

Rzhev '42 – Designer Notes

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– by David Glantz
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Design Notes

A. Introduction

After reading David Glantz's book "Zhukov's Greatest Defeat", I became intrigued with this unknown, but major operation. According to Col Glantz, the Soviet forces used for Operation Mars, were substantially larger than the more well known Operation Uranus, the counterattack at Stalingrad. Two Soviet fronts, Kalinin and Western, seven Armies, consisting of 667,000 men and over 1900 tanks, attacked on 25 November 1942 with the goal of destroying the German 9th Army, pinching off the Rzhev salient, and eliminating the threat this salient posed to Moscow. By attacking in four directions, the Soviets planned on tying down what little mobile reserves the Germans had, and not allowing them to be deployed elsewhere. The battle was fought during blizzard-like snowstorms which, along with the poor terrain in the area, contributed mightily to the Soviet defeat. The Germans fought back hard, with a stubborn defense, their strong points holding out behind the Soviet lines, further complicating moving the second echelon offensive troops forward. Beside the two panzer divisions in reserve of 9.AOK (9th Army), the Germans were able to send three more panzer divisions, from Heersgruppe (Army Group) reserve, to halt the offensive and counterattack. There are others who insist that this battle was just a diversion, and that the Soviets only used a small portion of the troops assigned to both Fronts, yet the archival German records seem to indicate that this was a major offensive operation.

Operation Mars is the Eastern front at its nastiest. While the German army was still the tactical master, the Soviets were learning from their previous mistakes. This was a huge battle, fought while the eyes of the world were focused on the monumental events taking place in southern Russia. It was fought by a stubborn Soviet Army General, Georgi Zhukov, against his nemesis, Heersgruppe Mitte (Army Group Center), commanded by the tenacious and resourceful General Oberst Walter Model. German sources estimate that the Soviets lost over 200,000 men including about 100,000 dead. The total Soviet tank losses were between 1700 and 1800 tanks. The Germans counted only 5,272 prisoners taken, so this was a struggle to the death.

David Glantz has been kind enough to let us use a historiography titled "Operation Mars Revisited" which is an in depth summary of the battle featured in Section III of these notes. I encourage all to read this account of the operation in order to understand how the battle unfolded. The text, along with the maps, will give the reader an insight into the objectives along with the forces involved in each of the operational areas, providing useful information to plan your attack or defense. A reading of his book "Zhukov's Greatest Defeat" is considered a must for anyone who wants a more detailed history of the operation.

A number of scenarios have been included that depict the Soviet offensives during August 1942 in the Rzhev area. These operations, conducted by Zhukov, were meant to reduce the Rzhev salient, destroy the German 9th Army, and tie down reinforcements. These operations came close to realizing their goals and were a major factor in Zhukov's planning of Operation Mars.

B. German Order of Battle

Very little information on the German order of battle exists in the few books on this battle. Therefore, a trip to the National Archives was necessary to conduct the required research. Using Georg Tessin's "Verbande und Truppen" series, I sketched out the corps and divisions assigned to both 9.AOK and 3.PzAOK (3rd Panzer Army) for this time period. With a general outline of the forces involved, Wig Graves was kind enough to put a list together, indicating the microfilm reels and folders to search, using his copies of "The Guides to the Captured German Records" (this list is included in the bibliography). Using this listing I spent two days at the National Archives going through the microfilm and copying all relevant information for use in the game. I collected quite a treasure trove of information to create the order of battle. One important piece of information was a listing of 9.AOK for 25 November 1942 (the battle start date) showing all units down to battalion and company level. (A partial image is shown below – use the bottom scroll bar to see the image to the right)

der 9. Armee.

O.B.: Gen. Oberst MODEL
 Chef: Gen. Maj. KREBS
 Ia: Oberst i.G. KOSSTLIN

Stand, 25.11.1942

Kommandeur: Gen. d. Inf. Weiß
 Chef: Oberst i.G. Feysabend
 Ia: Major i.G. Graf v. Bollen

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Gen. Maj. Durdach Ia: Oberst i.G. Meier-Wacker 251
 Gen. Maj. Richter Ia: Maj. i.G. v. Braun 67
 Gen. Maj. Großmann Ia: Oberst i.G. John 6
 Gen. Maj. Pracht Ia: Oberst i.G. Masius 129
 Gen. Maj. Banhäuser Ia: Maj. i.G. Hornig 256
 Gen. Maj. Müller-Gebhard Ia: Maj. i.G. Müller (Wahl) 72
 Gen. Maj. Röhricht Ia: Maj. i.G. v. Gonsörich 95

G.R. 454 (I.-II.)	G.R. 475 (I.-II.)	G.R. 488 (I.-II.)	G.R. 427 (I.-II.)	G.R. 456 (I.-II.)	G.R. 495 (I.-II.)	G.R. 276 (I.-II.)
G.R. 459 (I.-II.)	G.R. 485 (I.-II.)	G.R. 57 (I.-II.)	G.R. 430 (I.-II.)	G.R. 476 (I.-II.)	G.R. 124 (I.-II.)	G.R. 279 (I.-II.)
G.R. 471 (I.-II.)	G.R. 487 (I.-II.)	G.R. 59 (I.-II.)	G.R. 428 (I.-II.)	G.R. 481 (I.-II.)	G.R. 266 (I.-II.)	G.R. 280 (I.-II.)
AR 251 (I.-II.)	AR 187 (I.-II.)	AR 6 (I.-II.)	AR 129 (I.-II.)	AR 256 (I.-II.)	AR 172 (I.-II.)	AR 195 (I.-II.)
Schulz. Abt. 251 (4 Kp.)	Schulz. Abt. 187 (4 Kp.)	Pr. Jg. Abt. 6 (3 Kp.)	Schulz. Abt. 129 (4 Kp.)	Schulz. Abt. 256 (4 Kp.)	Pr. Jg. Abt. 72 (4 Kp.)	Schulz. Abt. 195 (4 Kp.)
Pl. Btl. 251 (3 Kp.)	Pl. Btl. 187 (3 Kp.)	A.-A. 6 (3 Schw.)	Pl. Btl. 129 (3 Kp.)	Pl. Btl. 256 (3 Kp.)	Radf. Abt. 72 (4 Schw.)	Pl. Btl. 195 (3 Kp.)
N-Abt. 251 (2 Kp.)	N-Abt. 187 (2 Kp.)	N-Abt. 6 (2 Kp.)	N-Abt. 129 (2 Kp.)	N-Abt. 256 (2 Kp.)	Pl. Btl. 72 (3 Kp.)	N-Abt. 195 (2 Kp.)

abgestellt: I./G. 1. 4. 51 (bei 67. J.B.)
 unterstellt: I./A.R. 451 (251 J.B.)
 I./A.R. 6 (4. 50)

Alle Teile der b. J.G. unterstellt: 125. 20, ohne II./AR 6 (bei 67. J.B.)

Gen. Maj. Krause Ia: Oberst i.G. Borenski
 (AOK-Pst.) 14 (mit)
 G.R. (mit) 41 (I., II., III., IV.)
 G.R. (mit) 53 (I., II., III., IV.)
 K 20 (I., II.)
 AR 14 (I., II.)
 Pl. Btl. 14 (3 Kp.)
 N-Abt. 14 (2 Kp.)
 abgestellt: II./AR 11 (b. 129 J.B.)

Pr. Reserven:
 Pr. Abt. Blücher (Pr. B. Pr. Rgt. 11 I. Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. Abt. 31 (I., II., III., IV. Pr. Div.)

Landeseigene Verbände: Ost-BH 147 (1 Kp.)
 Ost-Kp. 193

Heeresgruppen.

Arko 150
 Art. Rgt. 148 (6, 7, 8, 9)
 Sturmgeschütze-Abt. 165, 647 (n. 2.)
 10. Panz.-Abt. 1./57
 21. Panz.-Abt. 1./108 (n. 1.)
 45. Panz.-Abt. 1./120
 Korp. Abt. 6. (mit) 3. 11

Kor d. Kav. 10
 Bau-BH 16 (6 Kav.)
 Feld-Strafz-Abt. 9
 Pr. Jg. Abt. 541 (I./AOK-Res.)
 Pl. Btl. 641

unterstellte Einheiten.

Gen. Maj. Gullmann
 Korück 582

Stab Rgt. Stab 75
 Stab Btl. 227, 722, 736, 767
 Wacht-Btl. 506, 721
 1. PK Btl. 633 (n. 1.)

Landeseigene Verbände:
 Stabs-Abt. der Ost-Truppen 542
 Ost-Btl. 626, 629, 630 (je 3 Kp.)
 Ost-Btr. 582 / 5. Btl. 722
 Ost-Kp. 506 (Wtl.)
 Ost-Ers.-Kp. 582 / Ost-Unterf. Schule 582

non taktisch:
Fliegertruppe:
 Noh.-Aufkl. Gr. 5 mit 4. V. 23 / V. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.
 Kurierbtl. 8
 S. 518

Auf Zusammenarbeit angewiesen:
 Gen. Maj. Reinmann Ia: Oberst i.G. Jochen 18
 Flak-Rgt. St. 18 (W. A.)
 Flak-Rgt. St. 125 (I. u. II. Abt. A. K. 10000 P. K.)
 Flak-Rgt. St. 101 (A. K. P. K. J.)
 Flak-Rgt. St. 127, 128, 129, 130 (A. K. P. K. J.)
 Flak-Rgt. St. 127, 128, 129, 130 (A. K. P. K. J.)

Kommandeur: Gen. G. Pe. Ir. v. Arnim
 Chef: Oberst i.G. Ziegler
 Ia: Major i.G. von Kluge

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Gen. Lt. Triebner Ia: Oberst i.G. Müller 102
 Gen. Maj. Schliegmann Ia: Oberst i.G. Pfeiffer 337
 Gen. Maj. Völkers Ia: Maj. i.G. Kohler-Kurz 78

G.R. 84 (I.-II.)	G.R. 62 (I.-II.)	G.R. 14 (I.-II.)
G.R. 233 (I.-II.)	G.R. 660 (I.-II.)	G.R. 215 (I.-II.)
G.R. 233 (I.-II.)	G.R. 313 (I.-II.)	G.R. 195 (I.-II.)
AR 102 (I.-II.)	AR 337 (I.-II.)	AR 178 (I.-II.)
Schulz. Abt. 102 (5 Kp.)	Schulz. Abt. 337 (2 Kp.)	Schulz. Abt. 178 (3 Kp.)
Pl. Btl. 102 (3 Kp.)	Pl. Btl. 337 (3 Kp.)	Pl. Btl. 178 (3 Kp.)
N-Abt. 102 (2 Kp.)	N-Abt. 337 (2 Kp.)	N-Abt. 178 (2 Kp.)

unterstellt: I./Pr. AR 114 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 115 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 116 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 117 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 118 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 119 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 120 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 121 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 122 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 123 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 124 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 125 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 126 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 127 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 128 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 129 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 130 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 131 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 132 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 133 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 134 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 135 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 136 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 137 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 138 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 139 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 140 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 141 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 142 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 143 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 144 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 145 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 146 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 147 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 148 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 149 (5 Pr. Div.)
 I./Pr. AR 150 (5 Pr. Div.)

Gen. Maj. Metz Ia: Oberst i.G. v. Plank 5
 Gen. Maj. Scheller Ia: Oberst i.G. v. Neuber 9

Pr. Btl. 31 (I.-II.)
 Pr. Btl. 13 (I.-II.)
 Pr. Btl. 44 (I.-II.)
 K 25 (5 Kp.)
 Pr. Jg. Abt. 53 (3 Kp.)
 Pr. AR 114 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 115 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 116 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 117 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 118 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 119 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 120 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 121 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 122 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 123 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 124 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 125 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 126 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 127 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 128 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 129 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 130 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 131 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 132 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 133 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 134 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 135 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 136 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 137 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 138 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 139 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 140 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 141 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 142 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 143 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 144 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 145 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 146 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 147 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 148 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 149 (I.-II.)
 Pr. AR 150 (I.-II.)

Landeseigene Verbände: Ost-BH 435 (Wtl.) 1 Kp. Ost-Kp. 25, 176, 707

Heeresgruppen:

Arko 55
 Sturmgeschütze-Abt. 2./647
 21. Panz.-Abt. 657
 15. Panz.-Abt. 74
 Bau-BH 50 (mit Behälter)

Kor d. Kav. 59
 Pl. Btl. 62, Geb. 85
 Bau-BH 900

TO&E information was taken from the captured records of the korps and divisional gliederungs (formation organization) where they were available. The rest of the information was taken from Dr. Leo Niehorster's "German World War II Organizational Series" volume 4/I. Other sources, consisting of several unit histories, were used to verify information and you will find a complete bibliography at the end of these notes.

I left out the heavy weapons, Infantry gun, and Pak companies within the regiment, to limit the unit density. The infantry company's manpower and numbers reflect the addition of these units into them.

Another decision was made to use all German terminology in the order of battle to give it an authentic feel. Once you get used to the terms and designations I think you will find it the best way to represent these units.

For those interested in the German Army during World War II, several web sites offer a wealth of information. Here are a few, *(but if you click on the Link below, use the Windows HELP "Back" button to return to the Designers Notes)*.

