

Foreign Military Studies Office Publications - The Failures of Historiography: Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)

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The Failures of Historiography: Forgotten Battles of the German-Soviet War (1941-1945)

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Introduction

To laymen in the West, the German-Soviet War was a somewhat obscure, mysterious, and brutal four year struggle between Europe's most bitter political enemies and largest and most formidable armies . The two contending armies fought over vast expanses, and the sheer size, physical complexity, and seasonal meteorological severity of the theater accorded the war a seamless nature of slow advances and retreats and months of stagnant combat punctuated dramatically by four major battles, Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, and Berlin. The paucity of detailed information on the war was reinforced by the natural American (and Western) penchant to view it as merely a backdrop for more dramatic and significant battles in western theaters, such as El Alamein, Salerno, Anzio, Normandy, and the Bulge.

This altogether unbalanced layman's view of the war is explicable given that histories of the conflict have been based largely on German sources and these sources routinely tended to describe warfare against a faceless and formless enemy, an enemy whose sole attributes were its army's immense size and its limitless supply of expendable human resources. Therefore, only truly sensational events stand out from the pale mosaic of four years of combat. Even those more interested in and better acquainted with the details of the German-Soviet War share these common public mis-perceptions. They may know more about the major battles and perhaps have heard a little about several others (von Manstein's Khar'kov counterstroke, the Cherkassy Pocket, Kamenets-Podolsk, the collapse of Army Group Center, and Soviet perfidy at the gates of Warsaw). The use of these terms themselves evidence a German-based education. More important, laymen and interested readers alike lack the detailed knowledge and understanding necessary to fit the German-Soviet War into larger context and to

understand its regional and global consequences and importance.

Who then is at fault for this unbalanced view? Western historians who wrote on the war from only the German perspective deserve part of the blame. But they would argue, correctly, that they did so because they used the only sources available. Blame can also be ascribed to the natural influences of ethnocentrism, which conditions a people to appreciate only what they have experienced. These tendencies, however, only partially explain the unbalanced Western perception of the war. Perhaps the greatest factor contributing to our unbalanced view of the war is the collective failure of Soviet historiography to present Western (and Soviet) readers and scholars with a credible account of the course of war. Ideology, political motivation, and shibboleths born of the Cold War have often combined to inhibit the work and warp the perceptions of many Soviet historians.

While many detailed Soviet works on the war display sound scholarship and are accurate, unfortunately the most general and most accessible to Western readers tended to be the most biased, the most highly politicized, and the least accurate. Even the soundest works have been vetted ideologically, and the authors have been forced to write their accounts with the narrowest of focuses. These realities undercut the credibility of these works (fairly or unfairly), permitted German historiography and interpretation to prevail, and, coincidentally, damaged the credibility of those few Western writers who incorporated Soviet historical materials into their accounts of the war. These stark historiographical realities also explain why, today, sensational, unfair, and wildly inaccurate accounts of aspects of the war so attract the Western reading public.¹

This bleak general description of the state of German-Soviet War historiography, while essentially correct, must, of course, be qualified somewhat. Soviet historiography has not been universally bad, Western works have always existed which challenge the German view, and these works are now growing in number and their credibility is improving in the eyes of Western readers.²

In general, Western appreciation of the Soviet view has been inhibited by three fundamental barriers to understanding: an ignorance of the scope of Soviet writing on the subject, an inability to obtain and read what Soviet historians have written (the language barrier), and an unwillingness to accept what those historians have written. Western historiography has slowly overcome the first two barriers to understanding by publishing accounts using the best of Soviet sources. In so doing, they have lifted the veil on Soviet historiography and candidly and credibly displayed both its vast scope and its strengths and weaknesses. To overcome the third barrier, however, that of credibility, requires that the weaknesses of Soviet historiography now be overcome. In short, the blinders and restrictions that inhibited the work of Soviet military historians must be explained and removed before they, or their Western counterparts, can achieve the credibility they deserve and, even more important, before the Soviet role in the war can achieve the stature which it deserves. Among the most important steps that can be undertaken to restore the reputation of Soviet historiography and convey an accurate appreciation of the war to

Western readers is to explain and then fill in the gaps existing in the history of the war. This paper identifies some (but not all) of those gaps.

Process: Identifying the Gaps

Detecting and analyzing those military operations of the German-Soviet War which have not been written about is a difficult and painstaking process for a number of reasons. First, general accounts of the war written by Soviet historians often have simply overlooked these operations, treated the actions as insignificant, or dismissed them, rightly or wrongly as feints, demonstrations, or deceptions. Second, since many of these operations failed, they left no major "footprint" in terms of major territorial advance or impact on their opponent which can easily attract the historians attention. Finally, since the Germans routinely perceived massive Soviet forces arrayed against them, recorded almost constant Soviet counteraction, and had difficulty distinguishing precisely what forces were operating against them (because of the rapidity of their advance earlier in the war and their decaying intelligence capabilities late in the war), German historians focus primarily on those major operations which their Soviet counterparts identify and describe. Thus, the gaps identified here are routinely subsumed and obscured by the context of larger operations, such as the Barbarossa advance, the battles of Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kursk, and the immense Soviet operations later in the war (for example, the advance to the Dnepr, the Right Bank of the Ukraine operation, and the Belorussian operation). Finally, these gaps tend to occur in the waning stages of a major Soviet offensive, when striking overall Soviet offensive successes and German confusion obscure renewed Soviet activity and ultimate Soviet offensive aims.

If historians did not write about these operations or if they were summarily dismissed as unimportant, how then can the historian identify these gaps in the coverage of the wartime operations? Further, how can these operations be identified and their intent be revealed. From the experience of this historian, there are two ways to do so. First, Soviet historiography has been marked by periods of candor, during which the authorities permitted more thorough coverage of the war. The most obvious of such periods was 1958 to the mid-1960s, when memoir literature, unit histories, and operational accounts were generally more thorough, more candid, and more detailed. It was during this period that some of the greatest Soviet wartime military failures received remarkable public airing, including the Khar'kov disaster of May 1942 (covered by I. Kh. Bagramian and K. S. Moskalenko) and the Donbas and Khar'kov defeats of February-March 1943 (covered by V. P. Morozov and M. I. Kazakov). While many of the gaps recorded in this paper did not receive requisite attention, some were mentioned in the better memoirs and unit histories, such as L. M. Sandalov's and M. E. Katukov's memoirs and M. D. Solomatin's history of 1st Mechanized Corps. While one can reconstruct the shadowy outlines of these ignored operations from these Soviet works, full reconstruction is not possible. Recent releases of Soviet archival materials, in particular the war experience volumes of the General Staff and works produced by the Voroshilov General Staff and Frunze Academies sadly reveal that these works too often also ignore these historical gaps.

Thus, the failings and weaknesses of official and unofficial Soviet military

historiography force the historian to turn elsewhere to identify the gaps and reconstruct the complete history of wartime operations. The second and most important alternative source of information of these forgotten operations is the vast repository of German archival materials on the war, supplemented by German unit histories. German archival materials on Eastern Front operations have been markedly under exploited. Those now famous German military leaders who introduced the Soviet-German War to Western readers (such as Heinz Guderian, F. W. von Mellenthin, and Erich von Manstein) usually wrote from memory and from their personal notes without benefit of archival materials. Thus, their accounts are far from complete regarding Soviet actions and intent; and they present Soviet forces in an utterly faceless fashion. They sketchily identify the gaps noted here, but these gaps are again subsumed by the context of larger operations. Subsequent general histories by Western historians have used these memoirs as points of departure and also miss the gaps, focusing only on that which has been already been identified as significant.

