Staff, had informed Hitler that "Ninth Army believed that nothing will come here."<sup>116</sup> Therefore, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Army's surprise attack "dealt Ninth Army a staggering blow."<sup>117</sup> It was a brilliant strike designed to split and fix Ninth Army, as well as undermine German forces, further south, on the River Sozh fighting the Belorussian Front's middle grouping of 11<sup>th</sup>, 63<sup>rd</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Armies. It also seriously compromised the Ninth Army forces

fighting in the Gomel sector, a sector that it had just taken over from Second German Army. On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1943, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army crossed the psychologically significant Dnepr at Bykhov.<sup>118</sup> Simultaneously, further south, 48<sup>th</sup> Army carried the Berezina-Dnepr confluence<sup>119</sup> and once again threatened to split Second and Ninth German Armies, thus compromising the whole German front in south-eastern Belorussia.

On 26<sup>th</sup> November 1943, the Ninth German Army withdrew from the Gomel salient, withdrew from the Sozh and re-established its line on the Dnepr further west, utilising the key rail junctions of Zhlobin and Rogachev. Rokossovskiy officially terminated the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1943,<sup>120</sup> although we now know the fighting around Kalinkovichi resumed within days. The Gomel-Rechitsa Operation was a stunning example of Rokossovskiy's operational art and his ability to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre. German formations were repeatedly wrong-footed and forced to scramble in desperate, improvised operations, to protect their systemic rear. It is therefore distinctly ironic that the Gomel-Rechitsa Operation, an operation that generated considerable momentum was actually terminated because Rokossovskiy's deep operational forces ran out of steam, just as Rokossovskiy was threatening to impose a major strategic crisis on Army Group Centre and Army Group South.

As a result, although Second and Ninth German Army suffered an operational defeat, they did not suffer the operational collapse Rokossovskiy inflicted on the Wehrmacht during Operation Bagration. It is reasonable to speculate that if Rokossovskiy had possessed a tank army or cavalry mechanised group of the 1944-1945 vintage he may have inflicted a significant operation defeat on the Wehrmacht. Certainly, through a combination of creativity, maskirovka, attrition and manoeuvre he created an opportunity that went begging.

By 1944-45, Rokossovskiy had the instruments to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre on an operational scale. In turn, this combination of mobility and fighting power gave him the capacity to generate the massive operational

momentum that enabled him to overwhelm German forces and turn the theory of deep operations into practice. The greater Soviet armoured production from spring 1943 made it easier to combine attrition and manoeuvre in a more effective manner for more prolonged periods of time, within formations and for the *Front* as a whole. Soviet rifle armies received powerful, heavy infantry support tanks such as the JS-2, that combined attrition and manoeuvre in deep battle to support the massive attritional capabilities of Soviet tactical artillery. The superior mobility of Soviet infantry equipped with Dodge trucks transformed the internal cohesion of many Soviet formations. In conjunction with self-propelled artillery such as the SU-76 and SU-152, it made them far more capable of harmonising attrition and manoeuvre. Equally, by 1944-45, the increasing number of mobile armoured corps gave individual armies a greater ability to fuse manoeuvre and attrition.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, in 1944-45, Rokossovskiy made extensive use of army level mobile corps. These were integrated into a wider *front* operation in order to introduce a greater degree of simultaneous attrition and manoeuvre in support of tank armies and cavalry-mechanised groups.

It is clear from operations campaigns such as Moscow, Kol'tso, Kutuzov, Bagration, East Prussia and East Pomerania that the desire to harmonise attrition and manoeuvre were consistent themes in Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations. However, the evidence presented by Rokossovskiy's operational command is that far from being the strongest blow, the final blow was invariably the weakest. This significantly undermined the ability of a commander to fuse attrition and manoeuvre in a sustainable operational manner. These questions of operational momentum, sustainability and the harmonisation of attrition and manoeuvre were intimately linked to operational judgement as to when an operation had begun to out-run its ability to sustain itself. In these matters of operational art Rokossovskiy's military style places him in line with Svechin, not Tukhachevskiy.

### **Rokossovskiy's Judgement: Making The Right Decisions**

In the nineteenth century Clausewitz argued every offensive had a natural life of its own, beyond which the law of diminishing returns undermined the benefits of continuing an attack. At this point an offensive should be halted, before operational exhaustion left an attacking force unable to defend its gains. The Clausewitzian concept of the culminating point was well understood in the Soviet era. Svechin, in particular, was a disciple of Clausewitz and argued that “an offensive that goes beyond its culmination point very swiftly becomes a gamble.”<sup>122</sup> To Svechin, and later to Rokossovskiy, the ability to determine the point at which an operation had run out of steam was a fundamental aspect of operational art and command. Svechin believed, “the attacker must remember that simple forward movement only weakens him and is a very conditional plus.”<sup>123</sup>

It was a question of judgement, based on intellect and reason, not simply a blind emotional commitment to go forward or an unthinking obedience to ideological dogma about the offensive established in the 1920s.<sup>124</sup> Svechin argued that, “hence, it is understood how important it is to estimate opportunely the limit beyond which an offensive turns into a gamble and begins to turn into preparation for an enemy counter-attack. This is a very broad question.”<sup>125</sup> It was also a profound insight into the nature of command and played itself out in several operational scenarios in the Great Patriotic War. In short, both the German and Soviet commanders repeatedly ignored this aspect of operational and strategic command in war. Yet, the historical evidence suggests that invariably Rokossovskiy's judgement in such matters proved sound.

Svechin's comments were part of the Red Army's inter-war debate about a doctrinal commitment to offensive action. These thoughts contained a barely concealed criticism of Tukhachevskiy's dash on Warsaw in 1920, but Svechin, an intellectual Tsarist officer was in the minority. In 1926, Svechin lost the debate, less on the quality of argument and more on the ideological soundness of Tukhachevskiy's argument.<sup>126</sup> As a result, in the period 1926-1942, at the

strategic, operational and tactical level the Red Army was doctrinally committed to the offensive. In 1941, these doctrinal principles were blindly and dogmatically applied in a reckless and inflexible manner that had terrible consequences. In addition, Svechin's warning that "the best positions are abandoned if there is a possibility of advancing several kilometres"<sup>127</sup> was blindly ignored in the period 1939-1941.

In summary, it is easy to blame Stalin for the Red Army's reckless offensives in the period June 1941-March 1943, but this had been Red Army doctrine for years, formulated and endorsed by senior Red Army officers such as Tukhachevskiy. Stalin did force the Red Army's wasteful general offensive of January 1942, but the disastrous Khar'kov Operation of May 1942,<sup>128</sup> was proposed by Timoshenko, not Stalin.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, in the period January 1943-March 1943, as Rokossovskiy's memoirs show *Stavka*, not Stalin, authorised several inordinately ambitious offensives, designed to destroy German forces in the Caucasus, eastern Ukraine, southern and central Russia, including Rokossovskiy's monumentally ambitious operation of February 1943.

In 1942-43, *Stavka* mistakenly believed a series of successive and simultaneous operations could induce a strategic collapse amongst German and Axis forces, already wobbling after Stalingrad. These offensives began well and had considerable success in the Caucasus, but the wilful disregarding of intelligence ensured that Golikov's Voronezh Front, conducting Operation Star<sup>130</sup> and Vatutin's South-Western Front, carrying out Operation Gallop,<sup>131</sup> were smashed by Manstein's counter-offensive of February-March 1943. In essence, *Stavka* completely ignored Clausewitz's and Svechin's warnings about pushing offensives beyond their natural limits,<sup>132</sup> because the hard evidence contradicted their emotional beliefs about German weakness and imminent Soviet triumph.<sup>133</sup>

Equally, regardless of *Stavka*'s failings many field commanders were guilty of poor judgement and an obsession with relentless attacks in their conduct of their



operations. In contrast, at the tactical, operational and strategic level, Rokossovskiy consistently argued against over-ambitious, hastily prepared offensives driven beyond their natural limits without regard for the enemy's combat power. The extended operations in the Moscow area, after the counter-offensive of December 1941, forced Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army to undertake a series of tactical attacks that achieved little and incurred many casualties. Rokossovskiy argued that,

“by forcing them out we frequently placed ourselves in unfavourable conditions, stretching out the front, which in some places curved and looped in the most preposterous fashion. Very often the enemy sliced off the salients.”<sup>134</sup>

However, if a rational analysis of the operational situation demanded it, Rokossovskiy was quite prepared to drive an operation on, particularly if it prevented protracted attritional and positional fighting. On the Istra in December 1941, “to prevent the enemy from consolidating there I ordered the units to push forward at top speed and force the river on the heels of the retreating Germans.”<sup>135</sup> Similarly, in August 1943, during the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation, Rokossovskiy urged his commanders to bounce the Dnepr. In the same operation, further north, German forces attempted to stabilise their position on the Desna. This “had to be denied at all costs, so I ordered Batov to accelerate his advance and force the river without halting.”<sup>136</sup>

Clearly, from an operational perspective, this emphasis upon getting across rivers to deny them to the enemy made considerable sense. Striking the enemy, in a new operation, from a river you had already crossed, posed fewer tactical and operational problems than an assault crossing against an enemy in prepared defensive positions. Yet, it was a serious dilemma. It involved weighing the risks of further action, incurring casualties or the false economy of halting an operation, to face a harder task later. The worst outcome was to carry on an operation too far and get smashed by an enemy counter-attack. It was this dilemma that shadowed Rokossovskiy's contradictory orders to Chuikov's 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Army in late July

1944, before the German counter-attack that pummelled 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, east of Warsaw.

There is little doubt that in late July 1944, that 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and the right wing of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front had gone beyond their culminating point. The natural pendulum of operations had begun to swing away from Rokossovskiy towards German troops falling back on shorter supply lines and substantial reserves. Rokossovskiy had no fresh troops and was operating at a considerable distance from 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian's supply base. In summary, regardless of Stalin's willingness to allow 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front to help the Warsaw Rising, Rokossovskiy's forces had gone beyond their culminating point several days before the German counter-attack confirmed it. However, given *Stavka* and Stalin's emphatic orders to cross the Vistula, it is difficult to see how Rokossovskiy could have resolved the dilemma. Arguably, it was a gamble worth taking for the idea of a formal assault operation across the Vistula and Narev, without a bridgehead, against a prepared enemy was not an option to cherish.

Clausewitz argued,

“war is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgement is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth.”<sup>137</sup>

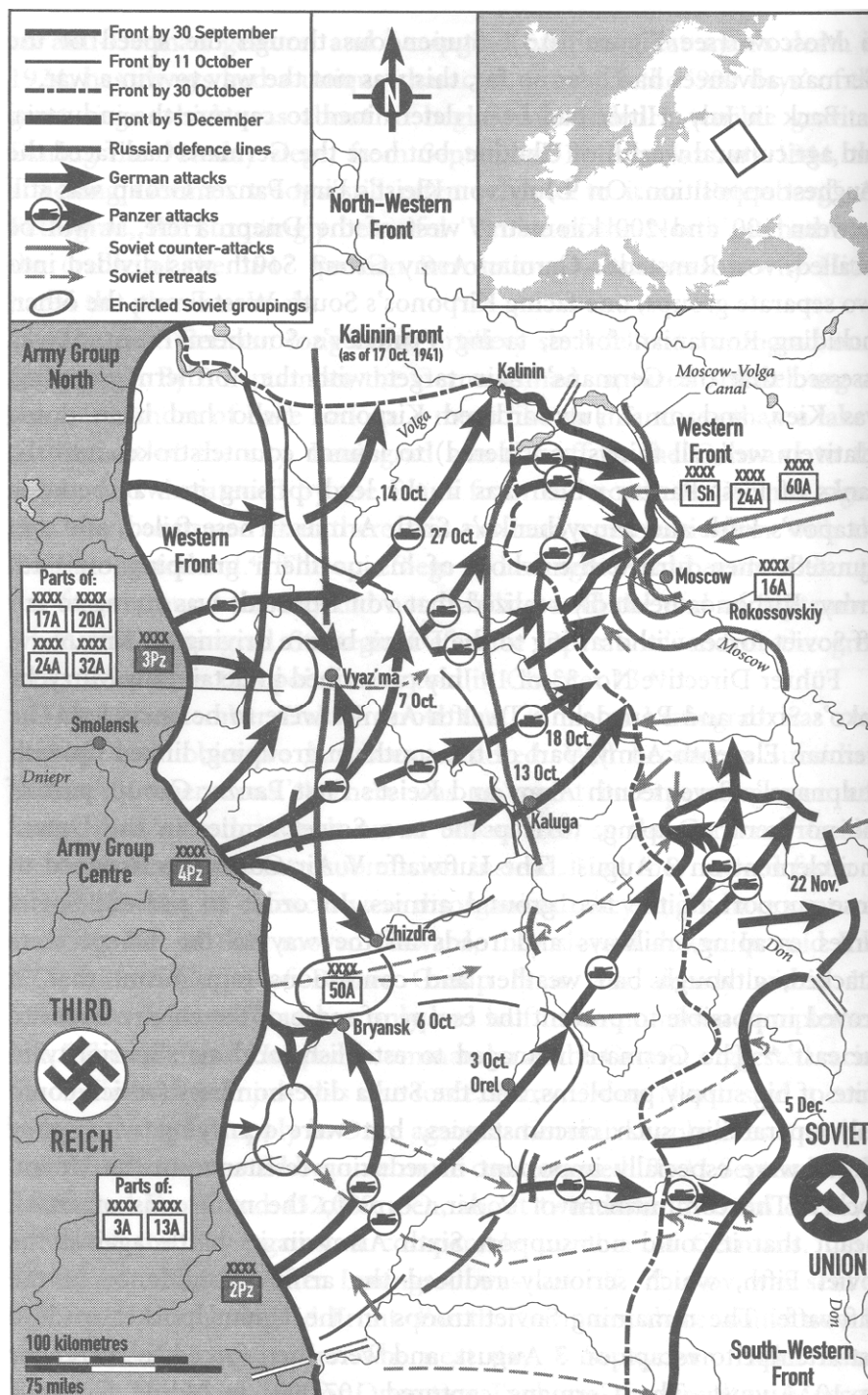
Clausewitz emphasised the instinctive ability of senior field commanders to make key decisions based on limited knowledge, in a short period of time. This requires a specific form of intellect, *coup d'oeil*, that instinctively assesses the situation rather than coming to the correct decision through a methodical analytical process. This is because

“circumstances vary so much in war, and are so indefinable, that a vast array of factors has to be appreciated – mostly in the light of probabilities alone. The man responsible for evaluating the whole must bring to his task the quality of intuition that perceives the truth at every point.