["http://www.feldgrau.com/"](http://www.feldgrau.com/)

["http://www.skalman.nu/third-reich/"](http://www.skalman.nu/third-reich/)

and

["http://www.lexikonderwehrmacht.de/start1.htm"](http://www.lexikonderwehrmacht.de/start1.htm)

Morale/Quality

This is a battle where, even though the Germans were outnumbered, they simply outfought the Soviets. Some of the front line units were not overrun by the Soviets who then fell back and did not attack again. During the initial play testing, the German units were being overrun at a much too high rate. The units were simply not standing up to the attack as was the historical case. We compensated for this by raising the morale level of the front line Infantry Divisions to "A" quality.

As for the Panzer divisions, they completely outperformed their Soviet counterpart. The panzer and motorized divisions provide the stiff resistance to the Soviet penetrations, and conducted the local counterattacks, that eventually spelled doom to the operation. One of the main reasons the Soviet penetration in the Sychevka area failed was the presence of the 5th Panzer division and timely arrival of 9th Panzer. The German player needs to use his mobile reserves wisely.

German Terms and Organization 101

For those interested in this sort of thing I will explain the terminology used, along with the typical organizations, in the German OOB.

Let's start with Heersgruppemitte. Heer means army, and mitte means middle, so, Army Group Center.

9.AOK is 9th Army Oberkommando, or Army Command HQs. The Germans used Arabic numbers to designate armies. They also use a dot "." to separate the designations as in 9.AOK. The word Stab in the headquarter units means staff.

German army corps were designated using roman numerals, and have either an AK or PzK designation, meaning army or panzer corps.

Infantry divisions were composed of three (3) infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, a pioneer (engineer) battalion, and either a schnelle abteilung (battalion), or an aufklärung abteilung and a panzerjäger abteilung. At the start of Operation Barbarossa, the infantry divisions all had three regiments, each with three battalions. With the loss in manpower, especially after the Russian winter offensive of 1941 to 1942, most divisions were composed of either three regiments, each with two battalions, or two regiments, each with three battalions. Either variation totaled six infantry battalions. Battalions used roman numerals while companies used Arabic numbers. A battalion was composed of three infantry companies and a heavy weapons company. These were numbers 1,2,3 and 4 in the first (I./) battalion, 5,6,7,and 8 in the II./ battalion and 9,10,11 and 12 in the III./ battalion. The 4th, 8th and 12th companies were the heavy weapons companies. So the designation 6./II./Gr.Rgt.18 is the 6th company, 2nd battalion, 18th grenadier regiment.

Another change that took place on October 25th 1942 was the re-designation of infantry regiments and companies to grenadier regiments and companies. With this in mind you will find the infantry designation in the July and August orders of battle and the grenadier designation in the November OOB.

At the start of Barbarossa, most infantry divisions had both an aufklärung abteilung (recon battalion) and a panzerjäger abteilung (Antitank battalion). Due to the shortage in manpower by early 1942, these two units were combined into a schnelle (mobile troop) battalion. This battalion usually consisted of a mixture of recon and AT companies, anywhere from two to five companies in strength. The recon companies were either cavalry mounted or radfahr (bicycle) mounted. The AT units were mostly composed of a mixture of 37mm and 50mm towed guns, with a few divisions having a company of Marder self-propelled 75mm guns.

A Panzer division was composed of a panzer regiment, two panzer grenadier regiments, an artillery regiment, a kradshützen battalion, a panzerjäger abteilung, and a pioneer battalion.

During the summer and fall of 1942, with the losses sustained during the winter of 41-42, the various panzer regiments consisted of anywhere from one to three battalions at various strengths. The standard organization of a regiment was either two battalions with four companies each, or three battalions with three companies each. These companies were equipped with a variety of PzIII, PzIVs, and Pz38ts.

The standard organization of a panzer grenadier regiment consisted of two battalions, each with three grenadier companies, and a heavy weapons company. In addition the regiment also had an infantry gun company.

During the summer of 1942, the two regiments were still organized under a schützen (rifle) brigade, but the brigade headquarters were removed during the fall.

The panzer artillery regiment was composed of three battalions, each with three batteries. The first two battalions were equipped with 10.5cm FH (field howitzers), with four in each battery, for a total of twelve each battalion. The third battalion was equipped with two batteries, each with four 15cm sFH (schwere or heavy field howitzers), and one battery with four 10cm K (kanones or cannons).

The kradshützen battalion was the panzer division's reconnaissance battalion. Krad is short for kradfahrer meaning motorcycle, and schützen meaning riflemen. The battalion was usually composed of five companies. One company was equipped with armored cars, three companies composed of motorcycle rifleman, and one heavy weapons company.

The panzerjäger abteilung was composed of three companies. One company of self propelled antitank guns, like the Marder II, one company equipped with towed antitank guns, and one company of self-propelled 2cm anti-aircraft guns.

Finally, the pioneer battalion consisted of three motorized engineer companies.

The information listed above is certainly not meant to be an in-depth study into the organization of the German army and its components. It is meant to familiarize you with some of the basic German terms used, and a brief glimpse into the composition of the panzer and infantry divisions. I have also included a listing of German military abbreviations and terms that you will find under Section IV of these Design Notes.

Special Units

During this battle the Germans, desperate as they were, employed many different rear area support units in a combat role. The rear area behind 9.AOK was under the command of Koruck.582 (Rear Area Military Commander). This unit was responsible for all matters of supply, administration, and security in the combat zone. It was also responsible for defending against partisan attacks.

Alarmeinheit units: These units consist of divisional rear area support troops, i.e. supply troops, cooks, police, etc., which were collected into an ad hoc combat company. These units provided an emergency force to stop breakthroughs by the Soviets into the division's rear area.

Sich Regiments: These were security (sicherung) units used in front-line, anti-partisan, and rear-area security roles. Usually, these units were attached directly to Corps or Army headquarters.

Kosaken Battalions: These were volunteer (freiwilliger) Cossack mounted units used in front-line, anti-partisan and rear-area security roles. Usually, these units were attached directly to Corps or Army headquarters.

Ost Battalions: The German's employed various "native" volunteer (freiwilliger) and conscript units used in front-line, anti-partisan, and rear-area security roles. These battalions were organized roughly on the basis of ethnicity, with each battalion usually having its personnel drawn from a single ethnic group. Usually, these units were attached directly to Corps or Army headquarters.

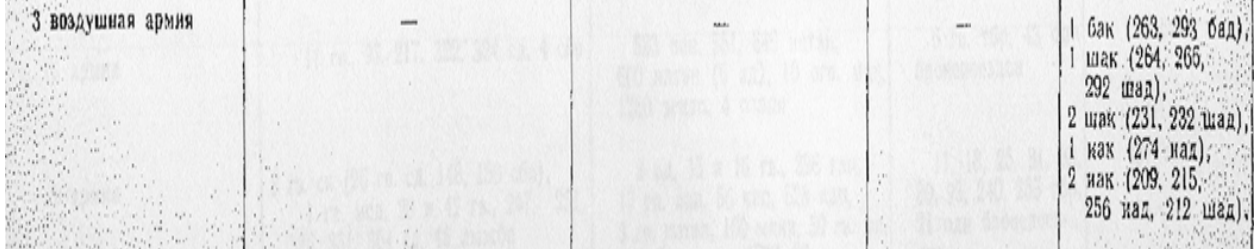
Bau Battalions: Bau (construction) battalions were rear area engineer construction battalions. They came in a few different varieties including brukenbau (bridge construction), and eisenbahn bau (railroad construction). These units could provide an emergency force to stop breakthroughs by the Soviets into the army's rear area. Usually, these units were attached directly to Corps or Army headquarters.

C. Soviet Order of Battle

The obvious starting place for the Soviet order of battle was David Glantz's book "Zhukov's Greatest Defeat". He lists all the participating units, reinforcements, and their commanders. The entire order of battle was checked and verified against the *Boevoi Sostav Sovetskoi Armii (Combat Composition of the Soviet Army)*, a

monthly order of battle for all Soviet forces for the entire war. (A partial image that shows Kalinin Front for 1 December 1942 is shown below)

Наименование объединения	Стрелковые, воздушнодесантные войска и кавалерия	Артиллерия РВГК, армейская и корпусная	Бронетанковые и механизированные войска	Военно-воздушные силы
Калининский фронт:				
3 ударная армия	2 гв. ск (8 гв. сд, 26 сбр), 5 гв. ск (9 и 46 гв., 357 сд), 21 гв., 28, 33, 117, 257, 381 сд, 31, 54 сбр, 44 лыжбр	38 и 41 гв. кав. 270, 613 зап. 385 гап, 1094, 1190 ппал, 79, 171, 316, 389, 699 иптап, 600 мина, 61, 304 гв. мп, 43, 196, 107, 205, 240, 410 огв. мди, 582, 609 зенит	2 мк (18, 34, 43 мбр, 33, 36 тбр, 68 омцб), 184 тбр, 27, 34, 36, 37, 38, 45 отп, 146, 179 отб	—
4 ударная армия	47, 332, 334, 358, 360 сд, 24 кд, 26 обр, 45 лыжбр	488 зап, 569, 759, 765 иптап, 408 мина, 17 гв. мп (без 219 д-на), 617 зенит	78, 236 тбр, 171 отб	—
22 армия	155, 185, 238, 362 сд, 114 сбр	16 гв., 43 зап, 376, 472 гап, 1157 ппал, 35, 141, 610 иптап, оплудн (б/н), 77 гв. мп, 81 гв. тмп, 75, 501 огв. тмдн, 405 огв. мди, 618, 621 зенит, 183, 397 озади	3 мк (1, 3, 10 мбр, 1 гв., 49 тбр, 58 омцб), 39 отп, 62 оди бронепоездов	—
39 армия	135, 158, 178, 186 ¹ , 348, 373 сд, 100, 101, 117, 136 сбр	421 зап, 480, 827 гап, 545 зап, 269, 480, 587, 712 иптап, 170 мина, 69 гв. тмп, 99 гв. мп, 47 огв. мди, 601 зенит	28, 81 тбр, 46 мбр, 28, 29, 32 отп	—
41 армия	6 ск (150 сд, 74, 75, 78, 91 сбр), 17 гв., 93, 134, 234, 262 сд	83 кав, 455 зап, 64, 440, 1224 гап, 1098 ппал, 75, 232, 301, 437, 483, 592 иптап, 16, 24, 31 (без 123 д-на) гв. мп, 38, 109 огв. мди, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554 огв. тмдн, 225, 717 зенит, 490 озади	1 мк (19, 35, 37 мбр, 65, 219 тбр, 57 омцб), 47, 48 мбр, 104, 154 тбр, 40, 229 отп	—
43 армия	32, 145, 179, 279, 306 сд, олыжб (б/н)	283 гап, 144, 452, 478 иптап, 118 мина, 123/34 гв. мп, 219/17 гв. мп, 243, 246 зенит	113 тбр	—
3 воздушная армия	—	—	—	1 бак (263, 293 бад), 1 шак (264, 265, 292 шад), 2 шак (231, 292 шад), 1 нак (274 над), 2 иак (209, 215, 256 над, 212 шад),



For unit designations, TO&E and manpower information I used a combination of Charles Sharp's "Red Army Order of Battle" volumes I - XII, Zaloga/Ness "Red Army Handbook", and David Glantz's "Red Army 1943". Sharp's books are indispensable for the wealth of information in them. And Glantz's "Red Army 1943" book provided the TO&E of many units not covered in either Sharps or "The Red Army Handbook".

Another source I used to verify TO&E and unit designations are two extremely useful web sites. They cover the Red Army and the Tank/Mech corps respectively, and include information not found elsewhere. *(As before, if you click on the Links below, use the Windows Help "Back" button to return to the Designers Notes).*

The two sites are:

["http://www.rkka.ru/"](http://www.rkka.ru/)

["http://mechcorps.rkka.ru/"](http://mechcorps.rkka.ru/)

The Soviet heavy rocket battalions were a new type of unit just raised in June of 1942. These battalions were quite large, consisting of 3 batteries with 32 launch frames each, for a total of 96 launch frames. These units required extensive setup, and reloading, so it was decided to give them a very low movement allowance of 1 to simulate this difficulty. Because rocket units are treated similar to self-propelled artillery in the game, it was decided to make these units "heavy artillery", to simulate this extensive tear down and setup difficulty.

Another historical addition to the order of battle is the Soviet Penal companies. These companies were assigned to the first echelon rifle divisions, and were the first units forward at the start of the attack. According to Stalin's infamous "Not one step back" Order No. 227 of July 28th 1942; "The Military Councils of armies and first of all army commanders should form 5 to 10, depending on the situation, penal companies, were soldiers and NCOs, who have broken discipline due to cowardice or instability, should be sent. These units should be deployed at the most difficult sectors of the front, thus giving their soldiers an opportunity to redeem their crimes against the Motherland by blood."

Morale/Quality

While the Soviet rifle and tank formations fought hard during the battle, they suffered from the weather, terrain, and the tenacious defensive effort put up by the

Germans. The Soviet units receive a morale rating of "C" and "D" to help simulate the problems they encountered. The Guards formations along with the mobile tank and mechanized formations are rated "C", while the Rifle divisions are rated "D". This seemed to work best for getting the right "feel" of the battle.