The failure of these German memoirs and secondary accounts to elucidate the war fully forces the researcher to turn to other sources, namely German unit histories, written more recently from archival materials, and primary archival materials themselves. The brevity, narrow focus, and spotty geographical coverage of the former makes it difficult to base one's conclusions solely on these sources. But once the archives themselves identify a gap, the unit history is of value as context. It is the archives themselves that most fully reveal the lost pages of wartime operations. This author has employed a time-consuming but fruitful method for discovering ignored and neglected military operations. The most vivid and candid reflection of what took place on the field of battle appears on the daily operational and intelligence maps of German army groups, armies, corps, and divisions. These "pictures" of combat record the nature and intensity of combat in any front sector through changing front lines, and they visually and graphically record the intensity and scope of fighting in any region by the physical configuration of the front and the intelligence picture of concentrated and identified enemy forces. Supplemented by accompanying written operational and intelligence reports, large operations become readily identifiable and subject to at least rudimentary analysis.

The military operations covered in this paper have been identified through this laborious process of observing and studying German daily operational and intelligence maps. Once such operations are identified, German unit histories and earlier fragmentary Soviet accounts confirm, elucidate, and elaborate upon the existence, nature, and probable intent of these obscure, but often significant operations. Admittedly, this research procedure is by no means infallible. The sources relied upon here can reliably detect major operations, accurately measure the nature, intensity, and scope of the operations, and identify the contending participants. They cannot, however, determine precisely the ultimate intent of the operation. Thus, definitive accounts of these and other neglected operations can be written only after the Soviet military archives are fully open and accessible to Western and Russian scholars alike. Finally, the operations mentioned in this paper are by no means the only

neglected operations. These are examples only, based upon an initial and rather perfunctory review of German archival materials. They do, however, represent what we do not know about the war, and they represent what must be done if, in the future, the history of the war is to be revealed in full.³

A Sample of Neglected Operations

Soviet Counterattacks and Counterstrokes During Operation Barbarossa (July-September 1941)

Historians and general readers alike have been fascinated with the sudden, deep, and relentless advance of German forces during Operation Barbarossa. Spearheaded by four powerful German panzer groups, the German advance from the Soviet Union's western borders to the approaches of Leningrad, Moscow, and Rostov has been portrayed as a series of successive offensive lunges culminating in the final November 1941 thrust on Moscow itself. While historians have identified the various stages of the advance and have argued about the sequencing, timing, and objectives of each stage, they have tended to accord it a seamless nature, whose various phases exist, but do not warrant excessive study in their own right. These primarily Western historians argue that German confusion over their ultimate objectives, the vast scale of Russian terrain, the terrors of a Russian winter, and weak German logistics ultimately produced German failure. They recount in some detail the complex Border Battles, the Minsk encirclement, the battles around Smolensk, the German September southward turn and subsequent Kiev encirclement, the German October victories around Viaz'ma and Briansk, and the final failed drive on Moscow. Often they openly lament German confusion and the failure to secure Moscow.

Soviet sources cover the period in greater detail, properly underscoring the importance of these combat phases in the ultimate outcome of battle on the approaches to Moscow. Soviet historians highlight the confused ferocity of the Border Battles, the importance of the Battle of Smolensk, and the Herculean efforts of the Stavka to assemble, amass, and commit to combat those strategic reserves which, at the gates of Leningrad, Moscow, and Rostov, ultimately thwart the German Barbarossa offensive. In the context of their accounts, however, Soviet historians have mentioned, but not elaborated upon to a sufficient degree, the intense Soviet efforts to counter the German advance before it reached unprecedented depths. Specifically, they have not covered in adequate detail the apparently concerted series of counterstrokes and counterattacks that periodically punctuated (and in the process perhaps wore down) the German advance.

In short, there are a series of Soviet counteractions, which occurred in clusters during July, August, and September 1941, which deserve further study and elaboration. At a minimum, these include the following:

July 1941:

- Western Front operations toward Lepel' (6-11 July)
- Northwestern Front operations at Stolb'tsy (14-18 July)
- -Western Front Counterstrokes (planned or carried) out along the Dnepr (13-17 July), to include:
 - 22d Army (at Gorodok)

- 19th Army (at Vitebsk)
- 20th Army (around Orsha)
- 13th Army (around Staryi Bykov)
- 21st Army (toward Bobruisk)
- 16th and 4th Army remnants (to Gorki)
- Southwestern Front operations toward Dubno (1-2 July)
- Southwestern Front operations toward Novgorod-Volynskii (10-14 July)

August 1941

- Northwestern Front's Staraiia Russa offensive (12-13 August)
- Western Front's Smolensk offensive (11 August-9 September)
- Continuation of the Bobruisk operation (to 7 August)
- Southwestern Front's offensive around Korosten' (5-8 August)

September 1941

- Western Front's El'nia offensive (30 August- 8 September)
- Briansk Front's Roslavl'-Novozybkov offensive (30 August-12 September)

Soviet historians have written in varying detail on each of these operations, but much of that detail is at the lower operational and tactical levels. For example excellent accounts exist on the exploits of 63d and 67th Rifle Corps near Rogachev, and accounts of the Bobruisk operation are fairly clear, as are the experiences of 5th and 7th Mechanized Corps at Lepel' (see map 1).⁴ One wonders if the factual detail here is in response to the detailed, if somewhat sensational, German accounts of the Bobruisk offensive as related in Guderian's memoirs and other German-based sources, under the rubric of the "Timoshenko counteroffensive." The same feature is apparent from operations in the north along the Leningrad axis. In his memoirs, von Manstein mentions heated actions around Stolb'tsy and Staraiia Russa (see maps 2 and 3). Subsequently, Soviet sources mention the action, only in less detail than their German counterparts. Likewise, German popular accounts focus on the heavy combat around Smolensk, and Soviet accounts have responded with considerable detail, in particular, about the fate of Group Kachalov, which Guderian's panzer corps destroyed (see maps 4 and 5).⁵ Unfortunately, Soviet accounts are less revealing about the operations and fate of the other Soviet operational groups which struggled around Smolensk.

A. I. Eremenko's memoirs do provide considerable detail about the Roslavl'-Novozybkov operation, but again in apparent response to materials in Guderian's memoirs. There are, however, a dearth of other sources on this operation and on the El'nia operation further north. Finally, the excellent recent work by A. V. Vladimirov, *Na kievskom napravlenii* [On the Kiev axis], finally casts light on the intense efforts of the Southwestern Front to halt the German drive on the approaches to Kiev.⁶ It remains, however, the only detailed source to do so.

Thus, there are many historical gaps to fill related to action during these critical phases of Operation Barbarossa. More detail is required on each of the operations mentioned above. Even more important, the strategic intent, nature, and import of these operations must be revealed. In the recent work entitled *Nezavershchaemie operatsii pervom periode voiny* [uncompleted operations of the

first period of war], A. A. Volkov carefully describes the offensive mind-set of Red Army commanders inherited from the prewar years which governed much of their 1941 planning and operations. He implies that the failed offensives of that period were largely prompted by this mind-set, but that requisite strategic appreciation and operational and tactical skills were lacking to carry out that tradition.⁷ Further, in their 1976 article on restoration of the strategic front, B. Panov and N. Naumov wrote that, in late June and July 1941, the Stavka faced the complex and daunting task of "restoring the strategic defensive front from Polotsk to Poles'e," and that the mission of forces designated to do so was "to prevent an enemy penetration to Moscow, while destroying him with powerful counterstrokes by ground forces and aviation."⁸ Therefore, the preeminent question is to what extent were these counteractions interrelated and driven by Stavka orders? And if that guidance existed, to what extent did these counteractions contribute to subsequent Soviet failures or the ultimate defeat of Barbarossa?

Offensive Operations During the Soviet Winter Offensive (December 1941-April 1942)

Much has been written from both the German and Soviet perspectives about the Soviet strategic defense at Moscow and the two-phased Soviet strategic offensive which followed. German works, however, focus on the events in the immediate environs of Moscow, and Soviet sources expand the focus to embrace the front from Staraia Russa to Elets. Events on the flanks and in less known sectors have been largely ignored by German and Soviet historians alike (with the exception of action around Demiansk and Rostov). Two major and one minor example will suffice to demonstrate this neglect.