Otherwise a chaos of opinions and considerations would arise, and fatally entangle his judgement...”<sup>138</sup>

In the Moscow defensive operation of 15<sup>th</sup> November-4<sup>th</sup> December 1941, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army played a critical role in one of the most intense and significant battles in history. The Red Army and Rokossovskiy did possess certain advantages at Moscow that were not present during Operation Barbarossa. The obvious nature of the German objective made surprise difficult to achieve and intelligence was easier to acquire.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, the terrain punctuated by forest, marshland and numerous rivers<sup>140</sup> made the German lines of advance predictable, particularly as the winter conditions undermined the Germans ability to launch the fluid armoured operations in which they were considerably superior to the Red Army at this stage of the war.

In addition, by December 1941, talented commanders such as Zhukov and Rokossovskiy had long recognised the German propensity to encircle and annihilate the enemy.<sup>141</sup> At Moscow, 16<sup>th</sup> Army was 50,000<sup>142</sup> strong in positions twenty kilometres deep,<sup>143</sup> whereas its neighbours 5<sup>th</sup> Army at 30,000 and 30<sup>th</sup> Army, 23,000 were considerably smaller.<sup>144</sup> while on the southern wing of Western Front's defences, 50<sup>th</sup> Army's positions were particularly strong. In combination, despite the Red Army's parlous strategic situation, in operational and tactical terms, the battle of Moscow was fought on something like equal terms.



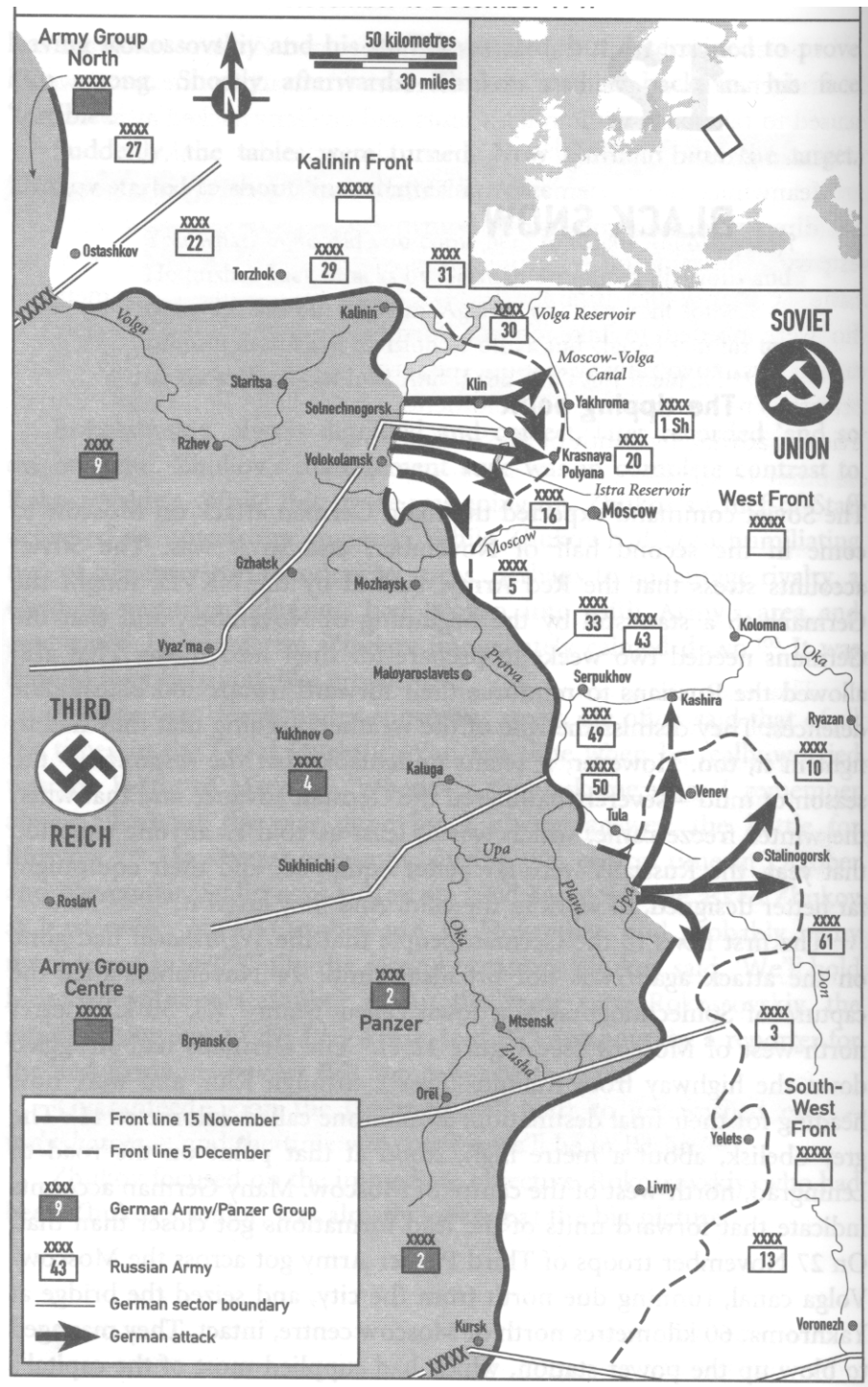
**Figure 129: The Moscow Defensive Operation as the decisive strategic engagement of the 1941 campaign.**

(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.258.)

Nevertheless, in contrast to previous Soviet defeats on the June 1941 border, Vyazma and Bryansk both in early October 1941, where the Russian defences were characterised by broad fronts with little depth, at Moscow, 16<sup>th</sup> Army had deep, strong defences. These defences had the power to sap the German blow and

drag the Wehrmacht into a positional and attritional struggle. This would deny the Germans the rapid encirclement and annihilation victories they had become accustomed to and test the Wehrmacht's ability to sustain its forces in prolonged, high intensity fighting. The German logistical chain was already stretched to breaking point as the road based systems slithered in the mud, or struggled with the cold. Furthermore, Rokossovskiy and the Red Army fought with Moscow behind them. Moscow's pivotal position in the Soviet rail network was instrumental in strategic re-deployment and operational mobility, enabling quick manoeuvre in any direction.<sup>145</sup> In addition, the Moscow road network meant commanders like Rokossovskiy could rely on a rough and ready supply chain to get reserves and equipment to the frontline. Rokossovskiy often complained about Zhukov's conduct at Moscow but frequently mentions that 16<sup>th</sup> Army received regular reinforcements, especially artillery. They were fed to 16<sup>th</sup> Army in a piecemeal fashion, but they were made available.

It is quite clear that at Moscow, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army faced the main German blow, north of the city, a massive attack spearheaded by Third Panzer and Fourth Panzer Armies.<sup>146</sup> In total, in the Klin-Solnechnogorsk sector, Third Panzer Army deployed 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Panzer Divisions, supported by the 14<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Motorised Divisions with 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. On the Volokolamsk-Istra sector, Fourth Panzer Army deployed 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer Divisions, SS Das Reich Division with 35<sup>th</sup> and 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.<sup>147</sup> This German force was not solely targeted at 16<sup>th</sup> Army, but during November-December 1941, Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army fought a gruelling, shattering battle. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army was at the *schwerpunkt* of the German attack and was the fulcrum of the Soviet defence at Moscow. A rapid German breakthrough had potentially ominous implications for Moscow, Zhukov's plans for a counter-offensive, the survival of the Soviet state and the outcome of World War Two. Rokossovskiy's judgement and his instinctive tactical acumen, as well as his ability to think clearly under the most extreme pressure, in circumstances of tremendous uncertainty, were tested to the limits of human endurance.



**Figure 130: The Western Front's Moscow Defence Operation led by Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army: 15<sup>th</sup> November-5<sup>th</sup> December 1941**  
(Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 2007, p.314.)

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1941, the main German assault smashed into the 16<sup>th</sup> Army and 30<sup>th</sup> Army on Western Front's right flank, north-west of Moscow.<sup>148</sup> During the next fourteen days, 16<sup>th</sup> Army was involved in constant fighting and slowly

driven back towards Moscow. In the first forty-eight hours Rokossovskiy faced a major crisis. On 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> November 1941, 30<sup>th</sup> Army, on his right wing, buckled.<sup>149</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> Army was in danger of being enveloped<sup>150</sup> and “we were greatly worried by the situation developing on the left flank of the 30<sup>th</sup> Army, especially when towards evening, we lost contact with its headquarters.”<sup>151</sup> To make these uncertain, but ominous matters worse, on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1941, a massive German concentration of force, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer Divisions, supported by 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the Luftwaffe, attacked 16<sup>th</sup> Army’s left flank, at the junction with 5<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, “by bringing in additional forces, the enemy was able to push back the right flank units of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, penetrate the gap between the two armies and advance towards the Volokalamsk-Moscow Highway, threatening to outflank us in depth.”<sup>153</sup>

This was a critical moment in the Moscow defence operation. At all costs, the Germans had to be denied a rapid breakthrough, for a German armoured column racing down the main road to Moscow had the capacity to wreak physical and psychological havoc among the city’s defenders.<sup>154</sup> As 16<sup>th</sup> Army received a terrible pounding, in the air and on the ground, assailed on two sides, Rokossovskiy held his nerve, did not waste his reserves, picked his spot and ordered 78<sup>th</sup> Siberian Division to block the German assault on the main road to Moscow.<sup>155</sup> The Siberians clashed head on with SS Das Reich. After three days the line held with Das Reich describing “the fighting of the last few days the heaviest of the Eastern campaign and with the highest number of casualties.”<sup>156</sup> The “enemy was not able to breakthrough our defences to operational depths.”<sup>157</sup> The Germans switched their focus from Volokalamsk and began to probe the rest of Rokossovskiy’s 16<sup>th</sup> Army, gradually gaining momentum as it pushed back 16<sup>th</sup> Army in exhausting, grinding fighting. If ever there was a situation wrapped in uncertainty that called for a sensitive and discriminating judgement that had the skilled intelligence to scent out the truth, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1941, on the road to Moscow, was it.

There was no respite. A fierce struggle for the Klin-Solnechnogorsk road developed. In Rokossovskiy's words "an extremely grave situation developed in the Klin and Solnechnogorsk sectors."<sup>158</sup> On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1941, the Germans approached Klin from the north, south and west with infantry battles taking place in the streets.<sup>159</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1941, Klin was lost, Solnechnogorsk was lost and trapped between the Germans, Stalin and Zhukov, who considered the situation catastrophic,<sup>160</sup> Rokossovskiy's command car was machine-gunned. German shells were landing in and around Rokossovskiy's headquarters. Zhukov insisted, over Rokossovskiy's objections, that Solnechnogorsk was to be re-captured.<sup>161</sup> Several hasty and poorly organised counter-attacks, including a disastrous one involving 44<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division,<sup>162</sup> were launched but "by nightfall the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the enemy had to be abandoned."<sup>163</sup>

During 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 1941, 16<sup>th</sup> Army was under attack from all directions.<sup>164</sup> The Germans approached the line of the River Istra and the Istra Reservoir. In the wake of Zhukov's refusal to countenance Rokossovskiy's idea of a tactical withdrawal to the Istra reservoir,<sup>165</sup> the Soviet position north-west of Moscow continued to deteriorate. On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1941, German and Soviet troops were fighting on both banks of the Istra. The 78<sup>th</sup> Siberian was still fighting in the streets of Klin, but the German assault ground forward. Nevertheless, although the situation was desperate, the Germans had still not ruptured 16<sup>th</sup> Army's line. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army evacuated its headquarters at Lyalova, under fire and withdrew to Kryukovo.<sup>166</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> November 1941, a German strike force made up of infantry and tanks drawn from 7<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division and 231<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, surged down the main Leningrad to Moscow highway, from Solnechnogorsk towards Kryukovo and the heart of Moscow.<sup>167</sup> At Kryukovo, Rokossovskiy was blessed with a call from Stalin who politely inquired,

"if I was aware that enemy units had appeared in the neighbourhood of Krasnaya Polyana, and what steps I was taking to prevent them from occupying the place. He stressed the point that from Krasnaya Polyana the nazis could reach the capital with long-range artillery."<sup>168</sup>



This was the crisis of the battle of Moscow. A few minutes later, with no discussion, Sokolovskiy, Western Front's Chief of Staff, informed Rokossovskiy that he was to counter-attack German units in Krasnaya Polyana.<sup>169</sup> Troops that had been allocated by Rokossovskiy for a counter-attack on Solnechnogorsk were switched, at Stalin's whim, to Krasnaya Polyana. At 17.00 hours on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1941, the 16<sup>th</sup> Army counterattacked.<sup>170</sup> Astonishingly, the assault was successful and drove German troops out of Krasnaya Polyana.<sup>171</sup>