The Soviet artillery force get mostly a "D" rating because while numerous, the weather, terrain, and the lack of good fire control limited their ability to cause extensive casualties. The Soviets also had quite a bit of trouble moving their artillery forward, to continue to support the advance, due to the restricting terrain, and the large amount of units forcing their way into the penetrations initially created.

The Soviet heavy rocket battalions, while very strong in terms of number of launch frames, were not very effective in causing casualties. The "E" rating on these units limits their effectiveness.

Finally, the morale ratings for both the Germans and Soviet should not be used to indicate which units were of a more elite status, but rather to indicate their respective effectiveness during the course of THIS operation.

D. Weather

Operation Mars was fought in extreme weather conditions. The operation started during an intense snowstorm that nullified much of the opening artillery barrage and hindered the advance of the second and third echelon units. The Russian player will find some frustration in conducting attacks, and moving reinforcements forward, due to the weather and restricting nature of the terrain. The Germans built a defensive position of strong points setup in villages behind the front trench line. These strong points, if not captured, will further constrict the Russian player in getting his units forward.

The weather during Operation Mars has been programmed into the weather.dat file, with the chance of a number of storms happening during the course of the battle. The effects of snowstorms result in combat and movement allowances being cut in half, and visibility is reduced to one hex. This will severely hamper the attacking player, and force him to be patient and persistent in his style of play.

The rivers shown on the map start in a frozen condition and units will be able to cross without the aid of bridges. There is a small chance during the course of the battle for this condition to change when using the programmable weather. Players should make sure to bridge these rivers, even though they are frozen, with their bridging engineers, otherwise a thaw will isolate their forces on the wrong side of the

river.

E. Making the Scenarios

Anyone who reviews a copy of the book "Zhukov's Greatest Defeat" by David Glantz will quickly see the framework we used for this game. Even prior to this, when Glantz published his article "Counterpoint to Stalingrad" in 1997, one could readily see the concept of a game in his work. Additionally, although there were other battles in the Rzhev area, it was decided early on that Operation Mars would provide the core of the scenarios for this game, with each of the operational areas providing a logical division for a scenario.

Tests of the earliest prototype scenarios caused us a great deal more challenge as designers than we had anticipated. Once we placed the forces on the map in their relative positions, and used combat values established from previous Panzer Campaign games, we had a difficult time getting historical results. The gains the attacking Russian made against the dug-in German defense line in the early scenarios, varied between being too easy for the Russians to achieve a breakthrough, up to almost impossible to break the frontline, with no happy medium.

What we were missing with these early scenarios was the effects of the winter stormy weather. This is where we turned to John Tiller for an enhancement to the existing Programmed Weather optional rules to simulate the extreme conditions under which this battle was often fought. The new Storm condition, as explained in the documentation, will cause reduced combat effects for the attacker. In times of Storms, you will see the word STORM in uppercase on the Status Bar and, with background sounds ON, you will hear the sound of the whistling wind.

The severe weather conditions that prevailed during this battle don't just penalize the attacker. The MARS Operation takes place on FROZEN ground, not just in SNOW as people may be familiar with in the Bugle '44, or Korsun '44 games. In FROZEN ground conditions units cannot dig-in, and this will make it difficult for the defender when/if the Russians penetrate the defense line.

Still, once we had all the effects, storms, forts, and units correct, still the scenarios were challenging to get right. In one notable case, we had three of the play testers all playing the same scenario, with the same optional rules and all conditions equal. The first guy liked the scenario as it was, but thought the level for the major victory could be a bit higher. However, both of the other testers said it was impossible to win vs. the AI Opponent, which only goes to underline the fact that it is very difficult to get the levels right for everyone.

Having said this, we are aware that a human player is better capable at manning a line of fixed emplacements, and moving units more effectively to the critical areas, than the AI Opponent, and so, with this in mind, we created an *a* version of a number of the first day scenarios that are taken from the Campaign setup. These *a* scns are not necessarily alternative scenarios for Head-to-head play. They are historical scenarios like the non *a* ones, but with intangible effects, such as fort strength, and supply, altered to make them more challenging.

So these *a* scenarios not only give players in the Play-by-email clubs another version of the historical scenario, if you're having too hard of a time as the Human Russian breaking the German line, then try the *a* scenario. Alternatively if you want more of a challenge as the Human defender, this might also be a better option too. It is all a matter of your point of view.

But there is more to this game than just Operation Mars. With each game in the series, we like to look for other possibilities, some historical based "What If" situations, and others are just battles that take place in the same area at another time period. For this title we have included a mix of scenarios in August of 1942, to provide some variation from the white worlds of the Russian Winter. So be sure to check out these summer scenarios, as well as Operation Jupiter, which was the "called off" follow-up plan had Mars been successful.

In any case, we believe we have provided you with a first class Map, Order-of-Battle, and set of scenarios with plenty of options for all styles of play. We sure hope you all enjoy them as much as we have in the development.

II. The Scenarios

A. Scenario List

#00_Started	Rumbling along the Osaga
#0804_01_Pogoreloe_Full	A Close Brush with Disaster
#0804_01a_Pogoreloe_Full	A Close Brush with Disaster (balanced)
#0804_02_Pogoreloe	Prelude to a Crisis
#0811_01_Vyazma	Charge to Vyazma
#0811_01a_Vyazma	Charge to Vyazma (balanced)
#0811_02_VyazmaN	Charge to Vyazma (North)
#0811_03_VyazmaS	Charge to Vyazma (South)
#0813_01_Dubna	The Ripple Effect
#1125_01_Op_Mars_Campaign	Rzhev '42 The God of War Unleashed
#1125_01a_Op_Mars_Campaign	Rzhev '42 Campaign (weaker defense)
#1125_01b_Op_Mars_Campaign_Alt_Allies	Rzhev '42 Campaign (Alt Stronger Russians)
#1125_01x_Op_Mars_Jupiter_Campaign	Rzhev '42 Campaign (with Jupiter)
#1125_02_Sychevka	A Hole in the Line at Sychevka
#1125_02a_Sychevka	A Hole in the Line at Sychevka (weaker defense)
#1125_03_Belyi	Breaking The Line at Belyi
#1125_03a_Belyi	Breaking The Line at Belyi (weaker defense)
#1125_04_Luchesa	A River Runs Through It
#1125_04a_Luchesa	A River Runs Through It (weaker defense)
#1125_05_Molodoi_Tud	The Way to Urdom
#1125_05a_Molodoi_Tud	The Way to Urdom (weaker defense)
#1128_06_Sychevka2	Once More into the Breach at Sychevka
#1130_07_Molodoi_Tud2	Struggle for Urdom
#1201_08_Luchesa2	Ahead, And Cut That Road
#1201_09_Belyi2	Too Little Too Late
#1201_09a_Belyi2	Too Little Too Late (balanced)
#1207_10_Molodoi_Tud3	From Sideshow to the Main Event
#1210_11_Operation_Jupiter	Operation Jupiter
#1215_12_Belyi3	Solomatin's Breakout

B. Scenario Overview

#00_Started: Rumbling along the Osaga

Sychevka Sector, Nov 19th 1942: For the last few weeks an uneasy calm had settled over the front. The rains had stopped, and a bitter cold swept into the area hardening the ground. Intelligence was a buzz with when the big attack might come, as raids and reconnaissance that preceded Soviet offensives became commonplace. One

such large "reconnaissance in force" happened near Gredyakino where Soviet infantry, supported by tanks, penetrated the 5th Panzer Division section of the line. After a few unsuccessful counter attacks were tried, the Russians were successfully driven off the next day, and the front line restored. [Size, small]

#0804_01_Pogoreloe_Full: A Close Brush with Disaster

Pogoreloe in the Sychevka Sector, Aug 4th 1942: The eyes of the world, watching the East Front, were all focused on the titanic struggle developing in the south, as the German Army drove toward Stalingrad. In the north, around Moscow, the Russians were looking for ways to bleed off any Axis troops bound for Army Group South by making diversionary attacks. But the real intent behind Zhukov's plan, with these attacks, was to crush Army Group Center. Here Soviet Armies forced their own way steadily toward Rzhev, and then Konev upped the stakes by releasing his fresh 6th and 8th Tank Corps along with the 2nd Guards Cavalry. General Model responded by throwing in his own operational Panzer reserves to close the breach in his line. A major battle for control of Zubtsov ensued. [Size, medium]

#0804_01a_Pogoreloe_Full: A Close Brush with Disaster (balanced)

Pogoreloe in the Sychevka Sector, Aug 4th 1942: The eyes of the world, watching the East Front, were all focused on the titanic struggle developing in the south, as the German Army drove toward Stalingrad. In the north, around Moscow, the Russians were looking for ways to bleed off any Axis troops bound for Army Group South by making diversionary attacks. But the real intent behind Zhukov's plan, with these attacks, was to crush Army Group Center. Here Soviet Armies forced their own way steadily toward Rzhev, and then Konev upped the stakes by releasing his fresh 6th and 8th Tank Corps along with the 2nd Guards Cavalry. General Model responded by throwing in his own operational Panzer reserves to close the breach in his line. A major battle for control of Zubtsov ensued. [Size, medium] Designer Note: This version of the Pogoreloe_Full scenario is designed for more balanced played.

#0804_02_Pogoreloe: Prelude to a Crisis

Pogoreloe in the Sychevka Sector, Aug 4th 1942: As Kalinin Front's 29th and 30th Armies, under Konev, were bearing down on Rzhev. Zhukov committed his own 20th and 39th Armies, in a drive toward Zubtsov and Sychevka, to cut off the German Rzhev grouping. On the opening day Zhukov ordered 20th Army's Rifle Divisions to break through the front lines and create an opening for the introduction of mobile reserves. [Size, small]

#0811_01_Vyazma: Charge to Vyazma

SE side of the Rzhev Salient, August 11th 1942: This scenario poses the question, "what if" the 5th Shock and 33rd Armies had been committed to taking Vyazma, and not been used to support the Rzhev-Sychevka operation. "What if" the 5th Shock had the 5th Tank Corps attached and attacked toward Vyazma along the axis of the

Gzhatsk-Vyazma road and railway. Then, "what if", the 33rd Army had attacked NW, across the Sorya river, two days later. Their objective would have been to capture Vyazma and then destroy any pocketed German units. [Size, medium]

#0811_01a_Vyazma: Charge to Vyazma (balanced)

SE side of the Rzhev Salient, August 11th 1942: This scenario poses the question, "what if" the 5th Shock and 33rd Armies had been committed to taking Vyazma, and not been used to support the Rzhev-Sychevka operation. "What if" the 5th Shock had the 5th Tank Corps attached and attacked toward Vyazma along the axis of the Gzhatsk-Vyazma road and railway. Then, "what if", the 33rd Army had attacked NW, across the Sorya river, two days later. Their objective would have been to capture Vyazma and then destroy any pocketed German units. [Size, medium] Designer Note: This version of the Vyazma scenario is designed for more balanced played.

#0811_02_VyazmaN: Charge to Vyazma (North)

SE side of the Rzhev Salient, August 11th 1942: In scenario 0811_02 a situation was posed that would have seen the 5th Shock and 33rd Armies committed to taking Vyazma, and not used to support the Rzhev-Sychevka operation. In the Gzhatsk sector, on the north end of this "what if" operation, the 5th Guards Shock Army will attempt to force the issue along the main road and exit units southwest toward Vyazma. [Size, small]

#0811_03_VyazmaS: Charge to Vyazma (South)

SE side of the Rzhev Salient, August 11th 1942: In scenario 0811_01 a situation was posed that would have seen the 5th Shock and 33rd Armies committed to taking Vyazma, and not used to support the Rzhev-Sychevka operation. In the southern sector of this "what if" operation, the 33rd Army will attempt to force the issue 'en masse', break out to the west, and exit units toward Vyazma. [Size, small]

#0813_01_Dubna: The Ripple Effect

Dubna, SE section of the Rzhev Salient, August 13th 1942: During the summer of 1942, General Zhukov, then commanding the Western Front, devised a plan to use the Rzhev Salient as a springboard to take the city of Vyazma. The plan was to use a 'ripple' effect attack from north to south along the whole eastern side of the salient. Armies from both the Kalinin and Western Fronts were to be used, starting with the Kalinin Front. Every few days another grouping, further to the south, would attack. The rationale was that the Stavka air and artillery assets could be moved to support each attack in turn. This was a wonderful idea on paper but, in reality, the Soviet ability to organize such an undertaking was non-existent. It was a very over-ambitious plan. The Soviet 33rd Army was the last to attack, and initially it met with great success. [Size, medium]