The Soviet Winter Campaign, like its component Moscow offensives, was an immense and complicated endeavor. While the principal Soviet operations drove the Germans back from the immediate approaches to Moscow, they did not achieve their ultimate aim of destroying German Army Group Center. They did not, in part, because of failures on the flanks, which either produced no operational results and, hence, had no strategic impact, or which dissipated the striking power of the Red Army on the main (Moscow) axis. For these reasons, the ignored flank operations are important.

Among those operation which require further clarification are the following:

- Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts' Liuban' offensive (7 January-30 April 1942)
- Briansk Front's Orel-Bolkhov offensive (7 January-18 February 1942)
- Briansk Front's Kursk-Oboian offensive (January-February 1942)
- Northwestern Front's Demiansk offensive (6 March-9 April 1942)

The first of these operations, which initially sought to end the German siege of Leningrad and, ultimately, involved the encirclement and destruction of Soviet 2d Shock Army, has received great notoriety in the West because of the fate of the man sent by Stalin to save the army, General A. A. Vlasov (see maps 6 and 7). For the same reason, and because of Vlasov's subsequent perceived treason to the Soviet cause, Soviet historians routinely first ignored the operation and then referred to it without reference to Vlasov. While recent accounts now discuss the operation in full, largely for political motives, a full military

assessment of the operation remains to be done.⁹

The twin Bryansk Front offensives languish in obscurity, just as do the details of other Soviet operations during the waning stages of the Moscow counteroffensive (such as 50th Army attempts to reach and rescue Soviet forces encircled in Army Group Center's rear from February-April 1942). Mention is made of the operations in separate chapters of memoirs (such as M. I. Kazakov) and unit histories, but the many Soviet encyclopedias on the war ignore the operations, and no other open source detailed accounts exist to substantiate the ample German archival materials attesting to the operations' existence. Given the potential role these operations had in the stretching of German Army Group Center resources in a time of great peril, they deserve more attention than they have received.

The Demiansk example exists as a case study in the failures of Soviet Eastern Front historiography. German sources, in vivid detail (including operational and tactical reports, intercepts of Soviet radio transmissions, and hundreds of POW debriefings), describe a daring Soviet ground operation, supported by air, designed to reduce and destroy the Demiansk encirclement (German II Army Corps). Three Soviet maneuver airborne brigades, supported by several ski battalions, penetrated into the German encirclement, while Soviet frontal forces attacked the encirclement from without (see map 8).¹⁰ While the course of the operation has been reconstructed in detail from these German sources, virtually no Soviet work has even mentioned the operation or commented on the selfless performance of the over 7,000 airborne troopers who perished during its conduct. No doubt other such examples await the investigation of future historians.

Soviet Offensive and Counteroffensive Operations Within the Context of German Operation Blau (June-July 1942)

Both German and Soviet sources have laid out in considerable detail the context and nature of operations during the spring and summer of 1942. A. M. Vasilevsky and M. I. Kazakov have detailed Soviet planning for the conduct of local offensive operations within the context of a Soviet strategic defense, I. Kh. Bagramian and K. S. Moskalenko have written extensively about the failure of the May 1942 Soviet Khar'kov offensive, others have provided details on the Soviet tragedy at Kerch, and Kazakov has related in some detail operations on the approaches to Voronezh.¹¹ Accounts from both sides then relate in considerable detail the German offensive and subsequent advance into the Stalingrad and Caucasus region. Where open source Soviet accounts are weak, recently released war experience volumes fill in the gaps (in particular, on 5th Tank Army's July counterstroke and subsequent fighting around Voronezh).¹² In other associated areas, major gaps exist. These include the following:

- Bryansk Front counteroffensive operations (June-July 1942)
- Western Front offensive operations (July-August 1942), including:
 - The Bolkhov offensive (61st Army, 5-12 June 1942)
 - The Zhizdra offensive (16th Army, 6-14 July 1942)
 - The Zhizdra offensive (61st, 16th, and 3d Tank Army, August 1942)
- Southern Front defensive battles in the Voroshilograd operation (6-24 July 1942)

While operations by the Briansk Front require greater explanation in open accounts, Western Front operations remain utterly obscure except for occasional mention in some German unit histories and extensive German archival coverage. The various offensives, obviously designed to distract German attention and strength from the Stalingrad axis, involved sizable forces, especially the August offensive which was the first offensive operation by newly created 3d Tank Army.

Operations by the Soviet Southern Front have been described in outline but not in detail, and, again, we must look to the German archives to find detailed materials on the actions and fate of Soviet 38th, 9th, 37th, 24th, and 12th Armies, which were all at least partially encircled, but the bulk of whose forces escaped captivity to the ultimate detriment of the Germans. Why and how this occurred remains unclear. To a lesser extent, detailed accounts are also lacking on the battles of 62d, 64th, and 1st and 4th Tank Armies on the immediate approaches to Stalingrad. Given the potentially critical influence of these operations on the course and outcome of the German Stalingrad offensive, historians and readers should possess more than a purely German interpretation. Soviet Offensive Operations in Fall 1942

All readers and historians know about the course and outcome of the Soviet Stalingrad counteroffensive, code-named Operation "Uranus." Most know about the subsequent planning for and conducting of Operations "Saturn" and "Little Saturn" against German and Italian forces along the middle Don River. Few, however, know about the remaining "celestial" operation, code-named "Mars," and its probable companion piece, perhaps code-named "Jupiter." "Mars" remains an enigma, noticed by the most astute of Western and German observers, but ignored by all but a handful of Soviet sources. Contemporary to operation "Uranus," unlike their successful counterpart, "Mars" and "Jupiter" have been dismissed and forgotten.

Operation "Mars": The Rzhev-Sychevka operation (25 November-December 1942)
The four most prominent Soviet sources which refer to the operation demonstrate the historiographical dilemma and represent how many of these forgotten operations appear in Soviet works. G. K. Zhukov notes the existence of operation "Mars" in his memoirs, and he apparently played a major role in its planning and conduct, along with the two participating front commanders, I. S. Konev, and M. A. Purkaev. Konev's memoirs, which begin in January 1943, ignore this operation and others he participated in before 1943. Zhukov reveals the general parameters of the plan, which called for the destruction of German forces in the Rzhev salient. Then, after returning to his description of the Stalingrad victory, he briefly mentions the failure at Rzhev and dismisses the operation as simply a diversion, although it began on 25 November (five days after the commencement of the Stalingrad operation and one day after the encirclement of German Sixth Army) and continued through mid-December.¹³

The second major source, that of M. D. Solomatin, commander of 1st Mechanized Corps, mentions the necessity of tying down German reserves within the context of the Stalingrad battle and provides a superb and detailed description of the role of his corps in Operation "Mars." His account covers his corps actions and

the operations of cooperating 41st Army formations and mentions the fact that other Kalinin and Western Front forces were designated to participate in the offensive, whose aims, he described, were to "destroy the German-Fascist Olenino-Rzhev Group" in cooperation with Western Front forces.¹⁴ M. E. Katukov, who commanded 22d Army's 3d Mechanized Corps (subordinate to attacking 22d Army) mentions the operation in his memoirs, but provides scant detail. . He states briefly, "3d Mechanized Corps received an order to go over to the attack with cooperating rifle units. The Rzhev-Sychevka offensive operation of Kalinin and Western Front forces began on 25 November." After commenting in general on the course of operations, the heavy fighting, and the adverse weather conditions, Katukov laconically noted, "on 20 December the Rzhev-Sychevka operation was completed."¹⁵ A. Kh. Babadzhanian, who commanded the 3d Mechanized Brigade of Katukov's corps, mentioned the operation only briefly in his memoirs by quoting a conversation with his army commander, V. A. Iushkevich, who said, "We will conduct a rather serious offensive together with Western Front forces-- we must liquidate the enemy Rzhev grouping."¹⁶ A final source, a history of Soviet cavalry forces, mentions joint operations by cavalry forces (20th Cavalry Division of 2d Guards Cavalry Corps) and Soviet 6th Tank Corps in penetration operations south of Rzhev, during which the cavalry division reached the German rear, where it operated for a month before being rescued by elements of Katukov's mechanized corps (also mentioned by Katukov).¹⁷

These sources, taken alone, indicate that a modest operation occurred, perhaps diversionary in nature, and that at least three armies (22d, 41st, and one Western Front army), supported by up to four mobile corps (1st and 2d Mechanized, 2d Guards Cavalry, and 6th Tank Corps), took part in the operation. These forces were of significant, but not overwhelming size.