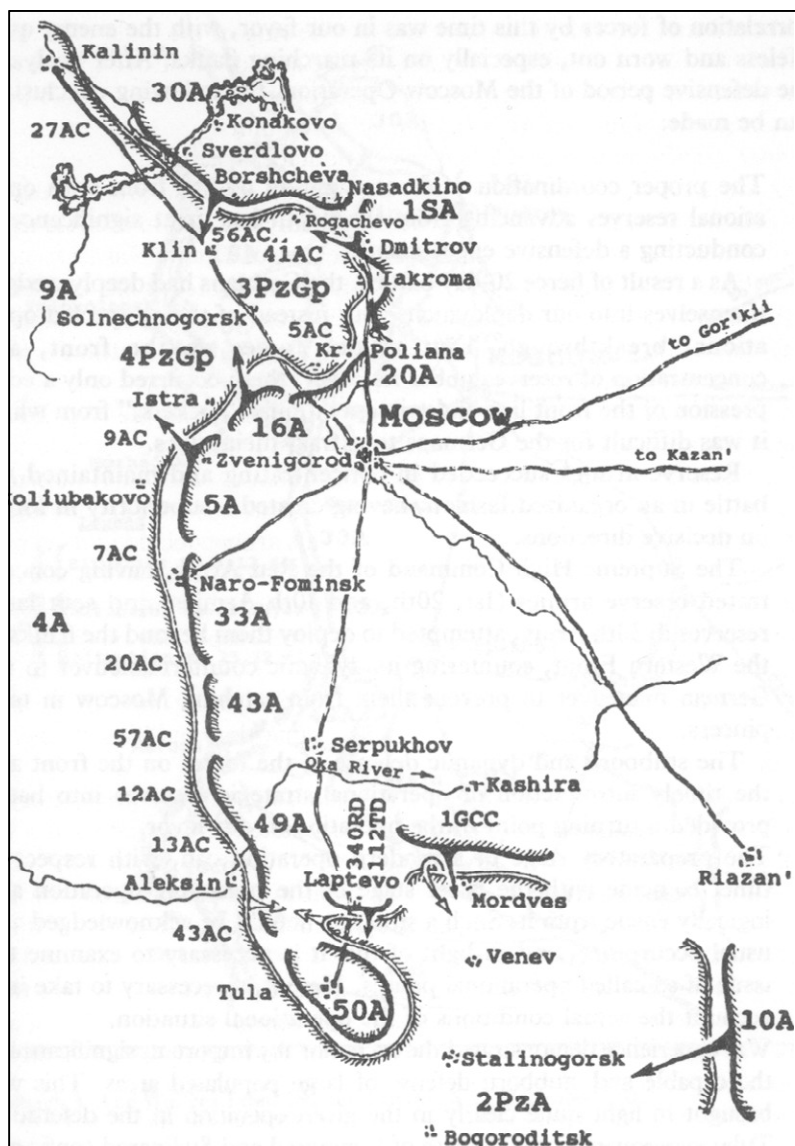


Figure 131: The Crisis of the Moscow Defence Operation north-west of Moscow in 16<sup>th</sup> Army's sector: 22<sup>nd</sup> November-6<sup>th</sup> December 1941.  
(Orenstein, *Soviet War Experience*, 1993, p. 7.)

However, as Svechin might have predicted, the gain at Krasnaya Polyana was a very conditional plus. The situation in Solnechnogorsk deteriorated, “we threw all we had into the battle, but even so the Army CP in Kryukovo was in trouble.” The CP was being bombed but “for the first time since the beginning of the war I saw our planes in action in relatively large numbers.”<sup>172</sup> The German advance continued: on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1941, in the face of bitter resistance German troops crossed the Moscow-Volga Canal, before being driven back over it by 16<sup>th</sup> Army, with the help of 1<sup>st</sup> Shock Army,<sup>173</sup> introduced into the battle at a critical moment by Zhukov. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1941, 16<sup>th</sup> Army again managed to fight the Germans to a standstill. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1941, 1<sup>st</sup> Shock Army, to 16<sup>th</sup> Army’s north continued to attack over the Moscow-Volga Canal.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, in the first days of December 1941, Rokossovskiy’s 16<sup>th</sup> Army faced continuous assaults north-west of Moscow.

However, although Rokossovskiy did not know it, for 16<sup>th</sup> Army the worst of the German assault was over. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1941, the Wehrmacht switched its main attack to Fourth German Army, west of Moscow. On 4<sup>th</sup> December 1941, although 16<sup>th</sup> Army was still involved in bitter defensive fighting to its north, 1<sup>st</sup> Shock Army and 20<sup>th</sup> Army launched sustained counterattacks that disrupted the momentum of the German offensive. As a result, on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the left wing of Rokossovskiy’s 16<sup>th</sup> Army, pounded, driven backwards, but not broken, began to grind its way forward.<sup>175</sup> Finally, on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1941, Field Marshal von Bock gave permission for German forces, north of Moscow, to halt their assault.<sup>176</sup>

The pages of history have naturally celebrated Zhukov’s achievement in organising the successful defence of Moscow, with the timely committal of 1<sup>st</sup> Shock Army, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1941, a decision of monumental significance. It halted the momentum of the German blow, just as it seemed to be developing an irresistible force, having crossed the Istra and the Istra Reservoir.<sup>177</sup> Zhukov’s skillful husbanding of his forces, his allocation of reserves and concealment of the

Red Army's subsequent counter-offensive, was a remarkable achievement that changed the course of World War Two.

However, western historiography is relatively ignorant of the key role played by Rokossovskiy's 16<sup>th</sup> Army. In the face of incessant attacks, and physical and mental conditions of the most extreme kind, Rokossovskiy handled his forces in an accomplished manner, and at least gave Zhukov the chance to contest the initiative, whilst retaining some degree of control, a state of affairs denied to most Soviet commanders in the period June-November 1941. The 16<sup>th</sup> Army's conduct of the battle of Moscow required constant juggling of forces to deal with the regular crises that threatened to rupture the Soviet line. In particular, the counter-attack of 78<sup>th</sup> Siberian Division on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1941 was a critical event. At Moscow, 16<sup>th</sup> Army fought a battle for the highest stakes, one that had tactical, operational and strategic implications. It was handled well by Rokossovskiy who demonstrated considerable *coup d'oeil*, refined judgement and a skilled, instinctive intelligence under the most extreme pressure.

Naturally, some of Rokossovskiy's decisions worked out better than others and with the benefit of hindsight, on rare occasions, Rokossovskiy's judgement was questionable. In December 1942, Rokossovskiy's argued that 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Army should stay with the Don Front, and, that a rapid crushing of the German pocket would render Operation Winterstorm irrelevant. Vasilevskiy,<sup>178</sup> *Stavka's* representative and Chief of the General Staff overruled Rokossovskiy. Operation Kol'tso was delayed. Rokossovskiy was given command of all Soviet forces involved in the destruction of the German pocket.<sup>179</sup> He was not actually given command of all forces in the Stalingrad region, including 62<sup>nd</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Armies until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1943.<sup>180</sup> The intelligence failures of the Don Front, and the fierce resistance it encountered a month later, in January 1943, suggest Vasilevskiy was right and Rokossovskiy was wrong. As Clausewitz pointed out, "of all the passions that inspire a man in battle, none we have to admit, is so powerful and so constant as the longing for renown and honour."<sup>181</sup> In retrospect, Rokossovskiy may have been saved from the consequences of his own emotional

impetuosity to crush what he thought were 85,000 troops, by the wisdom of Vasilevskiy's reason.

In February 1943, Rokossovskiy had serious misgivings about the headlong advance of Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps. He ordered Kryukov to dig in on the river Sevs. However, "the old war horse was flushed with success and it was not so easy to hold him back in mid-career. He pushed on as far as the Desna River and Novgorod-Severskiy, showing little or no concern for reconnaissance on his flanks."<sup>182</sup> Rokossovskiy repeated his warnings to Kryukov and ordered him to step up reconnaissance, consolidate his position and wait for 65<sup>th</sup> Army.

"But it was too late. The enemy struck at the flanks and rear of his cavalry force that had reached out of the Desna. At the cost of considerable losses the group fought its way out of the trap, greatly assisted by the units of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank and 65<sup>th</sup> Armies, which had hastened to the rescue. To halt the enemy here, we had to deploy the 65<sup>th</sup> Army on a wide front along the eastern bank of the River Sev."<sup>183</sup>

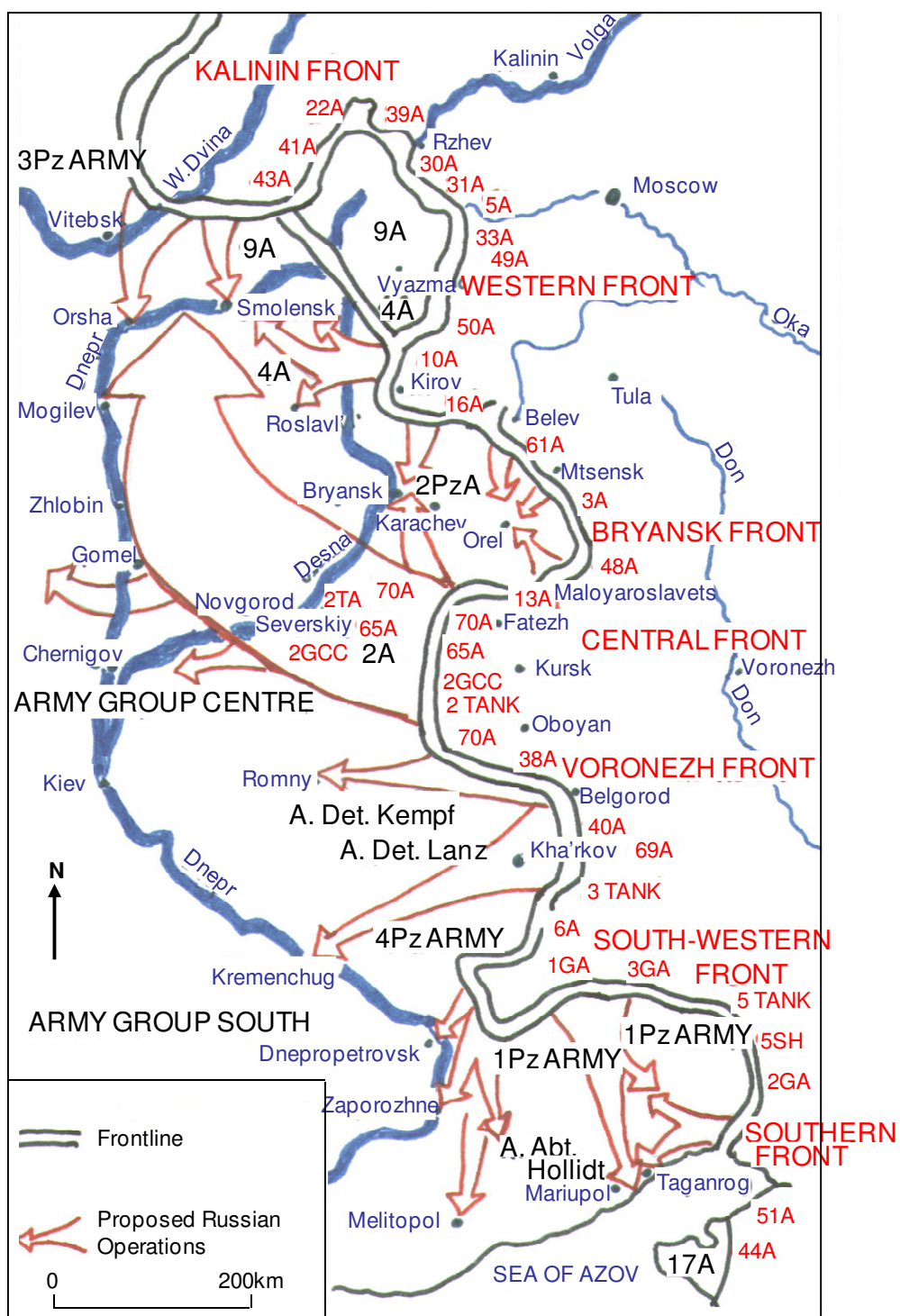
Why was Rokossovskiy not more forthright with Kryukov and why didn't he take a firmer grip of the situation? In Rokossovskiy's defence, the operational situation was an extremely complex and dynamic one. The progress of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps was just about the only thing going well. In the centre, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army was bogged down and there were serious problems with 70<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>184</sup> Similarly, despite Kryukov's recklessness, he had briefly occupied Novgorod-Severskiy, a key German supply and communications point on the Desna.<sup>185</sup> It is possible that Rokossovskiy was tempted by the possibility of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps holding Novgorod-Severskiy until 65<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army drew up and consolidated Central Front's gains.

*Stavka's* timetable of deployment, the difficult weather, involving waist high snow, made it extremely difficult to hold the Central Front together, without slowing the whole front down. This would only have undermined an operation that was already an ambitious gamble. A rapidly delivered blow by 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards

Cavalry Corps had some chance of success, but as 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army indicated, a slow, grinding advance was no panacea and entirely alien to Rokossovskiy's natural style. It would only incur greater casualties and alert German reserves, while giving them the time to deploy in an organised fashion. Therefore, Rokossovskiy had problematic and contradictory choices that made it difficult to reconcile operational cohesion and operational momentum, with time and speed. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1943, Second German Army deployed 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, soon joined by the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions. On Rokossovskiy's right wing, Second Panzer Army blocked 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army and 65<sup>th</sup> Army, by deploying two more infantry divisions.<sup>186</sup> At least Rokossovskiy did not ignore the intelligence about German divisions in the same way that *Stavka* and Vatutin did further south. In short, Kryukov knew about the threat and should not have been surprised.