#1125_01_Op_Mars_Campaign: Rzhev '42 The God of War Unleashed

Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The Soviet High Command had been convinced by Marshal Zhukov's proposal that two strategic operations be carried out, almost concurrently, in the winter of 1942. Both were assigned codenames of a planet, and were scheduled to be the opening gambits of two further reaching strategic plans. Operation Uranus, which, if successful, would open Operation Saturn, became the focus of world attention and is better known as the Battle of Stalingrad. The northern action, Operation Mars, if successful, was to be the opener for Operation Jupiter. Mars is one of the least known and least publicized Soviet battle's, it is also one of the greatest defeats the Soviet Army suffered in World War II. Basically, the Mars plan was to annihilate the German 9th Army in the Rzhev Salient. To accomplish this entailed four Soviet Armies attacking simultaneously at four different locations around the salient. The two main thrusts were to be carried out by the 20th Army on the east side and the 41st Army on the west. Massed infantry was to be used to punch holes in the line, then mobile forces would race through to meet, and cut off, all German forces north of this line, these would then be destroyed. Two other thrusts, in the Luchesa valley by the 22nd Army and close to the town of Molodoi Tud by the 39th Army, were to tie up the use of mobile German operational reserves. Zhukov had overwhelming odds in his favor and was so confident that he took a Mechanized Corps, earmarked to exploit the gap at Belyi, and moved it to the Velikie Luki sector. The plans were complete, the Armies were ready, but, ominously, so were the Germans and the forces of Mother Nature. [Size, large]

#1125_01a_Op_Mars_Campaign: Rzhev '42 The God of War Unleashed (weaker defense)

Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The Soviet High Command had been convinced by Marshal Zhukov's proposal that two strategic operations be carried out, almost concurrently, in the winter of 1942. The northern action, Operation Mars, if successful, was to be the opener for Operation Jupiter. Mars is one of the least known and least publicized Soviet battle's, it is also one of the greatest defeats the Soviet Army suffered in World War II. In this depiction of Operation Mars, the defense line, particularly in the rear, is not as strong, forts are downgraded and, therefore, the German player will have his hands full holding back the Soviet tide. Supply levels are also more even and the victory levels have been adjusted for more balanced play. [Size, large]

#1125_01b_Op_Mars_Campaign: Rzhev '42 The God of War Unleashed (Alt Stronger Russians)

Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The Soviet High Command had been convinced by Marshal Zhukov's proposal that two strategic operations be carried out, almost concurrently, in the winter of 1942. Both were assigned codenames of a planet, and were scheduled to be the opening gambits of two further reaching strategic plans. Operation Uranus, which, if successful, would open Operation

Saturn, became the focus of world attention and is better known as the Battle of Stalingrad. The northern action, Operation Mars, if successful, was to be the opener for Operation Jupiter. Mars is one of the least known and least publicized Soviet battle's, it is also one of the greatest defeats the Soviet Army suffered in World War II. Basically, the Mars plan was to annihilate the German 9th Army in the Rzhev Salient. To accomplish this entailed four Soviet Armies attacking simultaneously at four different locations around the salient. The two main thrusts were to be carried out by the 20th Army on the east side and the 41st Army on the west. Massed infantry was to be used to punch holes in the line, then mobile forces would race through to meet, and cut off, all German forces north of this line, these would then be destroyed. Two other thrusts, in the Luchesa valley by the 22nd Army and close to the town of Molodoi Tud by the 39th Army, were to tie up the use of mobile German operational reserves. Zhukov had overwhelming odds in his favor and was so confident that he took a Mechanized Corps, earmarked to exploit the gap at Belyi, and moved it to the Velikie Luki sector. The plans were complete, the Armies were ready, but, ominously, so were the Germans and the forces of Mother Nature. [Size, large] Designer note - This scenario assumes that Zhukov did not remove the 2nd Mech Corp from the Belyi sector.

#1125_01x_Op_Mars_Jupiter_Campaign: Rzhev '42 The God of War Unleashed (with Jupiter)

Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The Soviet High Command had been convinced by Marshal Zhukov's proposal that two strategic operations be carried out, almost concurrently, in the winter of 1942. Both were assigned codenames of a planet, and were scheduled to be the opening gambits of two further reaching strategic plans. Operation Uranus, which, if successful, would open Operation Saturn, became the focus of world attention and is better known as the Battle of Stalingrad. The northern action, Operation Mars, if successful, was to be the opener for Operation Jupiter. Mars is one of the least known and least publicized Soviet battle's, it is also one of the greatest defeats the Soviet Army suffered in World War II. Basically, the Mars plan was to annihilate the German 9th Army in the Rzhev Salient. To accomplish this entailed four Soviet Armies attacking simultaneously at four different locations around the salient. The two main thrusts were to be carried out by the 20th Army on the east side and the 41st Army on the west. Massed infantry was to be used to punch holes in the line, then mobile forces would race through to meet, and cut off, all German forces north of this line, these would then be destroyed. Two other thrusts, in the Luchesa valley by the 22nd Army and close to the town of Molodoi Tud by the 39th Army, were to tie up the use of mobile German operational reserves. Zhukov had overwhelming odds in his favor and was so confident that he took a Mechanized Corps, earmarked to exploit the gap at Belyi, and moved it to the Velikie Luki sector. The plans were complete, the Armies were ready, but, ominously, so were the Germans and the forces of Mother Nature. [Size, large] Designer note – this is a Campaign that contains units and a release of the forces for the canceled Operation Jupiter.

#1125_02_ Sychevka: A Hole in the Line at Sychevka

Sychevka, east side of the Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The 20th Army was tasked with punching a hole through the German tactical defenses between the Vazuza and Osuga rivers. The Army's plan was to use four Rifle Divisions on its right flank to penetrate the line on the first day. Subsequently, the Rifle Divisions were to widen the gap to 15 -18kms to enable a cavalry-mechanized group to exploit through the gap. The early morning weather was heavy snow and fog, causing the senior Soviet commanders to curse as the artillery was firing its preparation for the assault blind. After one and a half hours, at 0920, the artillery prep was finished, and the order was given to advance. The masses of brown and white clad infantry rose up, many with penal battalions in front, and moved towards the west, across the ice-covered river. Initially, the defensive fire was sporadic, then, gradually, the rain of fire from the German artillery, machine guns and small arms intensified, ripping gaping holes in the ranks of advancing infantry. It was the beginning of a long, bloody day. [Size, small]

#1125_02a_ Sychevka: A Hole in the Line at Sychevka (weaker defense)

Sychevka, east side of the Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The 20th Army was tasked with punching a hole through the German tactical defenses between the Vazuza and Osuga rivers. Of course, in creating any wargame scenario, one of the larger unknowns is "just how heavy were those defense lines" In this depiction of the Sychevka sector the defense line, particularly the fortified villages in the rear, is not as strong. Many of the improved positions are downgraded from Bunker to Trench and, therefore, the German player will have his hands full holding back the Soviet tide. Supply levels are also more even and the victory levels have been adjusted for more balanced play. [Size, small]

#1125_03_ Belyi: Breaking The Line at Belyi

Belyi, west side of the Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The 41st Army's massed artillery began its preparation on time. It was snowing, making it difficult to observe the fire on the German line, but they had registered their guns with painstaking care. At 0900, as the sound of the explosions subsided, the assault infantry, with their supporting tanks, lumbered across the kilometer of cleared ground west of the Belyi-Demekhi road. Defensive fire from German strong points was light and as the advancing infantry passed through the first defensive line, they saw why, the artillery had blasted this line apart. This gave the infantry a clean break through the initial line of defense. Gen. Solomatin's 1st Mechanized Corps' units were keeping pace with the assaulting infantry, ready to assist, if required, but lethally poised ready to exploit the penetration. [Size, small]

#1125_03a_ Belyi: Breaking The Line at Belyi (weaker defense)

Belyi, west side of the Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The 41st Army's massed artillery began its preparation on time. It was snowing, making it difficult to observe

the fire on the German line, but they had registered their guns with painstaking care. At 0900, as the sound of the explosions subsided, the assault infantry, with their supporting tanks, lumbered across the kilometer of cleared ground west of the Belyi-Demekhi road. Of course, in creating any wargame scenario, one of the larger unknowns is "just how heavy were those defense lines". In this depiction of the Belyi sector, the defense line, particularly in the rear, is not as strong, forts are downgraded and, therefore, the German player will have his hands full holding back the Soviet tide. Supply levels are also more even and the victory levels have been adjusted for more balanced play. [Size, small]

#1125_04_Luchesa: A River Runs Through It

Luchesa River Valley, November 25th 1942: While the main attacks were to be carried out by 41st Army at Belyi and 20th Army near Sychevka, 22nd Army was preparing to launch an important secondary attack up the Luchesa Valley. The Army's main objective was to cut the road link between Olenino and Belyi near Gordeevo. Using elements of two Rifle Divisions, the 185th and 238th, to breach the front line, the newly formed 3rd Mech Corps, commanded by Maj Gen M.E. Katukov, was to reach that objective by the third day. Intelligence detected elements of one regiment from the German 86th Infantry Division, and one regiment from the 110th Infantry Division, defending the front on either side of the river. Somewhere to the rear lurked elements of the Gross Deutschland Infantry Division (mot). The time is 08:00 and there is heavy snow falling. The Soviet Rifle Battalions are rising from their foxholes. [Size, small]

#1125_04a_Luchesa: A River Runs Through It (weaker defense)

Luchesa River Valley, November 25th 1942: While the main attacks were to be carried out by 41st Army at Belyi and 20th Army near Sychevka, 22nd Army was preparing to launch an important secondary attack up the Luchesa Valley. The Army's main objective was to cut the road link between Olenino and Belyi near Gordeevo. In this depiction of the Luchesa River sector, the defense line, particularly in the rear is not as strong, forts are downgraded and, therefore, the German player will have his hands full holding back the Soviet tide. Supply levels are also more even and the victory levels have been adjusted for more balanced play. [Size, small]

#1125_05_Molodoi_Tud: The Way to Urdom

Molodoi Tud, November 25th 1942: Maj Gen A.I. Zygin, commander of 39th Army, was preparing to launch this secondary attack with the main objective of capturing Olenino. Although his army lacked the mobile punch of the other four attacking armies, he possessed two capable tank brigades, one mechanized brigade and three tank regiments to accomplish his mission. With three Rifle Divisions, the 135th, 158th and 373rd, ready to breach the front line, he hoped to seize his initial objectives, including Urdom, before the Germans could assemble their reserves. A single German infantry division, the 206th, defended the entire line along the Molodoi Tud River. Zygin was informed by intelligence that elements of the 14.ID (mot) was in

reserve in the Rzhev-Olenino area. Rumor had it that elements of the Gross Deutschland Infantry Division (mot) were also in the area, but were these rumors correct? The time is 10:00, the artillery preparation has abruptly stopped. It is time for the battle to be joined. [Size, medium]

#1125_05a_Molodoi_Tud: The Way to Urdom (weaker defense)

Molodoi Tud, November 25th 1942: Maj Gen A.I. Zygin, commander of 39th Army, was preparing to launch this secondary attack with the main objective of capturing Olenino. Although his army lacked the mobile punch of the other four attacking armies, he possessed two capable tank brigades, one mechanized brigade and three tank regiments to accomplish his mission. With three Rifle Divisions, the 135th, 158th and 373rd, ready to breach the front line, he hoped to seize his initial objectives, including Urdom, before the Germans could assemble their reserves. In this depiction of the Molodoi Tud sector, the defense line, particularly in the rear is not as strong, forts are downgraded and, therefore, the German player will have his hands full holding back the Soviet tide. Supply levels are also more even and the victory levels have been adjusted for more balanced play. [Size, medium]

#1128_06_Sychevka2: Once More into the Breach at Sychevka

SE side of the Rzhev Salient, November 28th, 1942: The 20th Army was tasked with punching a hole through the German tactical defenses between the Vazuza and Osuga rivers. The Army's plan was to use four Rifle Divisions on its right flank to penetrate the line on the first day. Subsequently, the Rifle Divisions were to widen the gap to 15 -18kms to enable a cavalry-mechanized group to exploit through the gap. Unfortunately the gap at best was never wider than 5 or 6 kms, totally inadequate for the task. However, the Soviets did have a penetration and so they started to feed all the follow on troops through it, which led to the usual disorganized chaos in the gap.[Size, small]

#1130_07_Molodoi_Tud2: Struggle for Urdom

Molodoi Tud, November 30th 1942: Zhukov threatened Maj Gen Zygin with the loss of his command if he could not capture Urdom immediately. Zygin released his last reserve, the 348th Rifle Division, and prepared his divisions for an attack on November 30th. By this time, most of the 14th Infantry Division (mot) had arrived to help in the German defense. General Hilpert, the commander of the XXIII Armeekorps, had to decide if he wanted to defend Urdom, and watch his forces be probably ground up in that battle, or to initially hold, and then withdraw to a new defensive line. [Size, medium]

#1201_08_Luchesa2: Ahead, And Cut That Road

Luchesa River Valley, December 1st 1942: With the failure of 20th Army to make any gains in the Sychevka sector, Zhukov impressed upon General Iushkevich that the success of Operation Mars depended on his 22nd Army's performance. Despite the

heavy casualties suffered the previous days, he ordered his entire Army to advance on the morning of December 1st. The 1st Guards Tank Brigade was to spearhead the attack across the Luchesa, toward the village of Vas'kovo, with battalions from the 1st and 3rd Mech Brigades in support. The 1319th Rifle Regiment, of the 185th Rifle Division, was to attack and capture the village of Grivo, and then advance to protect the left flank of the Army. On the right flank, two rifle regiments of the 238th Rifle Division, along with the 49th Tank Brigade and 10th Mech Brigade, were to clear German forces from south of the Luchesa and reach the Olenino-Belyi road. In reserve, and moving toward the front, were the 114th Rifle Brigade and the 39th Separate Tank Regiment, which were to help exploit any successful penetration. After a heavy artillery preparation, and in yet another heavy snowstorm, the infantry prepared to advance. [Size, small]