German archival intelligence and operational reports, however, cast the operation in a vastly different light (see map 9). German Ninth Army records affirm that the Kalinin Front's 22d, and 41st Armies, supported by 1st and 3d Mechanized Corps, participated in the operation. But according to these records, so also did the front's 39th Army, and subordinate to 41st Army was the elite Stalin 6th Rifle Corps.. Moreover, three other Western Front armies (20th, 31st, and 30th) also took part, supported at various times by 5th, 6th, and 8th Tank Corps, and 2d Guards Cavalry Corps. At the same time, immediately to the west, 3d Shock Army struck at German forces at Velikie Luki and achieved success (which Soviet historians have reported on in detail). Further, 2d Mechanized Corps was available to support either 41st Army operations against Belyi or 3d Shock Army (which it ultimately supported). Detailed German order of battle reports indicate that the Soviet mobile forces were at or well above establishment armored strength, and that offensive preparations had been thorough.¹⁸

Recently released formerly classified Soviet order of battle data indicate that Kalinin and Western Front armies participating in Operation "Mars" were assigned supporting artillery and engineers equal or greater in strength than that assigned to attacking armies in Operation "Uranus."¹⁹ Moreover, in Western

Front's central sector, 5th and 33d Armies were similarly reinforced and had two tank corps (9th and 10th) and a fresh tank army (Rybalko's 3d) available to provide support. Given these strengths and force concentrations, it is likely that the Stavka planned a follow-on operation along the Viaz'ma axis to complete destruction of German Army Group Center forces in the entire Rzhev-Viaz'ma salient. This operation, perhaps "Jupiter" would have matched Operation "Saturn," which followed Operation "Uranus" in the south.

At Stalingrad, the Soviets committed six armies (5th Tank, 21st, 65th, 24th, 57th, and 51st), containing or supported by nine mobile corps (1st, 26th, 4th, 16th, and 13th Tank; 4th Mechanized, and 8th, 3d Guards, and 4th Cavalry Corps), against German Sixth and part of Fourth Panzer Army and Rumanian Third and Fourth Armies of Army Group B, while 62d and 64th Armies defended in the city. In the Rzhev-Sychevka operation, Zhukov committed six armies (41st, 22d, 39th, 30th 31st, and 20th), supported by up to seven mobile corps (1st, 2d, and 3d Mechanized, 5th, 6th, and 8th Tank, and 2d Guards Cavalry Corps), against two thirds of German Ninth Army, while 3d Shock Army struck simultaneously at German Ninth Army elements at Velikie Luki, and three more Soviet armies (4th Shock, 43d, and 29th) protected the flanks. While armies are admittedly of varying size, Soviet forces at Rzhev were stronger than Soviet forces at Stalingrad and the correlation of forces at Rzhev was more favorable for the Soviet than in the south.²⁰

On 25 November 41st and 22d Armies, spearheaded by 1st and 3d Mechanized Corps, attacked and penetrated German defenses north and south of Belyi, within days driving salients deep into the German rear area. Deteriorating weather conditions and heavy German resistance finally halted the attacks and contained Katukov's and Solomatin's mechanized corps. Meanwhile to the east, Konev's armies pounded German defenses along the Osuga River to no avail. Repeatedly, heavy Soviet combined tank and infantry assaults struck German defenses, but were repelled with heavy losses after only minimal Soviet gains. Elsewhere, to the north 39th Army forces also struck German defenses northeast of Rzhev, slowly driving the defenders back, and, just west of Rzhev, 30th Army forces struggled forward to cut the rail-line from Rzhev to Olenino. The heavy fighting continued into December as German mobile reserves encircled and destroyed the bulk of Solomatin's mechanized corps along with supporting 6th Rifle Corps, drove back Katukov's mechanized corps, and contained 39th and 30st Armies assaults north of the Rzhev-Olenino rail line. In mid-December, Zhukov and Konev launched one more attempt to break through and rescue Solomatin's force, but the attempt also ended in bloody failure. Total Soviet losses in the operation are unknown, but those recorded in German reports were high (an estimated 42,000 dead in Konev's sector alone and a total of 1,655 tanks destroyed from 24 November to 14 December) and included four general officers.²¹

Two factors differentiated operation "Uranus" from operation "Mars." First, at Stalingrad Soviet armies chose Rumanian sectors in which to conduct their initial penetration operations, and they penetrated Rumanian defenses rather easily. At Rzhev, however, experienced German divisions (like the 102d) were dug into well-prepared defenses. Unlike the case at Stalingrad, the Germans also had

5th Panzer Division deployed in defenses opposite Konev's main assault. Second, at Stalingrad the Germans had burned up their armor in city fighting and had only two panzer divisions in reserve (22d and 1st Rumanian). At Rzhev, however, German Ninth Army had four mobile divisions in their immediate operational reserve (1st and 9th Panzer, and Grossdeutschland and 14th Panzer Grenadier) and three other panzer divisions (9th, 19th, and 20th) within striking distance in a matter of days. This spelled doom for the Soviet offensive.

One other marked characteristic differentiates Operations "Uranus" and "Saturn" from Operations "Mars" and "Jupiter." The former were fully recorded by historians; the latter were not!

Offensive Operations During the Winter and Spring of 1943

Soviet historical coverage of the Winter Campaign (November 1942-March 1943) has generally mirrored or responded to that of the Germans. Obviously both sides were transfixed by operations around Stalingrad from 19 November through 2 February, including the encirclement and destruction of German Sixth Army, German failed attempts to relieve their beleaguered garrison, the ultimate destruction of the encircled force, and Soviet expansion of the operation westward toward and into the Donbas. Both sides have provided adequate detail of the flow of operations through early February, when the tide of battle suddenly turned against the advancing Soviets. German accounts of action in February and March focus almost exclusively on von Manstein's effective counterstroke in the Donbas, which cut off the spearheads of advancing Soviet forces, drove Southwestern Front forces back to the Northern Donets River and, subsequently, collapsed advancing Voronezh Front forces and drove them northward through Khar'kov and Belgorod to create, by mid-March, that particular bent segment of the Eastern Front popularly known as the Kursk bulge.

The Germans understandably wax poetic about von Manstein's achievements in February and March of 1943 and ponder what might have been achieved had the German advance continued. Soviet historians have written extensively about the Khar'kov offensive and defense operations but less about the details of the Donbas operation. The information is there, but one must work hard to dig it out of numerous scattered sources.²² More surprising is the fact that the potentially most important Soviet offensive of late winter 1943 has been almost totally obscured from view. That is the major offensive by Central Front on the Kursk-Briansk axis, an offensive which, if successful, could have destroyed German Army Group Center, reached the Dnepr River, and chopped the German Eastern Front in half.

Central and Western Fronts' Orel'-Briansk-Smolensk offensive (February-March 1943)

Close examination of Soviet memoir literature, in particular works by A. M. Vasilevsky, K. K. Rokossovsky, I. Kh. Bagramian, A. M. Chistiakov, and K. S. Moskalenko, and unit histories, such as 2d Tank and 13th Armies and 1st Guards Motorized Rifle Division, permit the researcher to reconstruct the outlines of the February-March offensive.²³ German archival materials, particularly from the records of Second and Second Panzer Armies, confirm the Soviet data and add details on the complex operations.²⁴ What emerges is a significant, ambitious,

and audacious offensive whose course, potential, and ultimate outcome increase the significance of von Manstein's counterstroke.