The choices of Rokossovskiy were further complicated by his knowledge that in early March 1943, 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army, 21<sup>st</sup> Army, 64<sup>th</sup> Army and 62<sup>nd</sup> Army were still pencilled in for Central Front. If Rokossovskiy had been able to deploy these forces, 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps had the prospect of quick relief from isolation. Equally, it would have been easier for Rokossovskiy to synchronise the Central Front and create the balance of manoeuvre and fighting power that held the key to operational momentum. However, Manstein's counter-offensive of March 1943 entirely undermined Rokossovskiy's chances of decisive success and turned Kryukov's isolation from potentially splendid to perilous.<sup>187</sup> It is difficult to assess whether Rokossovskiy could have deployed these extra forces with sufficient alacrity to bolster the Central Front's operation, but 21<sup>st</sup> Army was about to deploy, when on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943, it was transferred to the Voronezh Front.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore,

“in addition the STAVKA ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army southward to back up the Voronezh Front and both 24<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Armies from Stalingrad to concentrate in the Voronezh Front's rear area around Voronezh. The STAVKA correctly judged that these forces, together with 62<sup>nd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Armies newly arrived from Stalingrad, would be sufficient to bring von Manstein's juggernaut to a halt.”<sup>189</sup>



**Figure 132: The February 1943 *Obkhod* (Turning Move) of the Central Front: 25<sup>th</sup> February-11<sup>th</sup> March 1943.**  
(Stephen Walsh)

Therefore, Manstein's offensive diverted forces *already* allocated by *Stavka* to Rokossovskiy. These forces would have significantly augmented the Central Front's striking power and enabled Rokossovskiy to gather sufficient operational momentum to sustain the deep operation and challenge the Germans for the operational, indeed strategic initiative on the Eastern Front, in the same way that Manstein's counter-offensive hijacked *Stavka's* plans. Therefore, during February-March 1943, Rokossovskiy was faced with an operational and strategic situation that significantly complicated the apparently simple issue that Kryukov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps had marched off into the distance. Rokossovskiy did warn Kryukov and had ordered him to step up reconnaissance, but Rokossovskiy did not order a halt because he knew the potential scale and significance of the operation unfolding in February 1943.

The real issue, in late February and early March 1943, was time. Rokossovskiy knew the Central Front was not ready but another delay, following numerous such requests before Kol'tso, was out of the question. If 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps could ward off German reserves long enough for 65<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army to close up, Rokossovskiy knew the Central Front was about to receive an enormous accretion of fighting power. It was this, the latent overwhelming potential of the Central Front's operation that explains Rokossovskiy's apparently tentative decisions concerning 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, when to all intents and purposes he should have just imposed his will on Kryukov.

One might also debate Rokossovskiy's judgement concerning the German counter-attack in East Prussia, in January 1945, a counter-attack that at one stage threatened Rokossovskiy's headquarters. On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1945, the right flank of Rokossovskiy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front came under sustained attack from German forces desperate to restore the physical link between eastern Prussia and the German heartland.<sup>190</sup> It was a serious counter-attack on 48<sup>th</sup> Army's right flank that threatened to reach the Vistula. This would have presented 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front's forces on the Baltic coast and west of the Vistula, with an extremely problematic situation. In Rokossovskiy's words,

“We went into action at once, rushing a substantial portion of the forces of 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army, the 8<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps into the breach. At the same time instructions were issued to 2<sup>nd</sup> Strike Army’s Commander to turn the part of his forces deployed at and south of Elbing to the east with the task of denying the enemy an approach to the Vistula, should he succeed in breaking through our positions at any point.”<sup>191</sup>

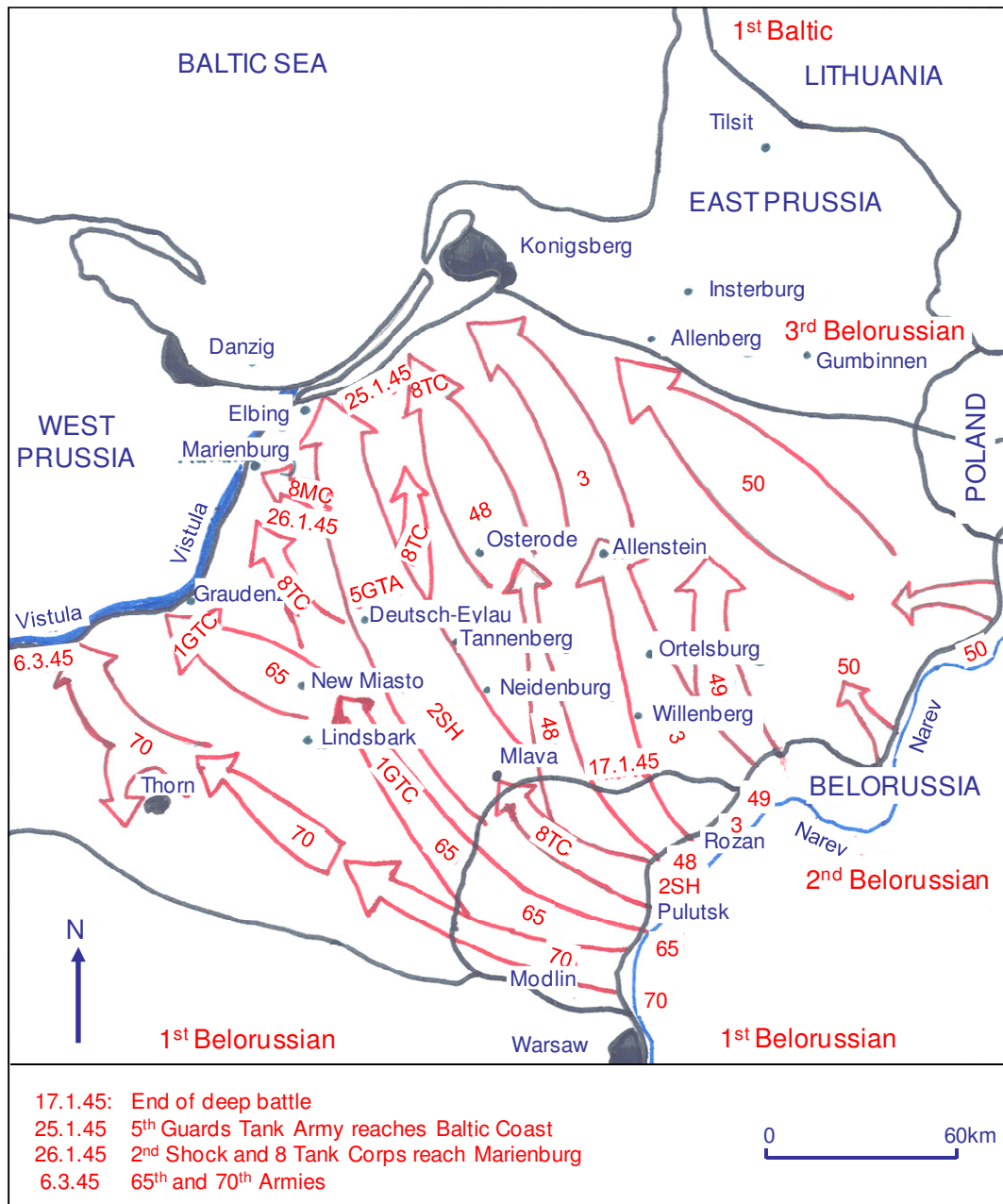
After a difficult forty-eight hours, the German counter-attack was beaten off. It is quite possible to argue that Rokossovskiy should have foreseen a major counter-attack from an easterly direction, by German forces desperate to regain control of the Vistula and to re-connect eastern Prussia to Germany. However, it is equally possible, indeed more likely, that Rokossovskiy was pre-occupied with the highly problematic operational situation that *Stavka*, not the Wehrmacht had imposed on 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front. In fact, it is reasonable to argue that the German counter-attack simply made a bad situation worse.

On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945, six days before the German counter-attack, *Stavka* had ordered Rokossovskiy to divert 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian’s right wing, north and north-east, to conduct operations against German forces in eastern Prussia. “The order came as a complete surprise. It meant a total change of our plans, which had been based on the GHQ directive of November 28, 1944.”<sup>192</sup> This directive had outlined 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian’s main mission as moving its left wing through western Prussia and eastern Pomerania, in support of 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian’s operations in northern Poland. Simultaneously, a secondary attack was to contain German forces in eastern Prussia.<sup>193</sup> In Rokossovskiy’s words,

“the GHQ directive failed to say a word about any participation of forces of the Second Byelorussian Front in the Third Byelorussian’s Front’s operations against the East Prussian group. And now our main task was to be precisely that of surrounding the East Prussian group with a strike by the Front’s main forces to the north and north-east, aimed at reaching the Frisches Haff. At the same time we were not relieved of our previous task



of co-operation with the First Byelorussian Front on the flank and had to continue the offensive westward, although we had only two armies left on that sector.”<sup>194</sup>



**Figure 133: The East Prussian Operation: January 1945**  
 (Stephen Walsh)

In essence, *Stavka* had turned 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front inside out. Now, the right wing was to carry out the main blow, while the left wing tried, in vain, to support the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. Rokossovskiy had been given a new, highly demanding operation that required his front to move in two directions at once. Yet, Rokossovskiy had been given no extra forces in the face of stiff opposition, appalling weather and terrain, “which abounded in forests, marshes, big and small lakes and rivers, most of them joined by canals.”<sup>195</sup> It was also to be conducted in a highly charged psychological atmosphere, along roads strewn with shattered and terrified German refugees.

In Rokossovskiy’s words, “the overall situation was very complicated, with half the Front’s forces facing eastward against the East Prussian group and the other half advancing to the west.”<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, from 20<sup>th</sup> January-10<sup>th</sup> February 1945, Rokossovskiy responded with a devastating operation, that splintered and shattered the German position in eastern Prussia, driving one German group west into Pomerania and another east into Konigsberg. In a difficult situation, Rokossovskiy had juggled his forces, kept his front together and swept through East Prussia in an overwhelming display of manoeuvre and attrition. In the meantime, in eastern Prussia, 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian slowly bashed its way forward against fanatical resistance and deep defences. As far as Rokossovskiy was concerned,

“the wrong sector had been chosen for Chernyakhovsky’s main attack. The General Staff could not have been ignorant of the fact that the strongest fortifications in Prussia were located in the eastern and southeastern areas, where it would be very difficult to break through the enemy defences. Besides, the very configuration of the frontline suggested that the main attack ought to be delivered from south to north.”<sup>197</sup>

In other words, *Stavka* should have planned a deliberate attack along the lines of the improvised one it had imposed on Rokossovskiy, to help 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>198</sup> Therefore, ironically enough, Rokossovskiy’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front

rescued *Stavka*'s flawed plans for East Prussia. It became the hammer that forced the Germans on the anvil of 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front. On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1945, *Stavka* effectively conceded Rokossovskiy's argument. It ordered Rokossovskiy to transfer his three right wing armies, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> plus 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army, to 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front.<sup>199</sup> In return, 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front received 19<sup>th</sup> Army and 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Army, as it moved west, to conduct what became the Eastern Pomeranian Operation.<sup>200</sup>

It is ironic that rather than challenging it, eventually, the East Prussian Operation actually endorsed Rokossovskiy's judgement. It is hardly surprising that he failed to anticipate the German counter-attack as he was engaged in the process of completely re-orienting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front, while simultaneously planning a new operation with no extra resources. In the end, Rokossovskiy's response to *Stavka*'s decision was a highly impressive display of operational art that smashed German military power in eastern Prussia.

Clausewitz argued that,

“a distinguished commander without boldness is unthinkable. No man who is not born bold can play such a role, and therefore we consider this quality the first pre-requisite of the great military leader. How much of this quality remains by the time he reaches senior rank, after training and experience have affected and modified it is another question.”<sup>201</sup>

As a soldier and junior officer in World War One, Rokossovskiy's boldness was documented by two decorations for bravery and four nominations, with two wounds in the Russian Civil War. Yet, time did not modify Rokossovskiy's boldness, if anything it increased it. This calculated boldness was driven by the rational manipulation of risk, rather than ignoring it through an emotional inability to confront ambiguity or a blind, simplistic commitment to attack. This was distinctly unusual, for as Clausewitz argued,

“the higher the military rank, the greater the degree to which activity is governed by the mind, by the intellect, by insight. Consequently, boldness, which is a quality of the temperament, will tend to be held in

check. This explains why it is so rare in the higher ranks, and why it is all the more admirable when found there.”<sup>202</sup>

In June 1941, Rokossovskiy ignored the orders of his front commander Kirponos, as well as Moscow’s standing orders to attack and drive the enemy back. Rokossovskiy held back 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps, put it on the tactical defensive and concentrated its artillery on the main road, confident that the Germans would seek the best going, in order to make rapid progress. As 13<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division moved forward, it was given a bloody nose.<sup>203</sup> It was a temporary setback, but an early indication of Rokossovskiy’s calculated boldness and confidence in his own judgement, a pattern that would be repeated throughout the war, despite Rokossovskiy’s rise through the higher ranks. Clearly, Rokossovskiy did not lack confidence in his own judgement and this often gave his decision making a remarkable boldness. To defy Stalin, three times, over Operation Bagration was an astonishing act of calculated boldness that bordered on the suicidal, but it was a product of Rokossovskiy’s intellectual conviction that unless 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian had two main blows it would fail.

Rokossovskiy was not an impetuous, rash commander but nor was he an unduly cautious one. In the conduct of operations, if faced with a stalemate or an operation that was losing momentum, Rokossovskiy’s response was invariably a bold and decisive one, in which he sought to alter the parameters of the situation rather than just hammer away. Nevertheless, with the possible exception of Rokossovskiy’s desire to launch Operation Saturn and Operation Kol’tso in response to Operation Winterstorm, a concept that was breathtaking in its imagination and audacity, Rokossovskiy boldness was calculated, informed by intellect, not emotion or unreasonable, unquestioning optimism.

As his actions in repeatedly asking for delays before Operation Kol’tso in January 1943, and in securing a delay of ten days before the February 1943 operation show, Rokossovskiy’s calculated boldness was not simply a product of a favourable environment that encouraged daring, dashing ambition. In these

operations subsequent events proved his calculated boldness to have been based on sharp intellect and sound judgement. Furthermore, as his gumption in informing Stalin in early March 1943, that the Red Army's most ambitious operation of the war could not be achieved indicates, Rokossovskiy was just as willing to advise the termination of an operation, as take an unreasonable gamble that was no more than a bluff. Equally, as his thoughts about the Orlovka Operation in October 1942<sup>204</sup> demonstrate, Rokossovskiy's calculated boldness often led him to argue against certain operations.