#1201_09_Belyi2: Too Little Too Late

Belyi Sector, Rzhev Salient, December 1st 1942: Things had been going well for the 41st Army's assault south of Belyi. General Tarasov was feeling elated after meeting with Marshall Zhukov at the Kalinin Front HQ. The 47th Mech Brigade was making progress to the north east of Belyi and would soon cut the road from Olenin, isolating the German units in the city. Meanwhile, the 1st Mech Corps was sitting well forward waiting to exploit the penetration fully, but without some infantry support, it was simply too weak to sustain any further assault. Tarasov was intent on getting rid of the thorn in his side, Belyi, and was diverting the infantry support earmarked for 47th Mech Bde and 1st Mech Corps. All the while, ominously, the Germans were steadily strengthening the lines and looking at ways to pocket the Soviet forces. [Size, medium]

#1201_09a_Belyi2: Too Little Too Late (balanced)

Belyi Sector, Rzhev Salient, December 1st 1942: Things had been going well for the 41st Army's assault south of Belyi. General Tarasov was feeling elated after meeting with Marshall Zhukov at the Kalinin Front HQ. The 47th Mech Brigade was making progress to the north east of Belyi and would soon cut the road from Olenin, isolating the German units in the city. This is a variation of the 1201_09 scenario, where some conditions, such as victory levels, and supply, were altered to create more balanced play. [Size, medium]

#1207_10_Molodoi_Tud3: From Sideshow to the Main Event

Molodoi Tud, December 7th 1942: Until now, General Zygin's 39th Army's offensive had been just a secondary attack, but Zhukov ordered him to "press on" and capture Olenino. Although lacking sufficient strength, Zygin order his weaken Rifle divisions and Tank brigades forward for one last push. This was the last hope for any success of Operation Mars. [Size, medium]

#1210_11_Operation_Jupiter: Operation Jupiter

Rzhev Salient, November 25th 1942: The Soviet High Command had been convinced by Marshal Zhukov's proposal that two strategic operations be carried out, almost concurrently, in the winter of 1942. Both were assigned codenames of a planet, and were scheduled to be the opening gambits of two further reaching strategic plans. Operation Uranus, which, if successful, would open Operation Saturn, became the focus of world attention and is better known as the Battle of Stalingrad. The northern action, Operation Mars, if successful, was to be the opener for Operation Jupiter. Mars is one of the least known and least publicized Soviet battle's, it is also one of the greatest defeats the Soviet Army suffered in World War II. Basically, the Mars plan was to annihilate the German 9th Army in the Rzhev Salient. To accomplish this entailed four Soviet Armies attacking simultaneously at four different locations around the salient. The two main thrusts were to be carried out by the 20th Army on the east side and the 41st Army on the west. Massed infantry was to be used to punch holes in the line, then mobile forces would race through to meet and cut off all German forces north of this line, these would then be destroyed. Two other thrusts, in the Luchesa valley by the 22nd Army and close to the town of Molodoi Tud by 39th Army, were to tie up the use of mobile German operational reserves. Zhukov had overwhelming odds in his favor and was so confident that he took a Mechanized Corps, earmarked to exploit the gap at Belyi, and moved it to the Velikie Luki sector. The plans were complete, the Armies were ready, but, ominously, so were the Germans and the forces of Mother Nature. [Size, large]

#1215_12_Belyi3: Solomatin's Breakout

Belyi Sector, Rzhev Salient, December 15th 1942: The 41st Army was a spent force and had been for days. Gen Tarasov was gone, relieved of his duties by Marshall Zhukov who took command of the Army himself. Gen Solomatin's 1st Mechanized Corps, inside the pocket, was getting steadily whittled away by the Germans. He planned to breakout tonight using the remnants of the 19th and 74th Rifle Bdes with the 37th Mech Bde in the 1st echelon. To the rear, the 35th and 48th Mech Bdes, with the 91st Rifle Bde, were to hold on until the breakout had succeeded, then they were to rapidly withdraw using the same route. Zhukov promised to provide an artillery preparation along the flanks of the route. Designer's Note: "What If" scenario, not all units are present. Also there are a lot of fixed units that will not release in this scenario. [Size, small]

III. Operation Mars Revisited

By David M. Glantz (copyright 2003)

Prelude to "Mars": The Conventional View

Most historians agree that, after the Red Army's first winter offensive in the great Patriotic War collapsed in late April 1942, a period of relative calm descended over the Soviet-German front during which both sides reorganized and refitted their forces and sought ways to regain the strategic initiative.[1] Stalin, who was eager to accomplish the objectives that had eluded him during the winter, preferred that the Red Army resume its general offensive in the late spring or early summer of 1942. After prolonged debate, however, other *Stavka* members convinced the dictator that Hitler was sure to renew his offensive toward Moscow in the summer to accomplish the most important goal of Operation Barbarossa. Although Stalin ultimately permitted the Red Army to begin the summer campaign with a deliberate strategic defense along the Moscow axis, he ordered it to conduct two offensive operations, the first in the Khar'kov region and the second in the Crimea, both of which were designed to weaken the expected German offensive toward Moscow and, if possible, regain the strategic initiative for the Red Army.[2]

Nor was Hitler chastened by the *Wehrmacht's* winter setbacks. Confident that his forces could still achieve many of Operation Barbarossa's original aims, Hitler and his Army High Command planned an ambitious new offensive designed to erase sad memories and fulfill the Third Reich's most ambitious strategic dreams. On 5 April 1942, Hitler issued Fuehrer Directive No. 41, which ordered the *Wehrmacht* to conduct Operation "*Blau*" [Blue], a massive offensive in the summer of 1942 designed first to capture Stalingrad and the oil-rich Caucasus region and later Leningrad. Ultimately, the *Wehrmacht* began Operation "*Blau*" on 28 June after its forces had dealt successfully with Stalin's twin offensives in southern Russia.

The first of Stalin's "spoiling" offensives began on 12 May 1942 when S. K. Timoshenko's Southwestern Front struck Army Group South's defenses north and south of Khar'kov. Predictably, this offensive faltered after only limited gains, and German panzer forces assembled to conduct Operation "*Blau*" then counterattacked and crushed Timoshenko's assault force, killing or capturing over 270,000 Red Army troops.[3] Days before, German General Erich von Manstein's Eleventh Army, which was deployed in the Crimea, added insult to Soviet injury by defeating a feeble offensive launched by the inept Crimean Front and then drove its remnants into the sea, killing or capturing another 150,000 Red Army soldiers. Although the twin Soviet offensives succeeded in delaying the launch of Operation "*Blau*", they also severely weakened Red Army forces in southern Russia and set them up for even greater defeat when "*Blau*" finally began.

On 28 June the massed forces of Army Group South's left wing (the German Fourth Panzer, Second, and Sixth Armies, and Hungarian Second Army) struck and utterly shattered the Briansk and Southwestern Fronts' defenses along a 280-mile front from the Kursk region to the Northern Donets River. While the army group's left wing thrust rapidly eastward toward Voronezh on the Don River and then swung southward along the south bank of the Don, the remainder of the army group (German First Panzer and Seventeenth Armies and Rumanian Third and Fourth Armies) joined the offensive on 7 July, pushing eastward across a 170-mile front and then wheeling south across the open steppes toward Rostov. Within two weeks, the *Wehrmacht's* offensive completed demolishing the Red Army's entire defense in southern Russia, while the *Stavka* tried frantically to repair the damage and slow the German juggernaut.

A week after Operation "*Blau*" began, Stalin reluctantly accepted the reality that the German summer offensive was actually taking place in southern Russia and altered his strategy accordingly by ordering his stricken forces to withdraw eastward. At the same time, the *Stavka* began raising 10 fresh reserve armies and deployed the first of these armies to slow and contain the German advance. All the while, it began planning future counterstrokes and counteroffensives at places and times of its own choosing.

Throughout July and August 1942, Army Group South, now reorganized into Army Groups "A" and "B" so that Axis forces could be controlled more effectively in so vast a theater, advanced eastward towards the "great bend" in the Don River and Stalingrad and through Rostov into the Caucasus region. After Army Group "B's" Second Army captured Voronezh on 6 July and dug in along the Don, its Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies swung southeastward through Millerovo toward Kalach on the Don, encircling the bulk of three Soviet armies in the process (the 9th, 28th, and 38th). At the same time, Army Group "A's" First Panzer and Seventeenth Armies cleared Soviet troops from the Voroshilovgrad region and then wheeled southward toward Rostov on the Don without encountering heavy resistance and without destroying major Soviet troop concentrations. By 24 July Army Group "B's" spearheads were approaching Kalach on the Don, less than 50 miles west of Stalingrad, and Army Group "A's" forces captured Rostov and were preparing to cross the Don River into the Caucasus region.

At this juncture, however, an excessively optimistic Hitler sharply altered his offensive plan. Instead of attacking toward Stalingrad with Army Group "B's" Sixth and Fourth Panzer Armies, he shifted the latter's advance axis southward toward the Don River east of Rostov to cut off Soviet forces before they crossed the river. This left the Sixth Army with the arduous task of forcing the Don and advancing on Stalingrad alone. Deprived of its support, the Sixth Army's advance slowed significantly in late July and early August against determined Soviet resistance and incessant counterattacks.

So slow was Sixth Army's progress that, in mid-August, Hitler once again altered his plan by ordering Fourth Panzer Army to reverse course and advance on Stalingrad from the southwest. Subsequently, the two German armies encountered significantly increased Soviet resistance and heavy fighting that severely sapped their strength as they fought their way into Stalingrad's suburbs. On 23 August the Sixth Army's XIV Panzer Corps finally reached the Volga River in a narrow corridor north of the city. Three days later Fourth Panzer Army's forces reached within artillery range of the Volga south of Stalingrad, marking the beginning of two months of desperate and intense fighting for possession of Stalingrad proper, during which German forces fought to the point of utter exhaustion against fanatical Red Army resistance.

Meanwhile, Army Group "A" advanced deep into the Caucasus region, leaving only three Allied armies (Rumanian Third and Fourth and Italian Eighth) in Army Group "B's" reserve. The heavy fighting in Stalingrad, during which both Sixth and Fourth Panzer Armies became decisively engaged, forced Army Group "B" to commit the three Allied armies into frontline positions north and south of Stalingrad in late August and September.

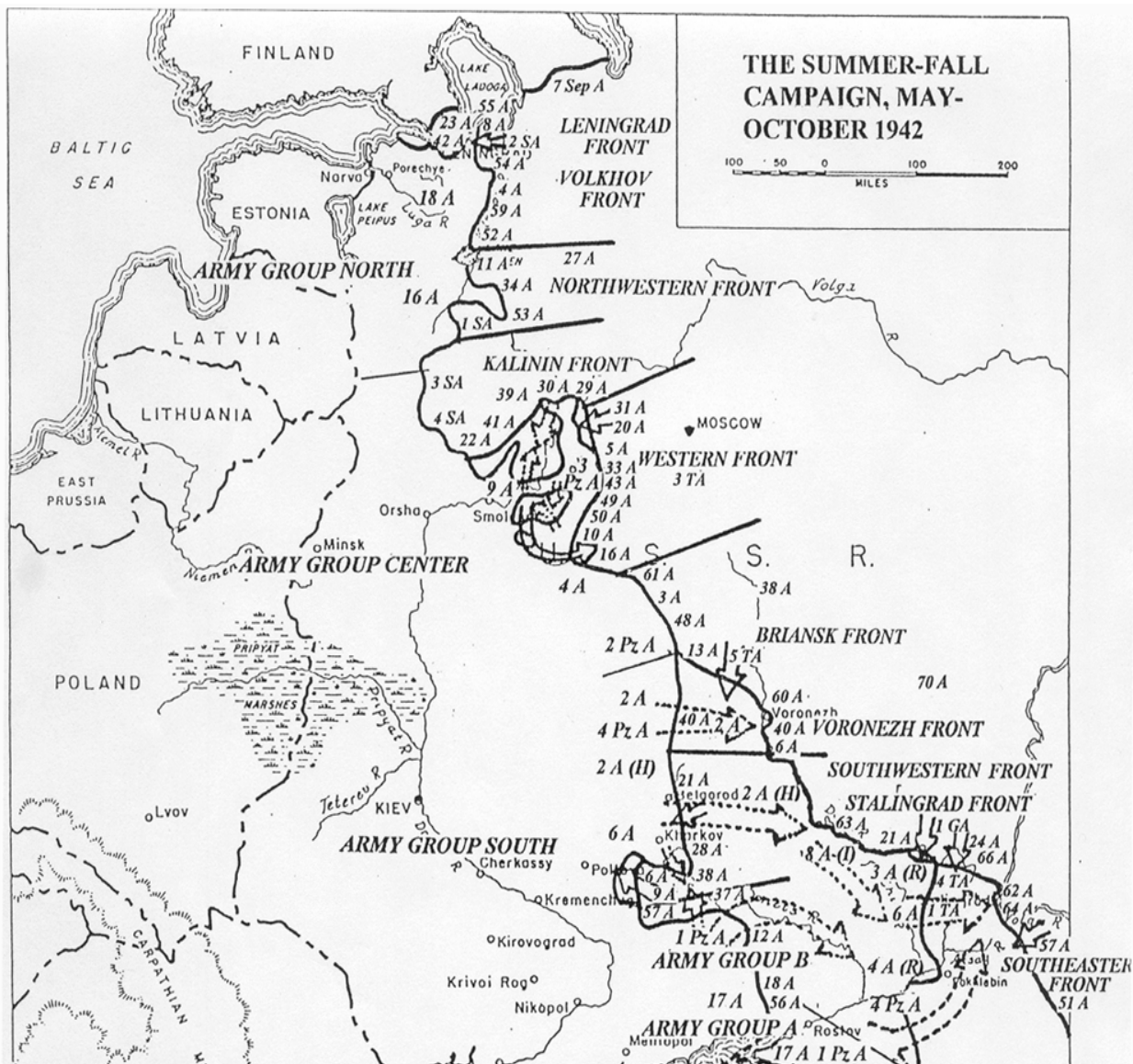
Throughout the German advance to Stalingrad, Stalin and the *Stavka* ordered the Red Army to conduct a deliberate withdrawal to save their defending forces, wear down the advancing Germans, and buy time necessary to assemble fresh strategic reserves with which to mount a new counteroffensive. The Briansk, Southwestern, and Southern Fronts withdrew to new defenses along the Don River from Voronezh to Stalingrad, and the Southern Front withdrew through Rostov to the northern Caucasus region, where it became the North Caucasus Front with the mission of halting German forces before they penetrated the Caucasus Mountain barrier and reached the rich Caucasian oilfields. Soon the *Stavka* formed the Voronezh, Stalingrad, and Southeastern Fronts, ordering the first to defend the Voronezh sector and other two to defend the approaches to Stalingrad. During the fierce fighting for Stalingrad, Stalin committed just enough forces to combat in the city's rubble to keep the conflagration raging and distract the Germans while the *Stavka* and General Staff prepared for the inevitable counteroffensive.