In outline, in early February 1943, the Stavka planned an offensive to exploit Briansk and Voronezh Front successes along the Voronezh-Kursk axis and accompany the Southwestern Front's advance through the Donbas to the Dnepr and Sea of Azov (see map 10). To do so, it planned to use the bulk of its "Stalingrad" armies, free after the 2 February surrender of German Sixth Army, and other strategic reserves to attack along the Kursk-Briansk axis toward the Dnepr River and Smolensk in concert with the Western and Kalinin Front. Rokossovsky's Don Front, renamed Central Front, would spearhead the mid-February offensive with 2d Tank Army and 70th Army from Stavka reserve and with 65th and 21st Armies re-deployed by rail from the Stalingrad region. The multi-front offensive was to begin on 12 February, when forward armies of the Western Front (16th) and Briansk Front (13th and 48th) were to encircle German forces in the Orel salient. Then, between 17 and 25 February, the two fronts, joined by Central Front, were to clear the Briansk region of German troops and secure bridgeheads over the Desna River. During the final phase of the operation, between 25 February and mid-March, the Kalinin and Western Fronts would join combat to seize Smolensk and, in concert with their sister fronts, destroy Army Group Center in the Rzhev-Viaz'ma salient. The entire offensive was timed to coincide with anticipated successful operations by the Voronezh and Southwestern Fronts so that by mid-March the strategic offensive would have propelled Soviet forces to the line of the Dnepr River from Smolensk to the Black Sea.

From the beginning the offensive experienced serious difficulties (see map 11). First, movement problems forced delay in the beginning of Rokossovsky's offensive to 25 February, by which time Southwestern Front's advance in the Donbas had already been thrown back by von Manstein's counterstroke. Bagramian's Western Front assault in the Zhizdra sector also failed, although he repeatedly attempted to renew the attack. Nevertheless Rokossovsky attacked on 25 February with 2d Tank Army, 65th Army, and a Cavalry-Rifle Group formed around the nucleus of 2d Guards Cavalry Corps. Other re-deploying armies were to join the assault as they arrived.

Rokossovsky's offensive achieved spectacular initial success. By 7 March, Rodin's 2d Tank Army had secured Sevsk and, with the Cavalry-Rifle Group, approached Trubchevsk and Novgorod-Severskii (see map 12). Batov's 65th Army, now joined by Tarasov's 70th Army, made slow progress against German forces defending south of Orel, while 60th and 38th Armies on Rokossovsky's left flank attempted to turn German Second Army's left flank in the L'gov region. Four factors, however, combined to deny Rokossovsky success. First, the re-deployment of the "Stalingrad" armies by rail and road through Livny to the front went slowly, delaying the arrival of 21st Army, which was essential for the attack on Orel to succeed. Second, bad weather and the ensuing thaw hindered this re-deployment as well as the advance by Rokossovsky's force. Third, by early March von Manstein's counterstroke had also crushed Voronezh Front forces south of Khar'kov and threatened both that city and Belgorod, on Rokossovsky's left flank. Finally, German abandonment of the Rzhev salient and the victories in the

south permitted German Second Panzer and Second Armies to shift forces south and north against the flanks of Rokossovsky's attacking forces. As a result, on 7 March Rokossovsky received Stavka permission to regroup his forces to his right flank to begin a less ambitious operation against the Orel salient.

Subsequently, German resistance stiffened on the Fatezh-Orel axis, halting Rokossovsky's offensive, and re-deployed German forces struck his overexposed forces in the Novgorod-Severskii-L'gov sector. The final blow to his offensive plans occurred on 11 March, when Chistiakov's 21st Army, just arrived to join Rokossovsky's Orel offensive, was diverted to Oboian to deal with von Manstein's continued advance toward Belgorod. Although desultory fighting continued along the Orel axis until 23 March, Rokossovsky's forces abandoned Sevsk and occupied new defenses along what would become the northern and central face of the Kursk bulge.

Thus, the ambitious strategic effort failed, and the Stavka, once again would have to postpone an advance to the line of the Dnepr River. The Soviet failure would have a major impact on how Soviet forces would operate at Kursk later in 1943. It also accorded strategic significance to von Manstein's Donbas, and Khar'kov counterstrokes. Most important, from the standpoint of this paper, is the apparent neglect of this operation by Soviet historians, which is extraordinary given its potential importance. No single account exists, and even recent works ignore its conduct. For example, Krivosheev's new work on Soviet wartime losses provides no personnel loss figures for the operation (or for Operation "Mars"), nor does it recognize the very existence of the Central Front in February-March 1943.²⁵

Offensive Operations into Belorussia in Fall 1943 and Winter 1944

German and Soviet historians cover in detail the dramatic series of Soviet offensives which followed the Kursk defense in July 1943 and the subsequent Soviet advance to the Dnepr River from August through October 1943. Volumes have been written on Operations "Suvorov," "Rumiantsev," and "Kutuzov" at Orel, Belgorod-Khar'kov, and Smolensk. Equal attention has been devoted to the various phases of the Chernigov-Poltava operation, operations designed to breach the Dnepr River line (the Chernigov-Pripiat, Kiev, Gomel'-Rechitsa, Krivoi Rog, and Nikopol' operations), and operations on the flanks, such as the Nevel' and Melitopol' operations. The Germans, quite naturally, focus on Soviet failures, such as the unsuccessful multiple attempts to crush their Nikopol' bridgehead. Thereafter, Soviet accounts focus on their successful and spectacular advance into the Ukraine, commencing with the Zhitomir-Berdichev operation in December 1943 and culminating with their encirclement of German First Panzer Army in the Proskurov-Chernovtsy operation and the arrival of Soviet forces along the borders of Rumania and southern Poland in April 1944. Lost in this coverage are important and repeated Soviet attempts to conquer Belorussia in late fall 1943 and early winter 1944.

The Belorussian strategic offensive (November 1943-February 1944)

The general outlines of this offensive can be pieced together from a wide variety of scattered Soviet sources (see map 13). Portions of the initial operations to liberate Belorussia are covered in detail under the rubric of the

continuation of the Nevel' operation by 1st Baltic Front and the Gomel-Rechitsa operation of the Belorussian Front. The overall Stavka plan, probably formulated in early November, called for 1st Baltic Front to strike from its salient west of Nevel' southward to Polotsk and west of Vitebsk to destroy the German Vitebsk Group in concert with Western Front attacks on the Orsha and Bogushevsk axes. Simultaneously, Belorussian Front forces would advance from their Dnepr bridgeheads near Loev along the Rechitsa-Bobruisk axis toward Minsk, supported on the right by Western Front forces attacking through Rogachev. One source set out the intent of the Stavka plan by quoting from a 1 October Stavka order: "While delivering the main blow in the general direction of Zhlobin, Bobruisk, and Minsk, destroy the enemy Zhlobin-Bobruisk group and secure the capital of Belorussia, Minsk. Detach a separate group of forces to attack along the northern bank of the Pripiat' River in the direction of Kalinkovichi and Zhitkovichi."²⁶ In his memoirs, K. N. Galitsky, commander of 1st Baltic Front's 11th Guards Army, also spells out initial Stavka intent to "isolate the Vitebsk-Gorodok enemy grouping," according to another source apparently in concert with an airborne operation into Belorussia.²⁷

Obviously, the airborne operation was canceled, and the intended strategic offensive failed for a number of reasons, including bad weather and intense German resistance. Soviet historians have written about the series of operations west of Nevel', the Gorodok operations of November and December 1943, the Gomel'-Rechitsa operation of November, and the Rogachev-Zhlobin operation of February 1944. They have been utterly silent, however, concerning subsequent operations by 1st Baltic and Belorussian Fronts during the period and until recently, have ignored entirely operations by Western Front. Soviet military encyclopedic literature ignores the operations, and the recent Krivosheev volume fails to mention losses in these additional operations and the overall losses of participating fronts during the lengthy period. The only exception to this neglect is the recent important revelations by M. A. Gareev concerning the multiple failed operations by Western Front during this period.²⁸

German unit histories, memoirs, and archival materials, however, amply attest to the scope, intensity, and duration of Soviet offensive efforts against German forces in Belorussia during this entire period.²⁹ Unless additional Soviet materials become available, the history of these operations will, of necessity, once again have to be based on German sources alone.