At the Seelow Heights, Zhukov's determined boldness was driven by the emotional need for glory. It was also the product of Zhukov's temperamental inability to countenance failure, whatever the cost. This was a hallmark of Zhukov's operations around Moscow in 1941-42, Operation Mars in November 1942, Kiev in November 1943 and the Berlin Operation (16<sup>th</sup> April-May 1945). Therefore, unlike Rokossovskiy, Zhukov's boldness was as much the product of wilful, murderous obstinacy as his undoubted military abilities. Zhukov, along with Stalin never accepted and perhaps did not wish to, that operations could be pushed too far.

Vatutin was also an imaginative and bold commander, but the historical record indicates that Vatutin's boldness was driven more by emotion than reason. It lacked Rokossovskiy's more refined calculation of risk. During the war Vatutin displayed an almost irrational optimism and a desire to attack, regardless of evidence that demanded more sober judgement. In September 1942, despite clear evidence that the operation was going to fail, *Stavka* had to order Vatutin, twice, on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1941<sup>205</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September 1942,<sup>206</sup> to halt his attempts to recapture Voronezh. Vatutin was also rash in his disregard of credible intelligence warnings about a German build-up in February 1943. He deluded himself, as late as 17<sup>th</sup> February 1943, that the Germans were planning to withdraw over the Dnepr and ignored warnings from army commanders about Germans preparations for a counter-attack.<sup>207</sup> In the next three weeks, as the South-Western Front reeled backwards from the German blow that he had

dismissed, the unfailingly optimistic Vatutin learned the true scope of his misjudgement, based on the emotional wave of victory and the desire for glory.

It is difficult to disagree that,

“the *front* commander, (Vatutin) caught up in the optimistic mood of the STAVKA and prodded by often sarcastic STAVKA directives, also ignored or misread intelligence indicators on initial enemy movements and made the fatal mistake of allowing subjective judgements concerning German intentions to cloud objective judgements concerning German capabilities. Moreover, Vatutin opposed the advice of his subordinate army commanders, who were more tuned to the realities of the situation. Like the STAVKA, Vatutin did not react quickly enough to avert disaster.”<sup>208</sup>

Rokossovskiy weighed, accepted and manipulated risk through rational analysis, based on his own intellectual appreciation of the evidence. If necessary he was prepared to defy Stalin and Zhukov in order to uphold his judgement, yet despite his self-confidence and calculated boldness, none ever accused Rokossovskiy of arrogance. Thus, both Rokossovskiy and Vatutin possessed flair, but Rokossovskiy had a more thoughtful intellect and better judgement. Rokossovskiy's was prepared to gamble as an act of calculated boldness, but Vatutin's boldness often appears to have been reckless.

Rokossovskiy's boldness was a product of a sharp intellect, as well as his natural temperament, so it did not impair his judgement. Therefore, Rokossovskiy managed to straddle the line between iron will, blind obstinacy and the optimistic disregard of reality in the pursuit of operational objectives. Rokossovskiy was a tenacious, demanding commander with the highest standards, who pursued operational objectives in a single-minded, but rarely mindless manner, and invariably displayed sound judgement. On several occasions in Operation Kol'tso, the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation, East Prussia and the Oder-Elbe Operation of April 1945, when faced with deadlock, Rokossovskiy adapted the

plan to reality, rather than simply pounding away at the German defences while berating tactical commanders.

Rokossovskiy was fortunate that as an attacking commander, he never really found himself in a situation where he had no options. He was not dragged into prolonged urban fighting in Stalingrad, Warsaw, Königsberg or Budapest. However, his imaginative response to other difficult situations indicates that Rokossovskiy's natural instinct would have tried to adapt and create a solution, rather than grind out an advance over a sea of bodies. Rokossovskiy and Zhukov were both men of exceptional talent and personal resilience. Indeed, "people who knew both said Zhukov was tougher, Rokossovskiy was smarter."<sup>209</sup> Yet, Zhukov frequently crossed the line between stubborn persistence and blind, bloody obstinate slaughter. In summary, Rokossovskiy repeatedly demonstrated during the Great Patriotic War, that he was able to combine the intellectual courage of his own convictions, with the temperamental ability to adjust to circumstances as he found them, not as he wanted them to be.

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<sup>1</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. n77, p. 244 discusses this idea.

<sup>2</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3412. d. 480. l. 339-345 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), p. 549-550. 'Doklad Komanduyushchego Voyskami Donskogo Fronta No0028/Op Nachal'niku General'nogo Shtaba Plana Operatsii Po Ob'yedineniyu S Voyskami Oboronyayushchimiya V Stalingrade' (Report Of The Commander Of The Don Front No:00228/Op To The Chief Of The General Staff On The Operational Plan To Join Up With The Troops Defending Stalingrad), 22.00 Hours, 9th October 1942.

<sup>3</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 201. op. 398. d. 21. l. 328-332 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (3), *Stavka VGK, 1943*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 306-308. 'Doklad Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00585/Op Nachalniku General'nogo Shtaba Dopolneniy K Planu Chernigovsko-Pripyatskoy Operatsii' (Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Chief Of The General Staff In Addition To The Plan Of Operations For The Chernigov-Priyat Operation).

<sup>4</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *The Development of Russian-Soviet Operational Art 1904-37*, op. cit. p. 207.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 381.

<sup>7</sup> Tukhachevsky, cited in Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 225.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce W. Lincoln, *Red Victory*, (Cardinal, 1989), p. 408.

<sup>9</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>11</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg* 2002, op. cit. p. 288.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Harold S. Orenstein, (Translated), 'Collection of Materials on the Study of War Experience, (SMPIOV), Vol. 11, March-April 1944, No.5, The Defensive Battle for the Kursk Bridgehead, 5-15 July 1943, *The Journal of Slavic Studies*, Vol. 6, No4, December 1993, pp. 656-700 gives a detailed overview while covering the Central Front in depth between pp. 681-700.

<sup>13</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *The Battle For Kursk 1943, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. pp. 201-207.

<sup>14</sup> Koltunov, G.A. and B.G. Solov'yev, *Kurskaya Bitva*, (The Battle of Kursk), (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1983), pp. 34-49 gives a detailed account of the Central Front's defensive operation at Kursk making it clear that Samudorovka, Olkhavotka, Ponyri and Maloarkhangelsk were the focal points.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The truly remarkable thing is that Rokossovskiy did not expect the main German attack in 48<sup>th</sup> Army's sector, but still launched the pre-emptive barrage.

<sup>18</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 3 op. 11556, d. 13. l. 156 cited in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 40. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No: 30144 Komanduyushchim Voyskami Zapadnogo, Bryanskogo, Tsentrāl'nogo, Voronezhnogo, Yugo-Zapadnogo i Yuzhnogo Frontov O Vozmozhnom Perekhode Protivnika V Nastupleniye.' (Stavka VGK No:30144 To The Commanders Of Western, Bryansk, Central, Voronezh, South-Western and Southern Fronts About The Possibility Of The Enemy Moving Over To The Offensive.) 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1943.

<sup>19</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 3. op. 11556. d. 13. l. 158 cited in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 41. 'Informatsiya General'nogo Shtab No:12933 Komanduyushchim Voyskami Zapadnogo, Bryanskogo, Tsentrāl'nogo, Voronezhskogo, Yugo-Zapadnogo i Yuzhnogo Frontov O Deystviyakh Protivnika' (General Staff Information No:12933 To The Commanders Of The Western, Bryansk, Central, Voronezh, South-Western and Southern Fronts About Enemy Activity), 01.50 Hours, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>20</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *The Battle For Kursk 1943, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 147.

<sup>21</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 20 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 154. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00366/Op Komanduyushchim 2-y Tankovoy i 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiyami Na Naneseniye Kontrudar.' (Battle Instruction Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On Inflicting A Counterstrike) 10.30 Hours, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>22</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 28 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 154. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00370/Op Komanduyushchim 13-y i 2-y Tankovoy Armiyami, Komandiru 19-go Tankovogo Korpusa Na Naneseniye Kontrudar.' (Order Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:00370/Op To The Commanders Of 13th and 2nd Tank Armies, Commander of 19th Tank Corps On Inflicting A Counterstrike), 21.25 Hours, 5th July 1943.

<sup>23</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 180-183 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 155-156. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo No:00132 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Perekhode Protivnika V Nastupleniye.' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:00132 To The Supreme Commander About The Transition Of The Enemy To The Offensive), 01.00 Hours, 6th July 1943.

<sup>24</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *The Battle For Kursk 1943, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. pp. 115-117 provides a vivid account of the struggle for Ponyri.

<sup>25</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, (University Press of Kansas, 1999), p. 117.

<sup>26</sup> P. Beldisiyev et al., *Kurskaya Bitva: Podvig na Kurskoy Duge* (The Battle of Kursk; Victory in the Kursk Bulge), (Voronezh, 1982) has a blow by blow account of the 307<sup>th</sup> Division's struggle at Ponyri. See M.A. Yeltsin, *Na Oborone Ponyrey*, (The Defence of Ponyri), pp. 238-244.

<sup>27</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 226. op. 321. d. 143. l. 147-154 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 157-159. 'Operativnaya Svodka Shtaba Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00283/Op Nachal'niku General'nogo Shtab O Khode Oboronitel'noy Operatsii' (Operational Summary Of The Staff Of The Central Front No:00283 To The Chief Of The General Staff About The Progress Of Defensive Operations), 22.00 Hours, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. d. 159

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> P. Beldisiyev et al., *Kurskaya Bitva: Podvig na Kurskoy Duge* (The Battle of Kursk; Victory in the Kursk Bulge), (Voronezh, 1982) has a detailed account of 70<sup>th</sup> Army's battle at Kursk. See V.M. Sharpov, *Geroy 70-Y Armii*, (The Heroes of 70<sup>th</sup> Army), pp. 214-223.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 226. op. 321. d. 143. l. 147-154 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 158. 'Operativnaya Svodka Shtaba Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta



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No:00283/Op Nachal'niku General'nogo Shtaba O Khode Oboronitel'noy Operatsii' (Operational Summary Of The Staff Of The Central Front To The Chief Of The General Staff About The Progress Of The Defensive Operation).

<sup>33</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 189-193 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 160-161. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00134 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Khode Oboronitel'noy Operatsii.' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front About The Progress Of Defensive Operations), 00.30 Hours, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>34</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, op. cit. p. 118.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*, Vol. 7, op. cit. p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 194-198 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 162. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00135 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Khode Oboronitel'noy Operatsii.' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front About The Progress Of Defensive Operations), 24.00 Hours, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>39</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 104. l. 199-203 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), pp. 163-165. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00136 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduyushchemu O Khode Oboronitel'noy Operatsii' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Supreme Commander About The Progress Of Defensive Operations), 24.00 Hours 9<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

<sup>40</sup> *Istoriya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*, Vol. 7, op. cit. p. 91.

<sup>41</sup> *Sovetskaya Voennoy Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1978), p. 51 says it began on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1944. John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 228 seems to suggest it began on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1944 with a massive artillery barrage.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>43</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 390 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 103. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220129 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go i 2-go Belorusskikh Frontov, Predstavitel'yu Stavki Na Perepodocheniye 3-y Armii' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220129 To The Commanders Of 1st And 2nd Belorussian Fronts And The Stavka Representative On The Transfer Of 3rd Army).

<sup>44</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 397,398 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 107. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220136 Komanduyushchim Voyskami 1-go Pribaltiyskogo, 3,2,1-go Belorusskikh Frontov Ob Uluchsheniim Upravleniya Voyskami Pri Presledovanii Protivnika ' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220136 To The Commanders Of The 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd, 1st Belorussian Fronts About Improving The Command Of Troops In Pursuit Of The Enemy) 02.50 Hours, 6th July 1944.

<sup>45</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 410 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 113. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220148 Komanduyushchemu 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta, Predstavitel'yu Stavki Na Vykhod 61-y i 70-y Armiy V Reserv Verkhovnogo Glavnokomandovaniya' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220148 To The Commander Of 1st Belorussian Front, And The Stavka Representative On The Withdrawal Of 61st and 70th Army Into The Reserve Of The Supreme Command), 03.30 Hours, 19th July 1944.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. pp. 244-245.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>49</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 423 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 118. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220161 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta, Predstavitel'yu Stavki O Razvitiy Nastupleniya I Zakhvate Platsdarma Na Peke Narev' (Stavka VGK Directive No: 220161 To The Commander Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front And The Stavka Representative Concerning The Development Of The Offensive And Seizing A Bridgehead Over The River Narev), 24.00 Hours, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

<sup>50</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l. 424 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 118. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220162 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo Fronta, Predstavitel'yu Stavki O Razvitiy Nastupleniya Na Varshavu i Zakhvate Platsdarmov Na Rekakh Narev i Visla' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220162 To

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The Commander Of 1st Belorussian Front And The Stavka Representative Concerning The Development Of The Offensive On Warsaw And Seizing Bridgeheads Over the Rivers Narev and Vistula), 24.00 Hours, 28th July 1944.

<sup>51</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 166. l.478 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), p. 120. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220166 *Komanudyushchim Voyskami 1-go Belorusskogo i 1-go Ukrainskikh Frontov O Poriyadke Forsirovaniya Vislu*' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220166 To The Commanders Of 1st Belorussian And 1st Ukrainian Fronts Concerning The Rapid Forcing Of The Vistula), 24.00 Hours, 29th July 1944.

<sup>52</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. pp. 280-281.

<sup>53</sup> A. Radzievskiy, 'Na Puti K Varshave', (On Route to Warsaw), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.10, October 1971, pp. 68-77, this p. 75.

<sup>54</sup> See A. Radzievskiy, 'Na Puti K Varshave', (On Route to Warsaw), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.10, October 1971, pp. 68-77.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Karl-Heinz Frieser, 'Die Panzerschlacht vor Warschau als operativer Wendepunkt' in *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Zweite Weltkrieg, Die Ostfront 1943/44, (Band 8, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munchen, 2007)*, pp. 570-587 gives a detailed account of the German counter-attack. See also, Gregory Liedtke *Furor Teutonicus: German Offensives and Counter-Attacks on the Eastern Front, August 1943 to March 1945, Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 21, No.3, July-September, 2008, pp. 563-587, this pp. 579-581.