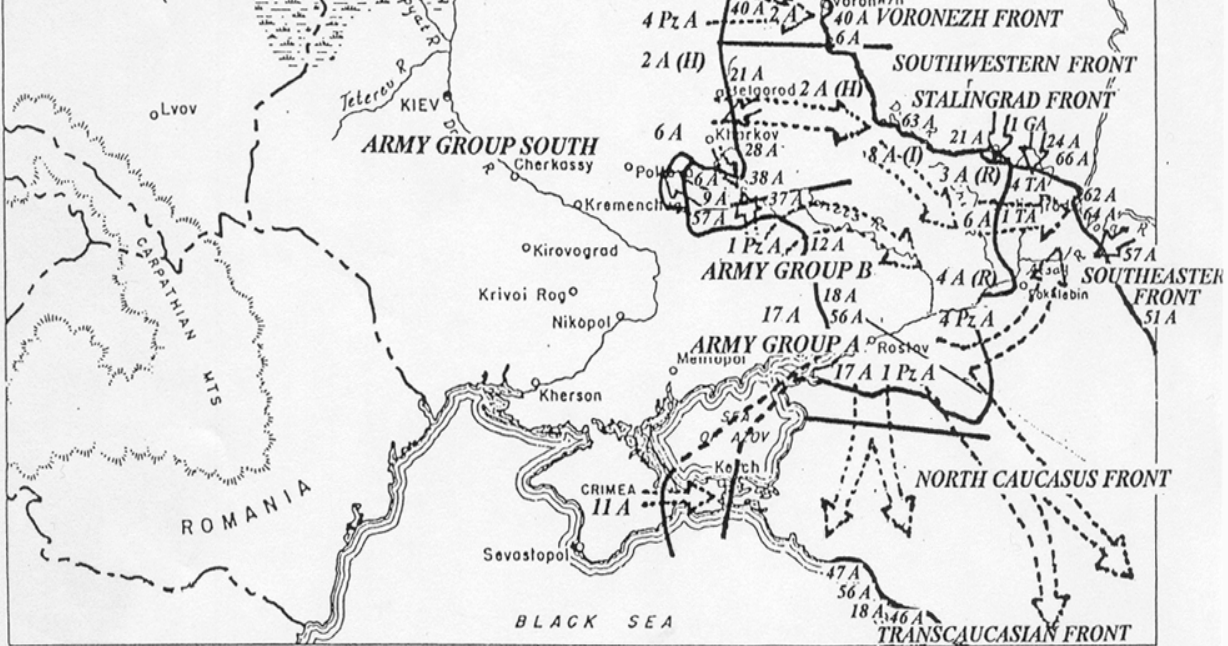
While the Red Army was conducting its hasty withdrawal eastward toward the Don and Stalingrad, its defending *fronts* mounted limited counterattacks designed to wear the advancing Germans down and "shape" the German strategic penetration. The most noteworthy of these actions took place near Voronezh in early July, along the Don River near Kalach in late July, and, thereafter, along the immediate approaches to and within Stalingrad. As had been the case the year before at Moscow, Stalin committed the first of his new 10 reserve armies in July and August to halt the German drive and retained control over the remainder for use in his future counteroffensive.

In addition, while Operation "Blau" was developing in the south, during July, August, and September, the *Stavka* ordered its forces in the Leningrad region (Siniavino) and west of Moscow (Rzhev) to conduct limited-objective offensives to pin down German forces and prevent the OKH from dispatching any reinforcements to the south.

Thus, according to this construct, the summer-fall campaign consisted of the following major military operations: (see Map-1: some Maps below may be wider than your HLP window - either resize your window or use the scroll bar at the bottom to view the right side of the maps)

- ❑ **The Soviet Khar'kov Offensive (12-29 May 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Crimean Debacle (8-19 May 1942)**
- ❑ **German Operation "Blau": The Advance to Stalingrad and the Caucasus (28 June-3 September 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Siniavino Offensive (19 August-10 October 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Rzhev-Sychevka Offensive (30 July-23 August 1942)**
- ❑ **The Battle of Stalingrad (3 September-18 November 1942)**





Map 1 - The Summer-Fall Campaign, May-October 1942

PRELUDE: THE FORGOTTEN WAR

Traditional descriptions of military operations during the summer and fall campaign of 1942 are incomplete in several respects. First, the Red Army was far more offensive-minded than earlier throughout the campaign both before and after the Germans launched Operation "Blau". Second, the Red Army that the *Stavka* fielded in the spring and summer of 1942 was far more capable than its threadbare predecessor of the previous year. By this time the Red Army had achieved notable victories of its own and was in the midst of a major reorganization and reconstruction program designed to accord it the capability of successfully engaging the *Wehrmacht's* forces both in the summer and the winter. Having bested the *Wehrmacht* around Moscow and in several other regions only six months before, in 1942 Stalin and his *Stavka* were reluctant to abandon the field to the Germans and then wait months for the proper moment to launch a major counteroffensive. For this reason, Stalin began the campaign with major offensives of his own. Even after the serious defeats at Khar'kov and in the Crimea, when the *Wehrmacht* began Operation "Blau", Stalin responded actively by ordering his operating *fronts* to conduct major counterstrokes and lesser attacks to resist, weaken, and, if possible, contain the German advance. Consequently, the fighting on the road to Stalingrad and elsewhere along the front during the summer and early fall was far more severe than history has recorded.

As he had during the summer of 1941, throughout July and August 1942, Stalin

ordered the Red Army to launch numerous and often massive counterattacks and counterstrokes against the advancing German, both in southern Russia and along other important strategic axes. However, since most of these operations failed, they were literally subsumed by the Germans' heady advance toward Stalingrad and the Caucasus and have remained forgotten. These largely "forgotten" Red Army offensive operations included three major counterstrokes in the Voronezh region, one in concert with a counterstroke by two new Soviet tank armies (the 1st and 4th) west of Stalingrad, and several large-scale offensives near Siniavino, Demiansk, Rzhev, Zhizdra, and Bolkhov in the northwestern and central sectors of the front. Russian accounts, however, have addressed only two of these operations, the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts' Siniavino offensive in August and September 1942 against Army Group North and the Western and Kalinin Front's Rzhev-Sychevka offensive against Army Group Center's defenses in the Rzhev salient during July and August 1942.

The list of forgotten or partially neglected operations during the summer-fall campaign of 1942 includes the following major operations:

- ❑ **German Destruction of Soviet 2nd Shock Army at Miasnyi Bor (13 May-10 July 1942)**
- ❑ **German Reduction of Encircled Group Belov (Operation Hannover) (24 May-21 June 1942)**
- ❑ **German Destruction of Soviet 39th Army southwest of Rzhev (2-27 July 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Defense of the Donbas Region (7-24 July 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Voronezh-Don Counteroffensive (4-26 July 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Zhizdra-Bolkhov Counterstroke (5-14 July 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Demiansk Offensive (17-24 July 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Rzhev-Sychevka Offensive (30 July- 23 August 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Siniavino Offensive (19 August-15 October 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Demiansk Offensive (10-21 August 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Bolkhov Offensive (23-29 August 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Voronezh Counterstroke (12-15 August 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Voronezh Counterstroke 15-28 September 1942)**
- ❑ **The Soviet Demiansk Offensives (15-16 September 1942)**

Existing Russian accounts of the Red Army's fighting withdrawal from the Donbas region remain inadequate, since, contrary to Russian assertions, German forces encircled and decimated the bulk of five of the withdrawing Soviet armies (the 28th, 38th, 57th, 9th, and 24th).[4] In addition, although it receives brief mention in the best Soviet histories, the Red Army's defense along the Stalingrad axis, particularly the counterstrokes by the 1st and 4th Tank Armies, requires more detailed analysis, especially so since these tank armies attacked in apparent close coordination with the 5th Tank Army's July counterstroke near Voronezh. Finally, the series of almost set-piece penetration operations by the Sixth Army in its advance from the Don to the Volga Rivers also require more detailed analysis.

The largest yet most historically obscure Red Army counterstrokes occurred in the Voronezh region in July, August, and September 1942.[5] While Russian sources have briefly described the ill-fated offensive by the Briansk Front's new 5th Tank Army west of Voronezh in early July, these sources understate the strength, duration, and ambitious intent of the offensive. Ultimately, the offensive lasted several weeks and involved as many as seven tank corps equipped with up to 1,500 tanks. Furthermore, the *Stavka* coordinated the 5th Tank Army's assault west of Voronezh in July with the counterstrokes by two other tank armies (the 1st and 4th) along the approaches to the Don River west of Stalingrad.

The three offensives the Red Army conducted in the Rzhev, Zhizdra, and Bolkhov regions, which were timed to coincide with operations at Voronezh and perhaps also at Demiansk and near Stalingrad, may have been designed to accomplish more than simply tie down German reserves.[6] For example, the August offensive at Bolkhov included a massive assault by the new 3rd Tank Army and several separate tank corps, while the August-September offensive near Rzhev, which was orchestrated by Zhukov and achieved moderate success, was a virtual dress rehearsal for the even larger counteroffensive in the same region later in the year (Operation "Mars").

While the Soviet offensive at Siniavino east of Leningrad in August and September 1942 failed disastrously, it did prevent German forces from capturing Leningrad and tied down the German Eleventh Army, which could have been put to better use elsewhere on the Soviet-German Front.[7] As a result, the 2nd Shock Army, which the Germans had destroyed at Miasnyi Bor in June and July, was destroyed once again in September near Siniavino.

The summer campaign of 1942 was of momentous import for the Red Army in general and for the *Stavka* in particular. In April and May 1942, Stalin and his *Stavka* optimistically concluded that they could capitalize on the Red Army's winter victories by conducting offensives that would preempt renewed German offensive operations. The *Stavka*'s hopes were dashed, however, when anticipated success quickly turned into the twin debacles at Khar'kov and in the Crimea. These disasters were clearly of the *Stavka*'s own making, for despite almost a full year of combat experiences, it failed to comprehend either its own capabilities or those of the *Wehrmacht*.

Even after these disasters occurred, the *Stavka* still earnestly believed that Red Army forces could either blunt or repel the German advance in Operation "*Blau*". The heavy fighting around Voronezh, Zhizdra, and Bolkhov underscored this belief. After these counterstrokes failed, the *Stavka* repeatedly insisted the Red Army launch fresh coordinated counterstrokes along the front, based on the assumption that the German Command must have reduced its strength elsewhere along the front in order to assemble so massive a force in southern Russia. Nor did

the Red Army's immense superiority in forces in most of these offensive operations indicate that the *Stavka* expected anything less than victory. Only in late August did Stalin completely understand the stark reality that the Red Army would emerge victorious only after it was capable of organizing massive strategic counteroffensives in the most critical sectors of the Soviet-German front.