Soviet Attempts to Exploit Offensive Success in Spring 1944

One of the most difficult tasks of a military historian is to determine the ultimate scope and aims of a strategic operation, even if that strategic offensive is successful. According to its general pattern of behavior, the Stavka understandably tended to expand its strategic objectives while operations were underway. This occurred during the Winter Campaign of 1941-42, the Winter Campaign of 1942-43, and the Summer-Fall Campaign of 1943. In general, this expansion of offensive aims could be justified on the basis that one could not determine whether or when German collapse would occur, and, unless one pressed the attack, opportunities would be lost. Of course, relative risk had to be assessed less the attacking force fall victim to the kind of trap that von

Manstein sprung on Soviet forces in the Donbas.

The success of Soviet strategic offensives in 1944 and 1945 makes it more difficult to assess whether military operations at the end of the offensive were simply attempts to exploit success or were designed to posture forces more advantageously for subsequent offensive action (or to deceive the enemy regarding future offensive intentions). Two such operations pose serious questions for historians. The first involves a failed offensive late in the Winter-Spring Campaign of 1944, which the Germans label as major and which Soviet historians generally ignore; and the second (covered later) involves an apparent major attempt by Soviet forces at the end of the Summer-Fall Campaign of 1944 to penetrate deep into East Prussia.

The first of these operations is called the Battle of Targul-Frumos (2-4 May 1944), during which, according to German sources, German forces defeated a major Soviet offensive and inflicted heavy losses on the attacking Soviet forces. Subsequently, the battle has been used as a prime case study in officer tactical education (along with the Chir battles of December 1942 and the Nikopol' battles of 1943-44).

The Battle of Targul-Frumos (2-4 May 1944)

According to German sources, foremost of which are studies by H. von Manteuffel, commander of Grossdeutschland Panzer Grenadier Division, and F. von Senger und Etterlin, the battle was precipitated when large Soviet forces struck German positions north of Iassy in an attempt to seize the city and advance deep into Rumania (see map 14).³⁰ The Germans identified the attacking force as 2d Tank Army and cooperating 27th Army. In three days of fighting, from 2-4 May, German LVII Panzer Corps (principally Grossdeutschland and 24th Panzer Division) and L Army Corps defeated the Soviet force and destroyed over 350 Soviet tanks.

Soviet sources are silent on the battle. Scattered reference appear in divisional histories concerning combat in Rumania during this period, but only 2d Tank Army's history makes direct reference to this particular battle. It notes, that in late March 1944, the tank army regrouped into 27th Army's sector with the mission of "attacking in the direction of Fokuri and Podul-Iloaei. Subsequently, the army was to strike a blow toward the city of Iassy and secure it."³¹ In its narrative of subsequent operations, the history relates that the tank army attacked with 27th Army's 35th Rifle Corps, and, although 3d Tank Corps reached Targul-Frumos, it was thrown back by heavy German counterattacks. The account attributes the Soviet failure to a poor artillery preparation and German advance warning that the attack was to occur.

Historians are thus left with the question of whether the Soviet offensive was a major effort to penetrate into Rumania or simply a local assault to improve the Soviet operational posture and opportunities for a renewed offensive in the future. The Germans maintain it was the former. This author has argued that it was the latter and was also associated with deception planning for future operations in Belorussia (to fix the future presence of 2d Tank Army in Rumania, while it was shortly moved elsewhere).³² Only further release of Soviet archival materials will settle this long-standing debate.

Soviet (1st Belorussian Front's) Actions East of Warsaw in August-September 1944

No Eastern Front action has generated more heated controversy than Soviet operations east of Warsaw in August and September 1944, at the time of the Warsaw Uprising against the Nazis by the Polish Home Army. Western historians have routinely blamed the Soviets for deliberately failing to assist the Poles, and in essence, aiding and abetting destruction of the Polish rebels by the German Army for political reasons. Soviet historians have countered that every attempt was made to provide assistance but that operational considerations precluded such help. No complete single Soviet volume exists which recounts in detail these operations on the approaches to Warsaw. The historian is forced to reconstruct events by referring to a host of fragmentary sources. Ironically, German archival materials, in particular Second Army records and other materials (and probably the records of Ninth Army, captured by the Soviets and unavailable to Western historians), help to justify the Soviet argument.

Operational details about Soviet combat on the approaches to Warsaw can be reconstructed from fragmentary Soviet and German archival sources (see map 15). On 28 July 1944, Maj. Gen. A. I. Radzievsky's 2d Tank Army, which had been turned north from the Magnuszew region to strike at Warsaw, with three corps abreast, engaged German 73d Infantry Division and the Hermann Goering Parachute Panzer Division 40 kilometers southeast of Warsaw. A race ensued between Radzievsky, who was seeking to seize the routes into Warsaw from the east, and the Germans, who were attempting to keep these routes open and maintain possession of Warsaw.³³ The nearest Soviet forces within supporting range of Radzievsky were 47th Army and 11th Tank and 2d Guards Cavalry Corps, then fighting for possession of Seidlce, 50 kilometers to the east. On 29 July Radzievsky dispatched his 8th Guards and 3d Tank Corps northward in an attempt to swing northeast of Warsaw and turn the German defender's left flank, while his 16th Tank Corps continued to fight on the southeastern approaches to the city's suburbs.

Although 8th Guards Tank Corps successfully fought to within 20 kilometers east of the city, 3d Tank Corps ran into a series of successive panzer counterattacks orchestrated by Field Marshal W. Model, new commander of Army Group Center. Beginning on 30 July, the Hermann Goering and 19th Panzer Divisions struck the overextended and weakened tank corps north of Wolomin, 15 kilometers northeast of Warsaw. Although the corps withstood three days of counterattacks, on 2 and 3 August, 4th Panzer Division and SS Panzer Division Viking joined the fight. In three days of intense fighting, 3d Tank Corps was severely mauled, and 8th Guards Tank Corps was also severely pressed. By 5 August 47th Army forces had arrived in the region, and 2d Tank Army was withdrawn for rest and refitting. The three rifle corps of 47th Army were now stretched out along a front of 80 kilometers from south of Warsaw to Seidlce and were unable to renew the drive on Warsaw or to the Narew River. German communications lines eastward to Army Group Center, then fighting for its life north and west of Brest, had been damaged but not severed.

Meanwhile, on 1 August the Polish Home Army had launched an insurrection in the city. Although they seized large areas in downtown Warsaw, the insurgents failed

to secure the four bridges over the Vistula and were unable to hold the eastern suburbs of the city (Praga). During the ensuing weeks, while the Warsaw uprising progressed and ultimately failed, the Soviets continued their drive against Army Group Center northeast of Warsaw. For whatever motive, 1st Belorussian Front focused on holding firmly to the Magnuszew bridgehead, which was subjected to heavy German counterattacks throughout mid-August, and on driving forward across the Bug River to seize crossings over the Narew River necessary to facilitate future offensive operations.

Soviet 47th Army remained the only major force opposite Warsaw until 20 August, when it was joined by 1st Polish Army. Soviet forces finally broke out across the Bug River on 3 September, closed up to the Narew River the following day, and fought their way into bridgeheads across the Narew on 6 September. On 13 September lead elements of two Polish divisions assaulted across the Vistula River into Warsaw but made little progress and were evacuated back across the river on 23 September.³⁴

Political considerations and motivations aside, an objective consideration of combat in the region indicates that, prior to early September, German resistance was sufficient to halt any Soviet assistance to the Poles in Warsaw, were it intended. Thereafter, it would have required a major reorientation of military efforts from Magnuszew in the south or, more realistically, from the Bug and Narew River axis in the north in order to muster sufficient force to break into Warsaw. And once broken into, Warsaw would have been a costly city to clear of Germans and an unsuitable location from which to launch a new offensive.