<sup>58</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 186.

<sup>59</sup> Pliyev, op. cit. p. 442.

<sup>60</sup> David M. Glantz and Harold S. Orenstein, *Belorussia 1944, The Soviet General Staff Study*, op. cit. p. 186.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> A. Luchinskiy, 'Osvobozhdeniye Bresta' (Liberating Brest), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.8, August 1969, pp. 92-99 gives a detailed account of the events at Brest seen through the eyes of 28<sup>th</sup> Army's commander.

<sup>64</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 240.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>67</sup> David M. Glantz, 'The Red Army's Lublin-Brest Offensive and Advance on Warsaw (18 July-30 September 1944) :An Overview and Documentary Survey', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 19, No.2, June 2005, pp. 401-442, this p. 411.

<sup>68</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 446.

<sup>69</sup> P. Batov, 'Srazheniye Na Narevskiy Platsdarm,' (The Narev Bridgehead Engagement), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.10, October 1974, pp. 60-67.

<sup>70</sup> Lt.General V. Zlobin, cited in Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 140.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>72</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War*, op. cit. p. 100.

<sup>73</sup> Anan'ev I.M., *Tankovye Armii v Nastuplenii*, (Tank Armies on the Attack), (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988), pp. 50-62.

<sup>74</sup> Anan'ev I.M., *Tankovye Armii v Nastuplenii*, (Tank Armies On The Attack), (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988), pp. 50-55 has an excellent discussion of the type of tank and mechanised corps used by the Red Army in the period spring 1942 until spring 1943.

<sup>75</sup> Anan'ev I.M., *Tankovye Armii v Nastuplenii*, (Tank Armies on the Attack), (Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988), pp. 63-109 discusses the evolution of the Red Army's mobile forces in considerable depth both in terms of their structure and role.

<sup>76</sup> John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, pp. 238-239.

<sup>77</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 403. op. 9657. d. 420. l.84 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), p. 299. 'Boevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 48-y Armii Ob Ovladenii Gorodom Mlava' (Battle Report Of The Staff of 48<sup>th</sup> Army About Control Of The Town Of Mlava), 19<sup>th</sup> January 1945.

- <sup>78</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 155-158 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 302-303. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Perekhode Granitsy Vostochnoy Prussii Na Uchastke Villenberg, Lindzbark' (Battle Report Of The Commander Of The 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About Crossing The East Prussian Border In The Willenberg, Lindsbark Sector), 00.50, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>79</sup> S. Gladyshev, '2-ya Udarnaya Armiya v Vostochno-Prusskoy Operatsii', (2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army in the East Prussian Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.2, February 1975, pp. 20-28, this p. 25 makes it clear that Rokossovskiy decision to introduce 8<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps into the breach had a critical impact on 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army's operational momentum.
- <sup>80</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 143-146 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 300-301. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shtab 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Resul'tatakh Nastupleniya, Ovladenii Yanovo i Peresechenii Granitsy Vostochnoy Prussii' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Results Of The Offensive, Controlling Yanovo And Crossing The East Prussian Border'), 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>81</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 186-189 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 304-305. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Proryve Yugo-Zapadnogo Sektora Vsheshnego Obvoda Vostochno-Prusskoy Oboronitel'noy Polosy Protivnika, Ovladenii Gorodami Osterode i Doytsh-Aylau (Ilava)' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About Breaking Through The External Defences In South-Western Sector The Of The Enemy's East Prussian Defence Zone, Taking The Towns Of Osterode and Deutsch-Eylau (Ilava))
- <sup>82</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 46. op. 2394. d. 1369. l. 233-236 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), pp. 312-313. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta O Razvitiy Nastupleniya I Vykhode Podvizhnykh Chastey Fronta K Yuzhnomu Poberezh'yu Danzigskoy Bukhty V Rayone Severnee El'binga' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front About The Development Of The Offensive And The Movement Of The Front's Mobile Formations To The Southern Coast Of The Bay Of Danzig In The Area North Of Elbing), 26<sup>th</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>83</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 309. op. 4073. d. 784. l. 27-28 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001), p. 314. 'Boyevoye Doneseniye Shtaba 2-y Udarnoy Armii Ob Ovladenii Gorodom Marienburg' (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army About Taking The Town Of Marienburg), 26<sup>th</sup> January 1945.
- <sup>84</sup> Christopher Bellamy, *The Evolution of Modern Land Warfare*, (Routledge, London and New York, 1990), p. 15.
- <sup>85</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, op. cit. p. 20-24 discusses this issue as an aspect of operational thinking.
- <sup>86</sup> Cited in David M. Glantz, 'Developing Offensive Success: The Soviet Conduct of Operational Maneuver,' in ed. Willard C. Frank, Jr and Philip S. Gillette, *Soviet Military Doctrine from Lenin to Gorbachev*, (Greenwood Press), p. 151.
- <sup>87</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 290.
- <sup>88</sup> A.M. Zvartseyev, *3ya Gvardeyskaya Tankovaya*, (The 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tanks), (Moscow, 1982), pp. 65-82 provides a tremendously detailed analysis of 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Tank Army's difficult experiences in Operation Kutuzov, first under the command of Bryansk Front, then under Rokossovskiy's Central Front. See also, G.A. Koltunov and B.V. Solovyev, *Kurskaya Bitva*, op. cit. pp. 72-92.
- <sup>89</sup> See P. Batov, 'K 40 Letuyu Vostochno-Pomeranskoy Operatsii', (40 Years Since the East Pomeranian Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.2, February 1985, pp. 14-20 presents a solid general account of the East Pomeranian Operation. See also N.S. Vetlishin, 'Vostochno-Pomeranskaya Operatsii', (The East Pomeranian Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.2, (February 1965), pp. 124-128. Also, V. Yakulov, 'Vostochno-Pomeranskaya Operatsiya', (The East Pomeranian Operation)', *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.3, (March 1975), pp. 52-56 which concentrated on the left wing of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front in the East Pomeranian Operation.
- <sup>90</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 407.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 405.
- <sup>93</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 410.
- <sup>94</sup> S. Bialer, *Stalin and His Generals*, (Sovenir Press, 1969), p. 595 suggests that 16<sup>th</sup> Army was supposed to be the main effort.
- <sup>95</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 144.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 152-153.

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- <sup>97</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 153.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 154.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 156.
- <sup>103</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 33. l. 391,392 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1999), pp. 183-184. 'Prikaz Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00513/Op Komanduyushchim 70, 2 Tankovoy i 16-y Vozdushnoy Armiyami Na Nastupleniye V Napravleniye Gnezdilovo, Gorodishe.' (Order Of The Commander Of The Central Front To The Commanders Of 70, 2 Tank and 16<sup>th</sup> Air Armies On The Advance In The Direction of Gnezdilovo, Gorodishe), 00.45 Hours, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1943.
- <sup>104</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 329. d. 23. l. 231. in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 185. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Komanduyushchego Voyskami Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No: 00521/Op Komanduyushchim 3 Gvardeyskoy i 2-y Tankovymi Armiyami Na Presledovaniye Protivnika.' (Battle Instructions Of The Commander Of The Central Front No:00521 To The Commanders Of 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Armies On The Pursuit Of The Enemy), 14.30 Hours, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943.
- <sup>105</sup> *Tsentrāl'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 62. op. 321. d. 23. l. 255, 256 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (4), (Moscow, 1997), p. 193. 'Boyevoye Rasporyazheniye Shtaba Tsentrāl'nogo Fronta No:00539/Op Komanduyushchemu 3-y Gvardeyskoy Tankovoy Armiyey Na Vykход Iz Boya' (Battle Instructions Of The Staff Of The Central Front No:00539 To The Commander Of 3rd Guards Tank Army On Withdrawal From Battle), 19.00 Hours, 10th August 1943.
- <sup>106</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 311.
- <sup>107</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1974), p. 601.
- <sup>108</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 312.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>110</sup> P.I. Batov, 'Na Gomelskom Napravleniye', (On the Gomel Direction), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.12, December 1968, pp. 78-83 has a straightforward and informative account of this operation.
- <sup>111</sup> Batov, op. cit. pp. 381-382.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 383-384.
- <sup>113</sup> Helmut Heiber and David M. Glantz, *Hitler and His Generals, Military Conferences 1942-1945*, (Greenhill Books, 2002), p. 289.
- <sup>114</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception*, op. cit. p. 258.
- <sup>115</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, op. cit. p. 195.
- <sup>116</sup> Helmut Heiber and David M. Glantz, *Hitler and His Generals, Military Conferences 1942-1945*, op. cit. p. 289.
- <sup>117</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 195.
- <sup>118</sup> A.V. Gorbato, *Gody i Voyny*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 250-251.
- <sup>119</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1974), op. cit. p. 601.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 602.
- <sup>121</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 80-84 gives an excellent account of how the Red Army was re-equipped.
- <sup>122</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art,' in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 18.
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>124</sup> See pp. 247-248.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>126</sup> Richard Harrison, *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904-1940*, (University Press of Kansas, 2001), p. 138 reviews the nature of this debate and its significance.
- <sup>127</sup> A.A. Svechin, 'Strategy and Operational Art', in Harold S. Orenstein, *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 19.
- <sup>128</sup> Documents: 'The Kharkov Operation, May 1942: from the Archives, Part 1, *Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 5, No.3, September 1992, pp. 451-493. David M. Glantz, 'Documents:The Khar'khov Operation, May 1942, Part II :Southwestern Front Combat Operations', *Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 5, No.4, December 1992, pp. 611-686 provides a fantastically detailed documentary account of this disastrous operation.

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- <sup>129</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op. cit. pp. 345-347.
- <sup>130</sup> David M. Glantz, *From the Don to the Dnepr*, op. cit. pp. 193-214 gives a detailed account of the devastating German counter-attack.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-150 gives an equally thorough account of how German forces smashed Operation Gallop.
- <sup>132</sup> John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op. cit. p. 50.
- <sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-55 gives an excellent account of this crisis mainly from a Soviet perspective.
- <sup>134</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 167.
- <sup>135</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 141.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid., pp. 298-299.
- <sup>137</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed and translated, Peter Paret, op. cit. p. 101.
- <sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 112.
- <sup>139</sup> Shaposhnikov, B.M. Marshal., *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta: 16 Noyabr' 1941- 31 Yanvar 1942*, (The Moscow Operation of the Western Front: 16<sup>th</sup> November 1941- 31<sup>st</sup> January 1942), Transitskniga, Neizvestniye Voyny, 2006. pp. 27-29. suggests that the Red Army had identified the main German axis north-west of Moscow before the German operation began
- <sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 13-14.
- <sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 36-37.
- <sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 33.
- <sup>143</sup> A.A. Lobachev, *Trudnaymi Doragii*, (On Hard Roads), (Moscow, 1961), p. 160.
- <sup>144</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 53.
- <sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 15.
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 49.
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>148</sup> Geoffrey Jukes, Jukes, Geoffrey, *The Defence of Moscow :Purnell's History of the Second World War, Battle Book, No.13*, Purnell, London, 1969, p. 108.
- <sup>149</sup> K. Rokossovskiy, 'Na Volokalamskom Napravleniye', (On The Volokalamsk Direction), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.11. November 1966, pp. 46-55 and K. Rokossovskiy, 'Na Severnykh Podstupakh k Stolitsiye', (On the Northern Approaches of the Capital), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.12, December 1966, pp. 50-61 both present dry terse accounts of the desperate fighting in this area at this time.
- <sup>150</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 62.
- <sup>151</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 111.
- <sup>152</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 64.
- <sup>153</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 112.
- <sup>154</sup> *Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, 1976), pp. 337-338.
- <sup>155</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 112.
- <sup>156</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, *Moscow-The Turning Point*, (Oxford, Berg, 1992), p. 232.
- <sup>157</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 66.
- <sup>158</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 115.
- <sup>159</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 68-69.
- <sup>160</sup> Zhukov, Georgiy, *Vospominaniya i Razmushleniya*, (Recollections and Reflections), 2 Volumes, (Olma Press, Moscow, 2002), p. 31.
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 2.
- <sup>162</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>163</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 121.
- <sup>164</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 80.
- <sup>165</sup> Zhukov, Georgiy, *Vospominaniya i Razmushleniya*, (Recollections and Reflections), 2 Volumes, (Olma Press, Moscow, 2002), p. 39.
- <sup>166</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 125.
- <sup>167</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. pp. 86-87.
- <sup>168</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 126.
- <sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>170</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 87.
- <sup>171</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 127.
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>173</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, *Moscow-The Turning Point*, op. cit. p. 222.
- <sup>174</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 93.