Quite naturally, the nature and consequences of the summer campaign have impelled historians to look only at those operations that were most dramatic, specifically, the Red Army's spectacular defeats in May 1942, the equally spectacular (and, in retrospect, impulsive and rash) *Wehrmacht* drive to Stalingrad and into the Caucasus, and the fierce and relentless fighting in Stalingrad proper. All else seemed simply peripheral. But as is so often the case, the seemingly peripheral was indeed significant. In short, the thousands of cuts that these and associated forgotten operations inflicted on the *Wehrmacht* literally "set the German Army up" for the devastating blow it would receive at Stalingrad later in the year.

The twin Soviet disasters in May 1942 at Khar'kov and in the Crimea had a sobering effect on Stalin and the *Stavka* alike. In essence, these sharp setbacks clearly indicated that the Red Army's education was not yet complete and that additional innovation was required. If the spring disasters were not convincing enough, then the German's Operation "*Blau*" that followed certainly was. As the *Wehrmacht* once again resumed the offensive in late June 1942 and Soviet defenses quickly collapsed under the hammer blows of advancing German armored spearheads, Stalin's *Stavka* demonstrated its newfound skill by withdrawing the bulk of its forces out of harm's way. As German forces advanced to the Don River at Voronezh and then sped, in succession, into the Stalingrad and Caucasus regions, the Soviet learning process continued. The *Stavka* tested new types of combat formations including fledgling tank armies and mechanized corps and, as the fighting progressed, honed their forces' operational and tactical skills, all the while "Mars"ing reserves necessary to conduct a new wave of fall and winter counterstrokes and counteroffensives.

When these counteroffensives finally materialized in November 1942, the Red Army demonstrated to the world and the *Wehrmacht* that the Red Army had indeed become better educated in the conduct of modern mobile war. Nevertheless, the pain the Red Army endured in 1942 and even during the counteroffensives at year's end also clearly indicated that the education was far from over. Innovation would have to continue before ultimate victory could be achieved.

Stavka Planning For A Transition To The Offensive

As the *Stavka* considered strategic objectives for its fall counteroffensive and winter campaign, its attention quite naturally gravitated to the Rzhev salient, whose

confines were defended by the Ninth Army of the Red Army's old nemesis, German Army Group Center. The salient, whose eastern extremity extended to within only 150 kilometers of Moscow, offered those who occupied it direct access to Moscow via the Viaz'ma, Gzhatsk, and Moscow highway. Thus, while the salient existed it posed a constant menacing threat to the Soviet capital. For that reason, since late 1941 the *Stavka* has been compelled to organize and man the Moscow Defensive Region, which at times numbered as many as 800,000 troops. Also for that reason, ever since the winter of 1941-1942, the *Stavka* had placed the Rzhev salient at the head of its list of priority strategic objectives.

By fall 1942 the city and environs of Rzhev had already been associated with numerous Red Army military operations, some defensive and others offensive, most of which turned out to be Red Army defeats. German forces had first captured Rzhev on 14 October 1941 during the Ninth Army's drive toward the city of Kalinin. Thereafter, the Red Army attempted to recapture the city during its Kalinin offensive operation (5 December 1941 - 7 January 1942). However, this offensive expired along the banks of the Volga River without seizing the city. During the first stage of the Soviet Moscow counteroffensive, Hitler demanded his forces hold on to the city and the surrounding region as a virtual bridgehead for a future assault on Moscow. Accordingly, German forces dug in around Rzhev, with the city forming a veritable bastion on the river and a key German bridgehead of the Volga River's north bank.

Rzhev was also a key Soviet objective during the second stage of the Red Army's Moscow counteroffensive. During the Rzhev-Viaz'ma offensive operation (8 January-20 April 1942), the Kalinin Front's 29th, 39th, and, later, 30th Army fought hard for possession of the city but to no avail. The Rzhev salient formed as a result of the heavy winter fighting, and, thereafter, the Germans consolidated their hold on it and built formidable fortifications to defend it. During July 1942 the German Ninth Army consolidated its hold on the salient by eliminating Red Army forces lodged within it (the 39th Army).

The Rzhev salient once again became a key Red Army objective when, on Zhukov's recommendation, the *Stavka* conducted major operations to thwart German strategic plans in the summer of 1942. In this instance, together with the Kalinin Front, Zhukov's Western Front conducted the massive Rzhev-Sychevka (Pogoreloe-Gorodishche) offensive operation and the associated Gzhatsk-Viaz'ma offensive operation against the salient in July and August 1942. After these operations failed to achieve their full objectives, Zhukov tellingly noted, **"With one or two more armies at our disposal, we could have combined with the Kalinin Front...and defeated the enemy not only in the Rzhev area but the entire Rzhev-Viaz'ma German force and substantially improved the operational situation in the whole Western strategic direction. Unfortunately, this real opportunity was missed by the Supreme Command."** (Emphasis added) [8] Within months, the *Stavka* would heed Zhukov's advice and give him the additional

forces he deemed essential to eradicate the Rzhev salient once and for all.

In September 1942, when the *Stavka* began planning for its forthcoming strategic counteroffensive, Zhukov argued strenuously that it focus its attention on strategic offensive operations along both the western (Moscow) and southwestern (Stalingrad) axis. Stalin agreed and, during October, the *Stavka* planned two offensive operations along the western axis to cripple German Army Group Center and, at the same time, apply unrelenting pressure on German Army Group North. The first offensive, code-named Operation "Mars," was to involve the Kalinin, Northwestern, and Western Fronts, which were to attack in mid-October 1942 to defeat Wehrmacht forces in the Rzhev and Novo-Sokol'niki [Velikie Luki] regions.[9] Elements of the Northwestern Front were to conduct the second offensive against Wehrmacht forces defending the Demiansk salient.

The Kalinin And Western Fronts' Rzhev-Sychevka Offensive (Operation "Mars")(25 November-16 December 1942)

Operation "Mars" serves as the most glaring instance in which the historiography of the German-Soviet War has failed us.[10] Originally planned for 12 October 1942 but postponed until 25 November, Operation "Mars" was the northern counterpart to Operation "Uranus", the Red Army's Stalingrad counteroffensive. The twin strategic operations, "Mars" and "Uranus", represented an attempt by Stalin and his *Stavka* to regain the strategic initiative on the Eastern Front and set the Red Army on the path to total victory. Planned and directed by Zhukov, conducted by a host of famous Red Army generals, and appropriately named for the God of War, along with Operation "Uranus", Operation "Mars" formed the centerpiece of the *Stavka*'s strategic efforts in the fall of 1942. Even though the immense scale and ambitious objectives of Operation "Mars" matched those of Operation "Uranus," in its fickleness, history lionized Operation "Uranus" because it succeeded, while it forgot Operation "Mars" because it failed.

In late September 1942, the *Stavka* formulated a strategic plan to reverse the spectacular gains the *Wehrmacht* accomplished during the summer and fall of 1942 and to restore the strategic initiative to the Red Army.[11] Once formulated, these plans reflected the bitter experiences of the prior 18 months of war and the military realities the Red Army confronted.

Zhukov played a significant role in the *Stavka* planning.[12] Based upon his own strategic analysis and personal combat experiences in 1941 and 1942, Zhukov believed that the Red Army could best achieve strategic victory by smashing German Army Group Center, which posed the most serious threat to Moscow.[13] He was also convinced that the *Stavka* had enough strategic reserves to conduct two major, mutually supporting, strategic counteroffensives, the first against German Army Group Center lodged in the Rzhev salient and the second against German Army

Group "B," whose forces were already overextended at Stalingrad. The Red Army's Kalinin and Western Fronts, supported by the Moscow Defense Zone, fielded almost 1,900,000 men with over 24,000 guns and mortars, 3,300 tanks, and 1,100 aircraft deployed along the vital western axis.[14] At the same time, the Red Army's 3 *fronts* operating in the Stalingrad region fielded over 1 million men with about 15,000 guns and mortars, 1,400 tanks, and over 900 aircraft.[15] Although the sizeable number of Rumanian, Italian, and Hungarian troops in German Army Group "B" improved Soviet chances for success in that sector, Zhukov thought it wiser and more prudent to defeat the large German force in the Rzhev salient, thereby removing, once and for all, the threat to Moscow.

On 26 September Stalin approved Zhukov's recommendations to conduct major strategic counteroffensives both at Rzhev and Stalingrad, the former under Zhukov's control and the latter directed by A. M. Vasilevsky, the chief of the General Staff.[16] Only one day before, on 25 September, at the *Stavka's* direction, an important Allied delegation made a surprise visit to the Rzhev sector, vividly underscoring the high hopes the *Stavka* entertained for success in the forthcoming operation. Although the delegation, which was led by Wendell Wilkie, the Republican Party Presidential candidate in the 1940 election, had no idea whatsoever why it had been invited to visit a sector they considered relatively unimportant, they were warmly entertained at his headquarters and in the field by Lieutenant General Leliushenko, the commander of the Western Front's 30th Army. In his report, the US military Attaché, Colonel Joseph Michela commented:

During the meal, Mr. Wilkie asked Lt. General Yelushenko how wide a front he was defending. The answer was that he was attacking, not defending. The General added that he was covering a 65 kilometer front and that he had 12 divisions under his command.[17]

Although circumstantial in nature, this visit to the front by so prestigious a visitor as Wilkie, which was a rare occurrence during this period of the war, was a likely indicator that the Red Army planned another major offensive in the same region and, furthermore, expected the new offensive to succeed. Interestingly enough, when the planned offensive did not succeed, the next US delegation permitted to visit the front did so in mid-December, when it visited General Vatutin's headquarters northwest of Stalingrad. At that time, the delegation visited "Lt Gen Vatutin's group of five armies at the point of break through of northern pincer of Stalingrad [sic] counter offensive on November one nine to twenty four." [18] In his report, which singled out Vatutin's role in the victory, the attaché wrote, "Vatutine since promoted to Col Gen., Zhukov [is] on the Central front and Timoshenko [is] said to be on the Leningrad front." In a subsequent report written on 28 December, which concerned the Middle Don operation, the attaché correctly noted, "Colonel General Vatutin, CO [commander] SW front has been cited [for the victory] but most of the credit is being given to Lieutenant Generals such as Badinov CO of Second Guard Tank Corps who is claimed responsible for present break through in middle

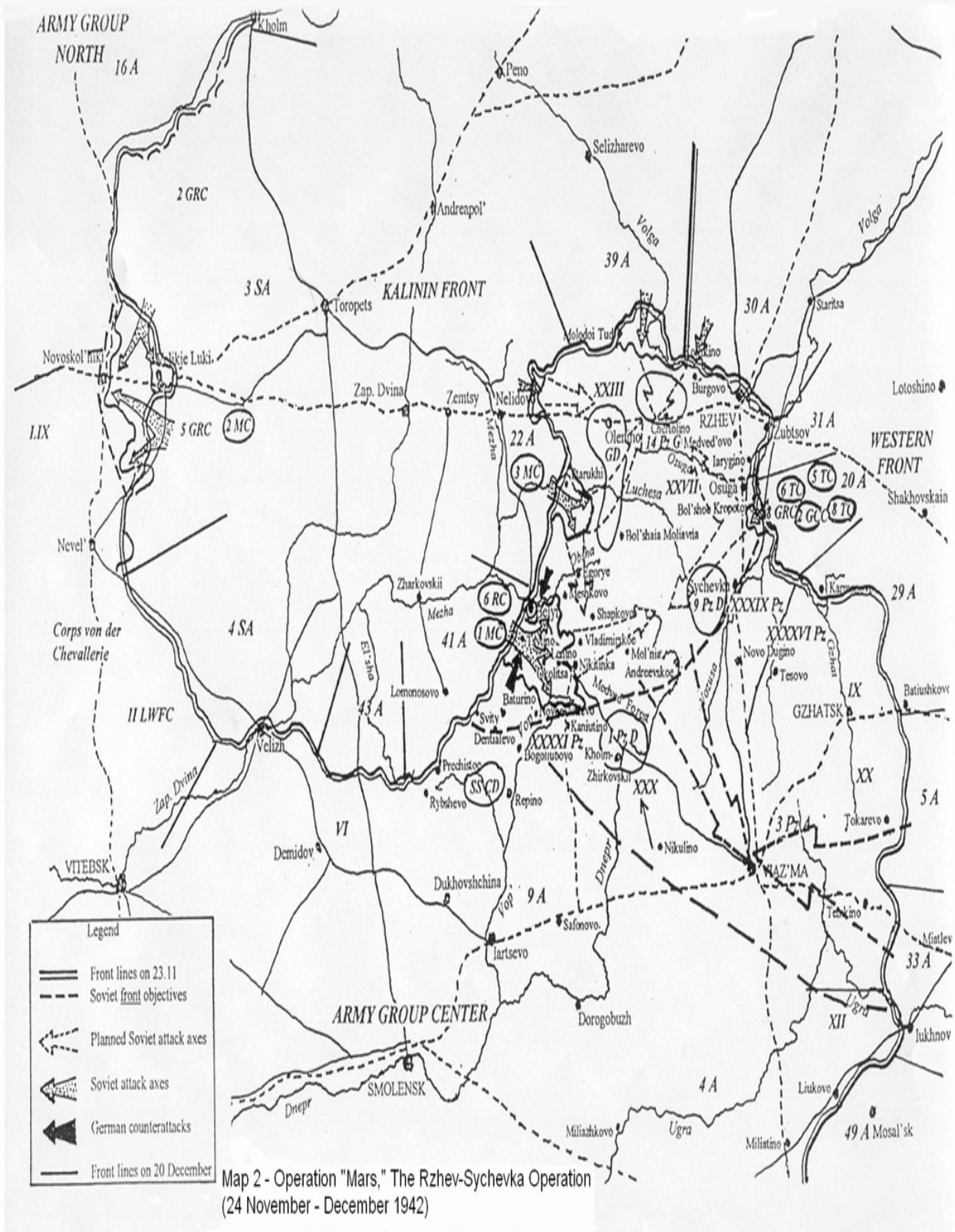
Don area."