This skeletal portrayal of events outside of Warsaw demonstrates that much more needs to be revealed and written about these operations. It is certain that additional German sources exist upon which to base an expanded account. It is equally certain that extensive documentation remains in Soviet archival holdings. Release and use of this information can help answer and lay to rest this burning historical controversy.

Soviet Attempts to Exploit Offensive Success in Fall 1944

As was the case in spring 1944, there were many opportunities accorded to Soviet forces to exploit success in the wake of the Belorussian and associated strategic operations in late summer and fall 1944. The most prominent of these, as evidenced from German archival sources, occurred in October 1944, hard on the heels of the Soviet Memel' operation, during which Soviet forces drove from the Siauliai region to the shores of the Baltic Sea. Immediately after the end of the Memel' operation, multiple Soviet armies, subordinate to Cherniakhovsky's 3d Belorussian Front, attempted to penetrate deep into East Prussia along the Gumbinnen axis.

The Gumbinnen or Goldap operation (16-27 October 1944)

German documents cover this operation in considerable detail and focus, in particular, mobile operations by 2d Guards Tank Corps south of Gumbinnen.³⁵ Soviet accounts are restricted to a single article and several passages from the memoirs of participants and unit histories.³⁶

According to these sources, the Stavka authorized Cherniakhovsky to exploit the success achieved in the Memel' operation by striking into the Prussian heartland

along the Gumbinnen-Konigsberg axis (see map 16). The front commander planned to penetrate German defenses with 5th and 11th Guards Armies and then exploit with 2d Guards Tank Corps and second echelon (and fresh) 28th Army. 31st and 39th Armies on the flanks would support the assault. On 16 October Col. Gen. N. I. Krylov's 5th and Col. Gen. K. N. Galitsky's 11th Guards Armies went into action and drove 11 kilometers into the German defenses. The following day 31st and 39th Armies joined the assault, and Galitsky's army crossed the East Prussian border of Germany. German resistance was fierce, and German fortified lines were so formidable that it took four days for Cherniakhovsky to penetrate the tactical defenses. The second defense line, along the German border, was so strong that Cherniakhovsky committed his tank corps to overcome it. Together, on 20 October 11th Guards Army and 2d Guards Tank Corps finally ruptured the defense and approached the outskirts of Gumbinnen. The next day Cherniakhovsky committed Lt. Gen. A. A. Luchinsky's 28th Army to battle, but the entire forces' advance faltered in the Stallupinen Defensive Region as heavy German panzer reinforcements arrived to stiffen the defense. Fighting continued until 27 October as the flank Soviet armies closed up with 11th Guards Army's forward positions. At a cost of heavy casualties (by German count), Soviet forces had advanced from 50-100 kilometers into East Prussia and learned from experience what extensive preparations would be required in the future to conquer Germany's East Prussian bastion.

The Gumbinnen operation stands as an example of an operation which had considerable impact on the manner in which Soviet forces would operate in the future. With the earlier Targul-Frumos operation and other unmentioned cases, it also raises serious questions about ultimate Soviet strategic aims in the waning stages of significant strategic operations. Again, accounts of the operation would be more thorough and conclusions more valid if the operation could be recounted and evaluated from Soviet as well as German sources.

Conclusions

What has been presented here is a sample of gaps in the operational history of the German-Soviet War. While the sample identifies many significant gaps, it is the product of only one historian's work, and even this historian can list many others. To the list must be added the many cases used by the modern German Army in its officers' education, to include the battles along the Chir (December 1942) and in the Donbas (February 1943), the various Nikopol' battles, and many others, all of which rest on the basis of only one-sided German accounts. Other neglected areas span the entire war and include such topics as the encirclement on destruction of Soviet 6th and 12th Armies at Uman', operations on the Khar'kov and Kursk axes in late summer and fall of 1941, plans for offensive action in the north in winter 1943 (by Group Khozin), operations in the Staraja Russa-Nevel' sector in fall 1943, and operations to reduce the German Army Group North after its isolation in Courland in October 1944.

Investigation of all of these issues and others will cast more accurate light on the war and will help dispel the many myths that the war has produced, myths which have and will continue to victimize the Soviet (Russian) Army and Soviet (Russian) historiography. In the final analysis, the old axiom remains correct

-- that it is better to relate one's own history than to have someone else relate it.

Endnotes

1. For example, see Viktor Suvorov (ne Rezin), *Ledokol (Icebreaker) and Den'-M (M-Day)*, whose preposterous claims about blame for the war pervert history for political purposes and profit. [BACK](#)
2. See, for example such superb superb military analyses as those done by D. M. Proektor on the Dukla Pass operation, A. A. Sidorenko on the Mogilev operation, V. Matsulenko on the Iassy-Kishinev operation and on a host of specialized themes, and equally candid and detailed memoirs by Moskalenko, Galitsky, Bagramian, Solomatin, Katukov, Batov, and many others. The groundbreaking and detailed studies of John Erickson raised the veil on Eastern Front operations for Western readers. [BACK](#)
3. For a thorough survey of these forgotten operations in proper context, see David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 1995). [BACK](#)
4. For example, see G. Kuleshov, "Na Dneprovskom rubezhe" [On the Dnepr line], *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 6 (June 1966), 16-28 (hereafter cited as VIZh) and V. Bytkov, "Kontrudar 5-iu mekhanizirovannoiu korpusa na lepel'skom napravlenii" [The counterstroke of 5th Mechanized Corps on the Lepel' axis], *VIZh*, No. 9 (September 1971), 60-65. [BACK](#)
5. For example, see V. Shevchuk, "Deistviia operativnykh grupp voisk v Smolenskom srazhenii (10 iulia-10 sentiabriia 1941 g.)" [The actions of operational groups of forces in the Battle of Smolensk], *VIZh*, NO. 12 (December 1979) 10-14. [BACK](#)
6. A. V. Vladimirsky, *Na kievskom napravlenii* [On the Kiev axis], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1989). [BACK](#)
7. A. A. Volkov, *Nezavershennye frontovye nastupatel'nye operatsii pervykh kampanii Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* [Incomplete front offensive operations of the initial campaigns of the Great Patriotic War], (Moscow: AVIAR, 1992). [BACK](#)
8. B. Panov, N. Naumov, "Vosstanovlenie strategicheskogo fronta na Zapadnom napravlenii (iiul' 1941 g.)" [Restoration of the strategic front on the Western axis (June 1941)] *VIZh*, No. 8 (August 1976), 15-23. [BACK](#)
9. For example, see numerous short articles such as E. Klimchuk, "Vtoraia udaraia i Vlasov," [2d Shock and Vlasov], *Sovetskii voen* [Soviet soldier], No. 20, 1989, 76-81 and V. A. Chernukhin, "Na liubanskom napravlanii" [On the Liuban' axis], *VIZh*, No. 8 (August 1992) 43-45. Stanislav Gagarin has also published a novel about the operation Miasnoi Bor , which has been serialized in *VIZh*. [BACK](#)
10. For details, see David M. Glantz, *A History of Soviet Airborne Forces* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1994), 231-262. [BACK](#)
11. A. Vasilevsky, "Nekotorye voprosy rukovodstva vooruzhennoi bor'boi letom 1942 goda"[Some questions concerning the direction of armed struggle in the

summer of 1942], VIZh, No. 8 (August 1965), 3-10; M. Kazakov, "Na voronezhskom napravlenii letom 1942 goda"[On the Voronezh axis in the summer of 1942], VIZh, No. 10 (October 1964), 27-44 I. Kh. Bagramian, Tak shli my k pobeda [As we went on to victory], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), 48-140; and K. S. Moskalenko, Na iugo-zapadnom napravlenii [On the southwestern axis], (Moscow: "Nauka," 1969), 133-218. Of course, the best source is the period war experience volume, "Opisanie operatsii voisk iugo-zapadnogo fronta na khar'kovskom napravlenii v mae 1942 goda" [An account of the operations of Southwestern Front forces on the Khar'kov axis in May 1942] in Sbornik voenno-istoricheskikh materialov Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny [Collection of military-historical materials of the Great Patriotic War], Issue 5 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1951). Hereafter cited as SVIMVOV.