- <sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 98.
- <sup>176</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, *Moscow-The Turning Point*, op. cit. p. 237.
- <sup>177</sup> B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Moskovskaya Operatsiya Zapadnogo Fronta*, op. cit. p. 100.
- <sup>178</sup> A. Vasilevskiy, 'Nezabyvayemye Dni,' (Unforgettable Days), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.3, March 1966, pp. 24-44, this p. 26 outlines the course of events and his decision to divert 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards.
- <sup>179</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 217.
- <sup>180</sup> *Prikaz Stavka VGK No: 170720 Verkhovnomu Glavnokomandovaniya* (Order of the Stavka of the Supreme Command), 30<sup>th</sup> December 1942 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1943 in V.A. Zhilin, Ed. 'Stalingraskaya Nastupatel'naya Operatsiya, 19 Noyabriya 1942- 2 Fevraliya 1943 (The Stalingrad Offensive Operation, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1942-2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943) citing *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 132a. op. 2642. d. 32. l. 223-225. Also, K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Velikaya Pobeda na Volge*, op. cit. p. 431.
- <sup>181</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, op. cit. p. 105.
- <sup>182</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 257.
- <sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 258. Batov, op. cit. p. 298-299.
- <sup>184</sup> Batov, op. cit. p. 298. K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, op. cit. p. 259.
- <sup>185</sup> David M. Glantz, 'Prelude To Kursk: Soviet Strategic Operations, February-March 1943,' op. cit. p. 23.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 25.
- <sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>188</sup> Ibid., p.25-26.
- <sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>190</sup> *Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz*, Vol. 5, (Moscow, 1963), pp. 119-120.
- <sup>191</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, op. cit. p. 390.
- <sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 384.
- <sup>193</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 103. l. 277,278, in RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 176-177. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:220274 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami 2-go Belorusskogo Fronta Na Razgrom Prasnishsko-Mlavskoy Gruppyrovki Protivnika' (Stavka VGK Directive No:220274 To The Commander Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front On The Destruction Of Enemy's Prasnishskoy-Mlava Grouping), 28<sup>th</sup> November 1944.
- <sup>194</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg*, 2002, pp. 381-383.
- <sup>195</sup> Ibid., p. 393.
- <sup>196</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>197</sup> Ibid., pp. 382-383.
- <sup>198</sup> A. Vasilevskiy, 'Vostochno-Prusskaya Operatsiya', (The East Prussian Operation), *Voyenno Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No.3, March 1969, pp. 35-45 refuted Rokossovskiy's criticisms of the General Staff.
- <sup>199</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 213. l. 26-28 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (4), *Stavka VGK, 1944-1945*, (Moscow, 1999), pp. 198-199. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:11022 Komanduyushchim Fronta 2-go I 3-go Belorusskikh Frontov O Perepodchchenii Voysk' (Stavka VGK Directive No:11022 To The Commanders Of The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Fronts Concerning The Transfer Of Forces), 17.50 Hours, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1945. Also, John Erickson, *The Road To Berlin*, op. cit. p. 519.
- <sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 522.
- <sup>201</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, op. cit. p. 192.
- <sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 191.
- <sup>203</sup> K.K. Rokossovskiy, *Soldatskiy Dolg* 2002, op. cit. p. 42.
- <sup>204</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 48a. op. 3412. d. 480. l. 339-345 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 549-550. 'Doklad Komanduyushchego Voyskami Donskogo Fronta No:0028/Op Nachal'niku General'nogo Shtaba Plana Operatsii Po Ob'yedineniyu S Voyskami, Oboronyayushchimiya V Stalingrade' (Report Of The Commander Of The Don Front No:0028 To The Chief Of The General Staff On The Operational Plan To Join Up With The Forces Defending In Stalingrad), pp. 549-550.
- <sup>205</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 126. l. 178 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka VGK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), pp. 393. 'Direktiva Stavki VGK No:170615 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Voronezhskom Fronta O Perekhode K Oborone' (Stavka VGK Directive No:170615 To The Commander Of The Voronezh Front Concerning A Transition To Defence) See also

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David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. III, The Summer Campaign (12 May-18 November 1942), p. 80, self-published, 1999 for a fuller discussion of the context.

<sup>206</sup> *Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony*, f. 148a. op. 3763. d. 124. l. 262, 263 in ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 16-5 (2), *Stavka V GK, 1942*, (Moscow, 1996), p. 403. '*Direktiva Stavki V GK No:170627 Komanduyushchemu Voyskami Voronezhskogo Fronta O Prekrashchenii Hastupleniya*' (Stavka V GK Directive No:170627 To The Commander Of The Voronezh Front About Halting The Offensive) See also David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)*, Vol. III, The Summer Campaign (12 May-18 November 1942), p. 80-81. self-published, 1999 for a wider discussion of these events.

<sup>207</sup> David M. Glantz, *From the Don to the Dnepr*, (Frank Cass, London, 1991), p. 120.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>209</sup> Constantine Pleshakov, *Stalin's Folly*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), p. 178.

## CONCLUSIONS

Marshal Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, victor of Moscow, Stalingrad,



**Figure 134: Rokossovskiy**  
(theeasternfront.co.uk)

Kursk, Belorussia and East Prussia remains an obscure figure in western historiography, vaguely associated with great events, but in reality unknown, lost in a state of western historical ignorance. In contrast, in the Soviet Union and Russia, Rokossovskiy was and is a household name, but his style of leadership and operational command, in particular the radical way in

which it differed from the standard authoritarian Red Army model, is only beginning to be discovered. Rokossovskiy is both famous and yet unknown.

In the Soviet era, a striking combination of extraordinary scope, detailed narrative and an acute sense of historical destiny in general histories, military history journals and unit histories, combined to create an enormous body of historical knowledge concerning the basic story of the Great Patriotic War. This recorded in detail the broad sweep of history as heroic individuals, great or previously unheralded, formations large and small, with the tireless support of the Communist Party, met the Wehrmacht and after an agony of suffering, saved the world from Nazism.

The literature, in both English and Russian, lots of it written by senior commanders and carefully scrutinised by the Soviet political authorities, must be treated with caution. Rokossovskiy's real memoirs, not the censored ones, are an indictment of the Soviet high command's entire approach to the whole war. In terms of planning, creative thinking, consultation, delegation, encouragement of initiative and toleration of mistakes, Rokossovskiy's style of leadership and operational command were entirely at odds with the Stalinist Red Army. There is no denying Zhukov, Konev, Malinovskiy and Vatutin, amongst others, got results, but so did Rokossovskiy. Rokossovskiy was just as successful in the field, if not more so than any other senior Red Army commander. Indeed, according to Woff,



he was, “considered by many senior wartime German commanders as ‘the Red Army’s best general’.”<sup>1</sup>

In character and in style of leadership, Rokossovskiy was different from his peers and contemporaries. Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership was based on his authority, his *dignitas*, his referent, legitimate and expert power, not his formal coercive power.<sup>2</sup> In a sense, he was part of the Red Army’s system, but not a product of it and his style of leadership was very much his own. A man whose record as a soldier bore comparison with any of his colleagues, Rokossovskiy led with fine judgement, moving betwixt and between different styles of leadership: authoritative, democratic and occasionally authoritarian with the ease of a natural leader. He was by instinct and considered judgement, primarily an authoritative leader, a man who, even in this Stalin’s Red Army, understood that in the final analysis, true leadership was borne of ability, trust and personal example, not the pitiless wielding of power. In Stalin’s state and Zhukov’s Red Army this was a radical philosophy of command and a truly distinct style of leadership, one that challenges the traditional image of Soviet military leadership during the Great Patriotic War.

Rokossovskiy was arguably the Red Army’s leading exponent of operational art because of his distinctive style of leadership, not in spite of it. It was not an optional extra but an integrated and considered philosophy of leadership and command. The unusual degree of initiative, delegation and empowerment that lay at the heart of Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership complemented and reinforced operations that emphasised speed, agility, and the desire to stun, grasp and retain the initiative, in order to throw the enemy off balance. Tukhachevskiy believed that the dictates of operational synchronisation placed limits on initiative especially among junior commanders. Yet, it can be argued that Rokossovskiy’s style of leadership actually increased rather than undermined, efficient operational synchronisation.

First, senior officers clearly understood Rokossovskiy's intentions, the wider operational concept and the plan. Second, they knew their own role and how it related to other units and aspects of the plan. Third, the culture of initiative and independent thought that Rokossovskiy consistently encouraged, permeated further down the chain of command than many other Soviet fronts, where authoritarian retribution in response to mistakes stifled *initsiativa* as well as creative initiative. Fourth, Rokossovskiy's inclination to delegate before and during an operation left him free to concentrate on operational synchronisation, not tactical detail. This was critical in maintaining operational co-ordination whilst refraining from excessive tactical interference. It is clear that because Rokossovskiy trusted the judgement of his commanders their judgement improved. This mutual trust and confidence ensured that within the parameters of the operational plan, Rokossovskiy's forces acted with an agility and dynamism that challenges the traditional image of the lumbering Soviet mass.

In short, the culture of encouragement of initiative, consultation, creativity, toleration of mistakes and honest reporting produced senior commanders whose conduct of operations was marked by creativity, imagination, risk-taking and decisiveness. This did not happen by accident. It was the manifestation of leadership and command culture encouraged, nurtured and developed by Rokossovskiy. It enabled Rokossovskiy to guide operations with a loose rein, rather than a firm grip that amounted to a stranglehold. If Rokossovskiy had been German, he would be a renowned commander, cited as an impressive exponent of *auftragstaktik*, or a role model for the contemporary western concept of mission command. Yet, as a commander of the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War for different complex political, social and cultural reasons the historical significance of his truly radical philosophy of leadership and command remain relatively unknown. Nevertheless, it seems clear that modern leadership, in particular military leadership, has much to learn from Rokossovskiy, especially the manner in which his style of leadership informed and sustained his conduct of operations.

In the conduct of operations Rokossovskiy thought carefully, prepared meticulously and moved rapidly, creating operations that at their best, developed operational momentum without pause, from beginning to end. Rokossovskiy's operations were marked by his desire to wrongfoot German commanders, and an inclination to acquire and retain the initiative through daring thrusts designed to turn German defences rather than grind out attritional victories. Once an operation began, the denial of time to the enemy became Rokossovskiy's operational imperative. The consistent themes in Rokossovskiy's operational style were the desire for a quick breakthrough, an intense dislike of protracted attrition and a commitment to rapid, deep operational manoeuvre designed to split and fragment the enemy, thereby shattering his operational cohesion.

The Germanic notion of operational encirclement and annihilation sponsored by Neznamov, Tukhachevskiy and Zhukov had little in common with Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations. Rokossovskiy's deep operations consistently sought out overt systemic targets such as road and rail junctions and towns. The nature of Rokossovskiy's deep operations was not to wear the enemy down, nor to engage in deep operations designed to carry out operational encirclements. Rokossovskiy's conduct of operations was marked by rapid, intense bursts of deep manoeuvre that seized operational objectives before the enemy could recover his poise. They were designed to undermine the enemy's capacity to conduct effective and sustained military operations, while inflicting substantial casualties in the breakthrough and pursuit phase.

In contrast to Zhukov, Rokossovskiy's deep operations were dominated by the idea of depth and the physical and psychological unhinging of the enemy rather than operational encirclement and annihilation. In this Rokossovskiy was the heir to Brusilov, Varfolomeyev and a long tradition of Russian military thinking stretching back into the nineteenth century, indeed back to Genghis Khan. Furthermore, in his rejection of what Aleksandr Svechin called the obsessive tyrannical needle of operations designed to annihilate the enemy force in the field, and in his criticism of an unthinking, blind commitment to relentless attack,

Rokossovskiy's operational art had much in common with Svechin, the intellectual father of Russian operational art.

At first sight, Rokossovskiy's meticulous planning of operations, would appear to be in conflict with Clausewitz's arguments that the nature of command in war is dominated by uncertainty and the need to make difficult decisions based on limited, contradictory information, often in a short period of time. Rokossovskiy believed effective operational planning and timely preparations were essential to military success, a reflection of his extremely sophisticated understanding of the strange anomaly that meticulous preparation fostered rapid but sustainable operations. Rokossovskiy was fully aware, even if occasionally *Stavka* was not, that time invested in preparation was time gained in operations, not the other way round.

Rokossovskiy was a thoughtful commander who preferred planned operations, not amateurish improvisations, full of Bolshevik ardour, passionate commitment and no brains. This did not mean that Rokossovskiy was a manipulator of esoteric military schemes, searching for the perfect operation. Rather, Rokossovskiy was a military professional, who understood the need for effective operational planning and considered judgment. He recognised that dynamic, urgent improvisation, while a key military skill, was not a sensible way to win a long war. Nevertheless, the historical record clearly indicates that Rokossovskiy was not a slave to plans. Indeed, once an operation began, in contrast to other Soviet commanders such as Sokolovskiy and Zhukov, Rokossovskiy's style was notable for its agility.

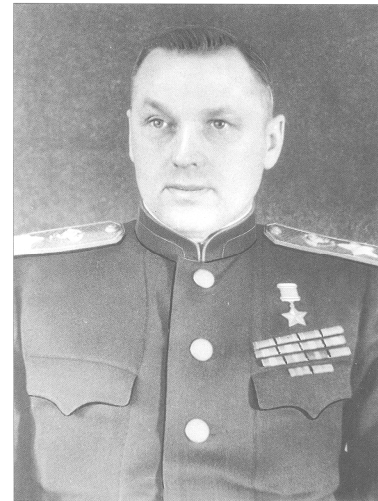
Rokossovskiy's constant improvisation during the period June-October 1941 is a powerful retrospective endorsement of his ability to lead flexibly in accordance with the situation. At Yartsevo, in July 1941, Rokossovskiy conducted operations instinctively, with no fixed headquarters for several weeks. In December 1941, he followed his instincts on the Istra, while at Moscow Rokossovskiy repeatedly demonstrated the ability to improvise and react flexibly to the course of events. In

Operation Kol'tso, at Kursk, in the Chernigov-Pripyat Operation, the Belorussian and East Prussian Operations Rokossovskiy trusted his instinct and made decisions that fundamentally affected the outcome of operations. Indeed, the flexibility and creative imagination that Rokossovskiy showed throughout the war in adapting to circumstances as he found them, rather than as he wanted them to be, was a hallmark of his leadership and command. It was in stark contrast to the bloody, inflexible obstinacy displayed by the likes of Zhukov, Malinovskiy and Sokolovskiy.

Rokossovskiy possessed natural intuition and an instinctive feel for operations as well as an excellent more considered judgement. As a corps, army and *front* commander Rokossovskiy spent four years on the Eastern Front. Yet, it is genuinely difficult to identify any major error of judgement or significant operational failure. There were setbacks and relative failures, but there is no Vyazma of October 1941, Khar'kov of May 1942, Mars of November 1942 to tarnish Rokossovskiy's operational record in the same way as Konev, Timoshenko and Zhukov. The Moscow counter-offensive of December 1941, the *obkhod* of February 1943, Operation Kutuzov of July 1943 and the Lublin-Brest Operation of July 1944 did not achieve all of their objectives, but none could be called a failure. It is difficult to attribute their problems to Rokossovskiy's operational judgement.