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12. M. I. Kazakov, "Boevye deistviia voisk Brianskogo i Voronezhskogo frontov letom 1942 na voronezhskom napravlanii" [Combat operations of Briansk and Voronezh Front forces on the Voronezh axis in summer 1942] in SVIMVOV, Issue 15 (Moscow: Voenizat, 1955), 115-146. BACK

13. G. Zhukov, Reminiscences and Reflections, (Moscow: Progress,1985), 129-133.

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14. M. D. Solomatin, Krasnogradtsy [The men of Krasnograd], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 11-44. BACK

15. M. E. Katukov, Na ostrie glavnogo udara [At the point of the main attack], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), 182-184. BACK

16. A. Kh. Babadzhanian, Dorogy pobedy [Roads of victory], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1981), 99. BACK

17. Sovetskaia kavaleriia [Soviet cavalry], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1984), 216. BACK

18. For complete details, see "Anlage 5 zum Tatigkeitsbericht der Abteilung Ic/A.O.," in AOK 9,27970/6, dated 1 July-31 December 1942, NAM T-312, Roll 304. These Anlage contain full reports on the offensive with a complete Soviet order of battle and full assessments of the strengths and estimated losses of participating Soviet units. For example, 1st Mechanized Corps, reinforced by the 47th and 48th Mechanized Brigades, had an initial strength of about 300 tanks and lost 85 percent of its armor in the operation. BACK

19. See, Boevoi sostav Sovetskoi armii, chast' 2 [Combat composition of the Soviet Army, Part 2], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966), 207-255. Prepared by the Military-scientific Directorate of the General Staff and classified secret. BACK

20. The three Soviet fronts participating in Operation "Uranus" contained 1,103,000 men, 15,510 guns and mortars, 1,463 tanks, and 928 combat aircraft. At the same time, the Kalinin and Western Fronts and Moscow Defense Zone numbered 1,890,000 men, 24,682 guns and mortars, 3,375 tanks, and 1,170 aircraft. See A. A. Grechko, ed., Istoriia vtoroi mirovoi voiny, T. 6 [A history of the Second World War, Vol. 6], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), 35. For details on Operation "Mars," see forthcoming book, David M. Glantz, Zhukov's Greatest Defeat: Operation "Mars" 24 November-14 December 1942). BACK

21. For general officer losses, see A. A. Maslov, "Soviet general officer losses in the 1st period of the Great Patriotic War," The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, Vol. 7, No. 3 (September 1994), forthcoming. BACK

22. See A. G Ershov, *Osvobozhdenie Donbassa* [Liberation of the Donbas], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973); V. Morozov, "Pochemu ne sovershalos' nastuplenie v Donbasse vesnoi 1943 goda"[Why was the offensive in the Donbas not completed in the spring of 1943?], *VIZh*, No. 3 (March 1963), 16-33; and a variety of unit histories such as those of 4th Guards Tank Corps and the 195th and 35th Guards Rifle Divisions. BACK

23. See also the unit histories of 11th Tank Corps and the 69th, 102d, 194th, 354th Rifle Divisions and 1st Guards Motorized Rifle Division. The best single source on planning for the operation is K. Rokossovsky, *Soldatskii dolg* [A soldiers duty], (Moscow: Voenizdat,). BACK

24. See for example, "Situation maps and overlays (1: 300,000), prepared by the Second Army, Counterintelligence Officer (Ic/AO), December 1942-July 1943," AOK 2, 31811/23, NAM T-312, Roll 1223 and a series of "Chefkarten and Anlagen," Pz AOK 2, Ia, NAM T-313, Roll 171. BACK

25. G. F. Krivosheev, *Grif sekretnosti sniat: poteri vooruzhennykh sil SSSR v voynakh, boevykh deistviakh, i voennykh konfliktakh* [Classification secret removed: losses of the USSR's armed forces in wars, combat actions, and military conflicts], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1993). This is but one of many gaps in this otherwise useful and enlightening book. BACK

26. I. Glebov, "Manevr voisk v Chernigovsko-Pripiatskoi i Gomel'sko-Rechitskoi nastupatel'nykh operatsiakh" [Maneuver of forces in the Chernigov-Pripiat and Gomel'-Rechitsa offensive operations], *VIZh*, No. 1 (January 1976), 13. BACK

27. K. N. Galitsky, *Gody surovykh ispytaniy 1941-1944* [Years of rigorous education 1941-1944], (Moscow: "Nauka," 1973), 347-348 and M. Absaliyev, "Iz opyta vzaimodeistviia vozdukhnykh dsantov s partizanami v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine" [From the experience of the cooperation of airborne forces with partisans in the Great Patriotic War], *VIZh*, No. 11 (November 1964), 104-108. BACK

28. M. A. Gareev, "Prichny i uroki neudachnykh nastupatel'nykh operatsii Zapadnogo fronta zimoi 1943/44 goda" [The causes and lessons of unsuccessful Western Front operations in winter 1943/44], *Voennaia mysl'* [Military thought], No. 2 (February 1994), 50-58 and M. A. Gareev, "O neudachnykh nastupatel'nykh operatsiakh sovetskikh voisk v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine. Po neopublikovannym dokumentam GKO" [About unsuccessful offensive operations of Soviet forces in the Great Patriotic War. According to unpublished GKO documents], *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* [New and newer history], No 1 (January 1994), 3-29. The two superb studies by Gareev exemplify what must be done to fill in the historical gaps in the history of the war. BACK

29. In particular, see the operational and intelligence records of Third Panzer Army and Fourth Army. Ninth Army records, which were captured by the Soviets and do not exist in the West, also should provide details on these failed Soviet operations. See also such excellent German unit histories as A. D. von Plato, *Die Geschichte der 5. Panzerdivision 1938 bis 1945* [The history of 5th Panzer Division 1938-1945], (Regensburg: Walhalla u. Praetoria Verlag, 1978). BACK

30. For details, see H. von Manteuffel, *The Battle of Targul-Frumos* (unpublished manuscript and briefing, 1948) and F. von Senger und Etterlin, *Der Gegenschlag* [The encounter battle]_____, which covers all of these popular German case

studies. [BACK](#)

31. F. I. Vysotsky, M. E. Makukhin, F. M. Sarychev, M. K. Shaposhnikov, *Gvareiskaia tankovaia* [Guards tank], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 101-106. [BACK](#)

32. David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1989), 350-356. [BACK](#)

33. Among the few sources on this operation are A. Radzievsky, "Na puti k Varshave" [On the path to Warsaw], *VIZh*, No. 10 (October 1971), 68-77 and Iu. V. Ivanov, I. N. Kosenko, "Kto kogo predal" [Who betrayed whom], *VIZh*, No. 3 (March 1993), 16-24 and No. 4 (April 1993), 13-21. German sources include extensive reports from German Second Army, which contain also Ninth Army materials. [BACK](#)

34. R. Nazarevich, "Varshavskoe vostanie 1944 g.," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, No. 2 (February 1989), 186-210. [BACK](#)

35. See a particularly detailed account in Third Panzer Army records. [BACK](#)

36. M. Alekseev, "Nachalo boev v Vostochnoi Prussii" [The beginning of combat in Belorussia], *VIZh*, No. 10 (October 1964), 11-22. Krivosheev, 227, provides casualty figures for what he calls the Goldap operation. [BACK](#)