In the end, as an operational commander in the greatest, most terrible military contest in the history of warfare, Rokossovskiy's judgement was repeatedly tested and not found wanting, despite the fact that he was a bold and imaginative commander. Rokossovskiy's calculated boldness and refined judgement were distinct hallmarks of his operational command. In combination with Rokossovskiy's instinctive creativity, this intellectual boldness created operations far removed from the stereotypical image of ruthless, unimaginative operations conducted by Soviet commanders with no regard for casualties.

Rokossovskiy was clearly a determined and persistent commander who possessed the intellectual conviction and moral courage to confront and defy the likes of Zhukov and Stalin. Yet, Rokossovskiy's determination and confidence did not degenerate into blind obstinacy. If an operational plan did not work, Rokossovskiy was prepared to amend or abandon it. Therefore, Rokossovskiy managed to combine a determined will with a discerning judgement that enabled him to pursue operational objectives with a degree of flexibility and imagination that was often missing from the operational art of other Soviet commanders. To conclude, Rokossovskiy's style of command, in both the planning and conduct of operations, was marked by clarity of thought and a cool, artful quality of execution that gives his operational command, as well as his style of leadership, a distinct, virtually unique signature amongst the Red Army's leading commanders of the Great Patriotic War.



**Figure 135: Rokossovsky, 1944**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002)

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Woff, *Rokossovsky* in ed., Harold Shukman, *Stalin's Generals*, op. cit. p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> See Robert P. Vecchio, 'Power, Politics and Influence,' in ed., Robert P. Vecchio, *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, op. cit. pp. 69-95, p. 69.

## EPILOGUE

On 24<sup>th</sup> June 1945, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy, cavalryman, veteran of World War One, the Russian Civil War, prisoner of Stalin, beaten half to death, survivor of torture and solitary confinement, Barbarossa, victor of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, the Belorussian Operation and East Prussia took command of the Red Army's victory parade in Red Square. Rokossovskiy, on a black horse, presented the parade to Zhukov, on a white horse. Zhukov commended the Red Army to Stalin, perched on Lenin's mausoleum, the master of all and in thrall to none. Hitler and Nazi Germany were destroyed. Stalin and the Soviet Union were victorious. Rokossovskiy, the Marshal from the Gulag had survived.



**Figure 136: Rokossovskiy, Victory Parade, Red Square, 1945**  
(Rokossovskiy, 2002))

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*Fronta No: 0053 O Razvitii Nastupleniya i Ovladenii Gorodom Novemyacto'* (Battle Report Of The Staff Of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front No: 0053 About The Development Of The Offensive And Control Of The Town Of New Myacto), 21.30 Hours, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1945. Henceforth, ed. Zolotarev, RA: VO, Vol. 15-4 (10), (Moscow, 2001). Document No.211

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**Translated From Autobiography Written by Marshal Sovetskogo**  
**Soyuza (Rokossovskiy)**

**27 December 1945**

Born in 1896 in the town of Velikiye Luki in Pskov oblast into the family of a railroad worker. Nationality Polish. Employment stonemason. Party member 1919. Education average.

Military service began in August 1914 in the town of Sluzhil in the old Russian army in 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Regiment. Final rank-Junior Under Officer. Participated in battles on Western and North-Western Fronts until October 1917.

In October 1917 joined the Red Guards: commanded a cavalry detachment in a cavalry division and a cavalry regiment. Participated in battles particularly on the Eastern Front against Czechoslovakians, Kolchak, Semenov and Baron Ungern until complete liquidation.

In peacetime engaged in command of a cavalry brigade, cavalry division, cavalry corps and command of a mechanised corps. In 1929 I commanded the cavalry brigade detachment that fought against the Chinese on the Manchurian axis.

At the start of the Great Patriotic War I commanded 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Corps in the Kiev Special Military District leading the corps in action on the Lutsk and Novgorod-Volynsk axes.

In July 1941 I was appointed to command of an army and transferred to the Western Front (Smolensk Direction) where I was the head of the Yartsevo group of forces. The successful offensive actions of these forces forced the Germans to halt on the Yartsevo direction.

At the time of the German attack on Moscow, I commanded the troops of 16<sup>th</sup> Army and led them in defensive fighting on the Volokolamsk, Solnechnogorsk and Istra direction.

In the decisive days of the battle of Moscow I led the forces of 16<sup>th</sup> Army in counterattacks on the Solnechnogorsk and Istra direction as result of which German assault was destroyed and they fled panic stricken to the west

In 1942 at the time of the German breakthrough at Voronezh I was appointed to command of the Bryansk Front. I led the forces of the Bryansk Front with the result that despite many attempts the Germans were not able to expand their breakthrough to the north in the direction of Yelnya.

In the period of the German advance on Stalingrad I was appointed to command of the Don Front. I led the troops of the Don Front in breaking through the hostile enemy front on the river Don in the Kletskaya axis and operated in co-ordination with the South-Western Front in the complete encirclement of the German group of forces at Stalingrad.

By order of Stavka the liquidation of the encircled German forces at Stalingrad was given to the forces of the Don Front. I commanded these forces leading them in operations achieving the complete annihilation of this group capturing more than one hundred thousand German officers and soldiers including their commander Field Marshal Paulus.

In 1943 I commanded the forces of the Central Front leading them in the defensive engagement on the front of the Kursk-Orel bulge, concluding the defeat of the Germans with the successful transition of our forces on to the counteroffensive.

In the following days I led the troops of the Central Front in offensive operations that broke through the German defences west of Kursk, destroying German forces followed by a rapid offensive in the direction of Putivl', Vorozhba, Konotop, Bakhmach, Nezhvin, Kozelets, Chernigov, Kiev. As a result of these operations all the territory

east of the Sozh and the river Dnepr from Gomel to Kiev was liberated from the Germans. The conclusion was a bridgehead on the western bank of the river Dnepr north of Kiev and by the river Sozh, south of Gomel.

At the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944 I commanded the troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, leading the front's forces in offensive operations on Belorussian territory. As a result of these operations we created a wide bridgehead west of the river Dnepr and liberated the towns of Mozyr, Kalinkovichi, Rechitsa, liberated the town of Gomel and seized a bridgehead across the river Dnepr and the river Drut, north of Rogachev and across the river Berezina, south and south-west of Rogachev. These were of great importance in the preparation of the Bobruisk-Minsk Operation.

In 1944 I commanded the forces of the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front leading the front's forces in offensive operations that inflicted two successive blows. First blow-in the direction of Bobruisk, Minsk, Baranovichi, Brest.

Second blow-in the direction of Kovel, Kholm, Lublin, Krepost, Demblin (Ivan-Town), Praga. As a result of these operations the German forces were completely destroyed, Belorussian was liberated and our forces advanced to the line of the river Narev river Vistula and seized bridgeheads on the western bank of the river Narev, north of Warsaw and on the western bank of the river Vistula, south of Warsaw.

In 1945 I commanded the forces of 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian Front conducted three significant operations.

First-the East Prussian Operation, consisting of breaking through the German defences on the river Narev and the forces of the right-wing advancing to the Baltic Sea in the region of Elbing. As a result the entire enemy's East Prussian group was encircled and destroyed. Besides that the troops of the front's left wing seized a wide bridgehead on the western bank of the river Vistula west of Graudenz, Kul'm enabling us to prepare a new operation.

Second-the Pomeranian Operation, consisting of breaking through the German defences and the left wing forces of the front advancing to the Baltic Sea in the region of Kesslin, Kolberg and encircling the East Pomeranian group of German forces. As a result this group was completely annihilated and liberated the substantial towns of Gdynia and Danzig.

Third-the Oder Operation consisted of breaking through the German defences on the river Oder. As a result of this rapid offensive the Stettin group of German forces was destroyed and subsequently the front's forces advanced to the line of Rostock on the river Elbe completing the destruction of the German troops and met up with the troops of Allied forces.

During the time of the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars and in the course of many years of service in the Workers and Peasant Army (RKKA) I have been awarded: two golden stars (twice Hero of the Soviet Union), four Orders of Lenin, five Orders of Red Banner, Order of 'Victory', Order of Suvorov, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, Order of Kutuzov, 1<sup>st</sup> Class.; Medals: '20 Years RKKA', 'Defence of Moscow', 'Defence of Stalingrad', 'Capture of Konigsberg', 'Liberation of Warsaw', and 'Victory over Germany'.

Foreign: Mongolian Order of the Red Banner; Polish Orders: Master of the Military First Class with Stars and Cross of Gryunvald First Class; French Orders: Legion of Honour, Military Cross; British Knight Commanders Cross of the Order of the Bath.

During the Civil War I was wounded twice and during the Great Patriotic War- once.

MARSHAL SOVETSKOGO SOYUZA (ROKOSSOVSKIY)

27 Dekabrya 1945 Goda

Gor. Lignitz.

## APPENDIX B:

### Belorussian Front Order of Battle: 1<sup>st</sup> January 1944

Army General K.K. Rokossovskiy

<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Army: Lt.Gen. A.V.Gorbatov</b>  41<sup>st</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  V.K.Urbanovich  120<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  186<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  80<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  I.L.Ragulia  5<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  283<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  362<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Division  17<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  269<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  36<sup>th</sup> Separate Tank Regiment  31<sup>st</sup> Separate Armoured Train  Battalion  55<sup>th</sup> Separate Armoured Train  Battalion</p> <p><b>48<sup>th</sup> Army: Lt.Gen. P.L.Romanenko</b>  25<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  A.B.Barinov  4<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  197<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  273<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  29<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  A.M.Andreev  102<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Division  137<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  307<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  42<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  A.M.Kolganov  170<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  194<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  399<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  73<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  175<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  217<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  42<sup>nd</sup> Separate Tank Regiment  231<sup>st</sup> Separate Tank Regiment  1897<sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery  Regiment</p>	<p><b>61<sup>st</sup> Army: Lt.Gen. P.A.Belov</b>  9<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Corps: Major General  A.A.Boreiko  12<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  76<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  77<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  89<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  G.A.Khaliuzin  15<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  55<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  81<sup>st</sup> Rifle Division  356<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps: Lt.Gen.  V.V.Kryukov  3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  4<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  17<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  149<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Destroyer  Regiment  2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Separate Tank  Destroyer Artillery Battalion  10<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Regiment  60<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Battalion  1730<sup>th</sup> Anti- Aircraft Artillery  Regiment  7<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps: Major  General M.P.Konstantinov  14<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  15<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  16<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  145<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Destroyer  Regiment  7<sup>th</sup> Guards Separate Tank  Destroyer Artillery Battalion  7<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Regiment  57<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Battalion  1733<sup>rd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery  Regiment  68<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade  1459<sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery  Regiment</p>
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<p><b>50<sup>th</sup> Army: Lt.Gen. I.V.Boldin</b>  46<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  K.M.Erstakov  238<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  369<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  380<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  108<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  110<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  324<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  413<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  233<sup>rd</sup> Separate Tank Division  21<sup>st</sup> Separate Armoured Train  Battalion  43<sup>rd</sup> Separate Armoured Train  Battalion</p> <p><b>63<sup>rd</sup> Army: Lt.Gen V.A.Kolpakchi</b>  35<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  V.G.Zholudev  129<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  250<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  348<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  40<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps:Major General  V.S.Kuznetsov  41<sup>st</sup> Rifle Division  169<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  53<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Corps:Major General  I.A.Gartsev  96<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  260<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  323<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  26<sup>th</sup> Guards Separate Tank Regiment  1901<sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery  Regiment</p> <p><b>Front Reserves</b>  121<sup>st</sup> Rifle Corps:Major General  D.I.Smirnov  23<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  218<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  115<sup>th</sup> Fortified Region  119<sup>th</sup> Fortified Region  161<sup>st</sup> Fortified Region  6<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps:Lt.General  S.V.Sokolov  8<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  13<sup>th</sup> Guards Cavalry Division  8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division</p>	<p><b>65<sup>th</sup> Army:Lt.Gen.P.I.Batov</b>  18<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps:Major General  I.I.Ivanov  69<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  162<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Division  193<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  115<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade  19<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps:Major General  D.I.Samarskiy  38<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  82<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Division  27<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  F.M.Cherokmanov  60<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  106<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  354<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division  95<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps:Major General  I.A.Kuzokov  37<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  44<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  172<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Division  105<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps: Major General  D.F.Alekseyev  75<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division  132<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Division  253<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division  1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Corps:Major General  M.F.Panov  15<sup>th</sup> GuardsTank Brigade  16<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade  17<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade  1<sup>st</sup> Guards Motorised Rifle Brigade  237<sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery  Regiment  1001<sup>st</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery  Regiment  1541<sup>st</sup> Self -Propelled Artillery  Regiment  1<sup>st</sup> Guards Motorcycle Battalion  65<sup>th</sup> Motorcycle Battalion  732<sup>nd</sup> Tank Destroyer Artillery  Regiment  455<sup>th</sup> Mortar Regiment  43<sup>rd</sup> Guards Mortar Battalion  80<sup>th</sup> Guards Anti-Aircraft Artillery  Regiment  2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Brigade  255<sup>th</sup> Separate Tank Regiment</p>
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1813 <sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment 142 <sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Destroyer Regiment 6 <sup>th</sup> Guards Separate Tank Destroyer Artillery Battalion 11 <sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Regiment 47 <sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Battalion 1732 <sup>nd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment 193 <sup>rd</sup> Separate Tank Regiment 251 <sup>st</sup> Separate Tank Regiment 253 <sup>rd</sup> Separate Tank Regiment 1444 <sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment 1538 <sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment 39 <sup>th</sup> Separate Armoured Train Battalion 40 <sup>th</sup> Separate Armoured Train Battalion 59 <sup>th</sup> Separate Armoured Train Battalion	1816 <sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment 1888 <sup>th</sup> Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment
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