The Red Army General Staff then planned two offensives, each of which was to be conducted in two stages and each of which was designated by the code name of a planet. Zhukov's Operation "Mars", which was originally planned to begin on 12 October, was to encircle and destroy German Ninth Army in the Rzhev-Sychevka salient. Subsequently, the powerful 5th and 33rd Armies of General I. S. Konev's Western Front, supported by the 3rd Guards Tank Army, were to attack westward along the Viaz'ma axis in conjunction with the victorious "Mars" force to destroy German Army Group Center's forces east of Smolensk.[19] In addition, the 43rd Army of General M. A. Purkaev's Kalinin Front, supported by the 2nd Mechanized Corps, was to advance southward toward Dukhovshchina and Smolensk in cooperation with the 5th and 33rd Armies (see attached documents).

Vasilevsky's Operation "Uranus", which was tentatively planned to begin in early November, was to destroy German Sixth Army in the Stalingrad region.[20] During the second stage of his offensive, which was code-named Operation "Saturn," Vasilevsky's forces were to capture Rostov, destroy German Army Group "B," and isolate German Army Group "A" in the Caucasus region.[21]

The Western and Kalinin Fronts received the *Stavka* directive for Operation "Mars" on 28-29 September, and participating armies received their orders on 1 October.[22] An army after-action report on the operation later described the order as follows:

On 1 October 1942, the commander of the 20th Army received directive No. 0289/OP of the Western Front commander, which assigned the Western Front the mission of destroying the enemy Sychevka-Rzhev grouping with the 29th, 30th, 31st, and 20th Armies in cooperation with Kalinin Front units. (see Map-2)



In accordance with this directive, the 20th Army received the mission to

penetrate the enemy defense in the Vasil'ki-Pechora sector, and, while developing the attack on Sychevka with the 8th Guards Rifle Corps and mobile group, to reach the line of the Rzhev-Sychevka railroad and capture Sychevka by the end of the first day of the offensive.

Subsequently, while firmly covering along the Vazuza River in the Podoson'e, Sychevka, and Marino region and from the west and southwest along the Viazovka, Iuriatino, and Podoson'e line, attack to the northwest through Karpovo, Osuiskoe, and Afonasovo with the main forces to destroy the enemy's Rzhev grouping in cooperation with the 31st Army.[23]

The Western Front's order to its subordinate armies read:

Western Front Directive No. 0289/OP to the commanders of the 20th, 29th, and 31st Armies and Subordinate Formations Concerning the Destruction of the Enemy's Sychevka-Rzhev Grouping
0240 hours 1 October 1942

Copy to the Chief of the Red Army General Staff

For destruction of the enemy Sychevka-Rzhev grouping, I order:

1. The commander of the 31st [army] grouping, consisting of the 88th, 239th, 336th, and 20th Guards Rifle Divisions, the 32nd and 145th Tank Brigades, seven RVGK artillery regiments, and six multiple rocket launcher battalions (including four M-30 battalions), will launch an attack along the Osuga, Artemovo, and Ligastaevo axis from the *front* sector from Staroselovo to Kriukovo (incl.). The immediate mission is to penetrate the enemy front, capture the railroad in the KAZ (4 kilometers north of Osuga), Osuga Station, and Osuga River sector with the [army's] main force, and the subsequent mission is to attack westward from the railroad in the direction of Rzhev with the main grouping and, together with 29th, 30th, and 20th Armies, destroy the enemy's Rzhev grouping.

2. The commander of the 20th [army] grouping, consisting of the 251st, 331st, 415th, 26th Guards, 42nd Guards, 247th and 379th Rifle Divisions, the 148th and 150th Tank Brigades, the 11th, 17th, 25th, 31st, 93rd, 255th, 240th, 18th and 80th Tank Brigades, 18 RVGK artillery regiments, and 16 multiple rocket launcher battalions (including 10 M-30 battalions), will attack in the direction of Sychevka from the *front* sector from Vasil'ki to Pechora. The immediate mission is to penetrate the enemy's front and, capture Sychevka and the railroad line in the Osuga River and Sychevka sector with [army's]

main forces, and the subsequent mission is to protect reliably the Podson'e, Sychevka, and Marinino sector and along the Vazuza from the west and southwest....

Attack toward the north and northwest from the Iakovka, Iuratio, and Podson'e line through Karpovo, Osuiskoe, and Afonaso with a main force of no fewer than four reinforced rifle divisions and, together with 30th and 31st Army's and Kalinin Front' units, destroy the enemy Rzhev grouping.

3. The boundary line between the 31st and 20th Armies is to Kortnevo, as before, along the Osuga River to Kasatino and further to Kul'nevo and Afonaso. All points are inclusive for the 20th Army.

4. The armies are to be ready to attack on 12 October.

5. When the enemy front has been penetrated, a mobile group consisting of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps and the 6th Tank Corps and under the command of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps commander, will be committed along the southern bank of the Osuga River at the junction of the armies with the mission of reaching the Nashchekino, Tatarinka, Pribytki, and Aleksandrovka region, after which one cavalry division will be sent to occupy Andreevskoe and establish communications with the Kalinin Front's units attacking from the Belyi region.

6. Army commanders will submit their plans for Operation ""Mars"" by 5 October.

Konev Bulganin Sokolovsky [24]

The 43rd Army, which was to participate in the offensive's second stage, also received its offensive instructions on 1 October, which, in part, read:

1. The army's mission is to destroy the opposing enemy units and reach the Demidov (incl.), Kholm, and Dukhovshchina (incl.) front and to sever enemy communications routes to Smolensk by an attack with a mechanized corps in the general direction of Smolensk, where it will dig in with its main forces. Be prepared to begin the operation on 12 October 1942.[25]

However, poor weather conditions and the un-preparedness on the part of some of the forces earmarked to participate in the assault compelled the *Stavka* to postpone the offensive.[26] A revised *Stavka* directive, dispatched to participating *fronts* on 10 October, required the Western Front's right wing and Kalinin Front's left wing "to encircle the enemy Rzhev Grouping, capture Rzhev, and free the rail road

line from Moscow to Velikie Luki." [27] Specifically, supported by the 29th Army, the 20th and 31st Armies of Konev's Western Front were to deliver the *front's* main attack along the Osuga and Vazuza Rivers northeast of Sychevka. After penetrating German defenses, a cavalry-mechanized group made up of the 6th Tank and 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps was to capture Sychevka, outflank the Germans' Rzhev defenses from the south, and link up with the 41st Army's forces attacking eastward from the Belyi region. Thereafter, the 20th and 31st Armies' forces were to mop up German forces in the salient in conjunction with supporting armies, while the remainder of the force prepared to attack southward toward Viaz'ma spearheaded by the 5th and 6th Tank Corps.

The Western Front's cavalry-mechanized (mobile) group was to play a key role in the operation. Its amended order read:

Top secret

Special importance

To the commanders of the 2nd Guards Cavalry and 6th Tank Corps.

0230 hours 11 October 1942

Copy to the 31st and 20th Army commanders

Copy to the Chief of the Red Army General Staff

As an addendum to *front* Directive No. 0289, of 1.10.42, I order:

1. When the 31st and 20th Armies have penetrated the enemy's front, a mobile group consisting of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps, 6th Tank Corps, and 1st Motorcycle Brigade and under the command of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps commander, will enter the penetration on the 20th Army's right with the immediate mission of swiftly reaching the Nashchekino, Tatarinka, Pribytko, and Aleksandrovka region.

The subsequent mission of the mobile group is [as follows]:

2nd Guards Cavalry Corps -- by means of a decisive blow, one cavalry division will secure the Andreevsko region (30 kilometers northwest of Sychevka), and from there will establish communications with the Kalinin Front's forces, which will operate from the Belyi and Kholm-Zhirkovskii region, and will prevent the approach of enemy reserves to Sychevka from the southwest. While dispatching strong reconnaissance detachments toward Shizderevo to provide cover from the west, the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps' main forces will continue resolute operations along the northern axis to Chertolino in the rear of the enemy Rzhev grouping and will conduct reconnaissance in the direction of Olenino to establish communications and cooperate with the Kalinin Front's

units, which will advance on Olenino.

6th Tank Corps with 1st Motorcycle Brigade -- will deliver a blow from the designated region in the direction of Viazovka, Barsuki, and Kholodnia with the mission of attacking from the southwest in cooperation with the 20th Army, capturing Sychevka, and blocking the approach of enemy reserves toward Sychevka from the south.

2. A day before the penetration, the mobile group will occupy jumping-off positions in the Karganovo, Krasnovo, Il'inskoe, Rakovo, and Rovnoe region for commitment into the penetration, and [it] will reach the Vazuza River the night before the attack.

3. To the commanders of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps, 6th Tank Corps, and 1st Motorcycle Brigade—Work out procedures for the commitment of the mobile group into the penetration and for artillery support with the commander of 20th Army in timely fashion.

4. To the commanders of the 31st and 20th Armies -- the *front's* chief of artillery will provide artillery support for the commitment of the mobile group into the penetration.

5. To the commander of the 1st Air Army -- Fighter aviation will provide protection to the mobile group while it is in its jumping-off position and during the period when the mobile group is being committed into and operating in the penetration, and assault aviation will assist the mobile group in accomplishing its missions.

6. To the commander of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps -- By 14 October plan measures for the commitment of the mobile group into the penetration and for its operations in the depths in accordance with the actual directive missions assigned by me at the *front* auxiliary command post (in the forest 0.5 kilometers southeast of Ryl'tsevo) to the [respective] groupings.

Confirm receipt.

Konev

Bulganin

Sokolovsky [28]

Purkaev's Kalinin Front was to conduct its main attack south of Belyi with its 41st Army and along the Luchesa River north of Belyi with its 22nd Army. The 39th Army, deployed at the northern extremity of the Rzhev salient, was to launch a secondary assault southward across the Molodoi Tud River toward Olenino.[29] The Siberian 6th Volunteer Rifle Corps was to spearhead the 41st Army's attack, and the

1st Mechanized Corps was to exploit the penetration eastward to link up with the 20th Army's cavalry-mechanized group west of Sychevka. Meanwhile, the 22nd Army would advance eastward up the Luchesa River valley to assist in capturing Belyi and to encircle German forces around Olenino in cooperation with 39th Army attacking from the north. The newly formed 3rd Mechanized Corp was to lead the 22nd Army's exploitation. Subsequently, the other armies around the flaming circumference of the Rzhev salient were to join the offensive, destroy German Ninth Army, and regroup to participate in Operation "Jupiter" against German forces defending Viaz'ma and Smolensk.[30]

During the second stage of the offensive, the Western Front's heavily reinforced 5th and 33rd Armies, which were deployed astride the Moscow-Viaz'ma road, were to penetrate German defenses east of Viaz'ma. The 9th and 10th Tank Corps, followed later by the 3rd Guards Tank Army, were to exploit the penetration to capture Viaz'ma, link up with the Kalinin Front's forces, and, if possible, continue the attack toward Smolensk.[31] To insure success, the *Stavka* provided extraordinary armor, artillery, and engineer support for Zhukov's two attacking *fronts*.[32] In fact, the support exceeded that of Vasilevsky's armies earmarked to carry out operation "Uranus".

To ensure success in the second stage of the offensive, as early as mid-October, the *Stavka* further reinforced the Kalinin Front by assigned a fresh rifle corps to the 43rd Army so that it could participate more effectively in the final advance on Smolensk. The *Stavka* directive read:

***Stavka* VGK Directive No. 170651 to the Kalinin Front Commander
Concerning the Reinforcement of Front Forces**

0350 hours 13 October 1942

The *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command ORDERS that [the following] be transferred to you for the forthcoming operation ""Mars":

1. To reinforce the 43rd Army – the 5th Guards Rifle Corps consisting of: the corps headquarters, which will begin to load at Uvarovo Station in the Western Front on 14 October, the 9th Guards Rifle Division, which will begin to load at Riazan' Station on 13 October, the 46th Guards Rifle Division from the Voronezh Front, which will begin to load on 14 October, and the 357th Rifle Division, which will begin to load at Naro-Fominsk Station on 15 October.

2. In *front* reserve in the Soblago region – the 8th Estonian Corps consisting of: the corps headquarters, the 7th and 249th Estonian Rifle Divisions, and the 19th Guards Rifle Division. The corps will begin to move from the Egor'sevka region after the 5th Guards Rifle Corps and the 19th Guards Rifle Division [will move] from the Volkhov Front.

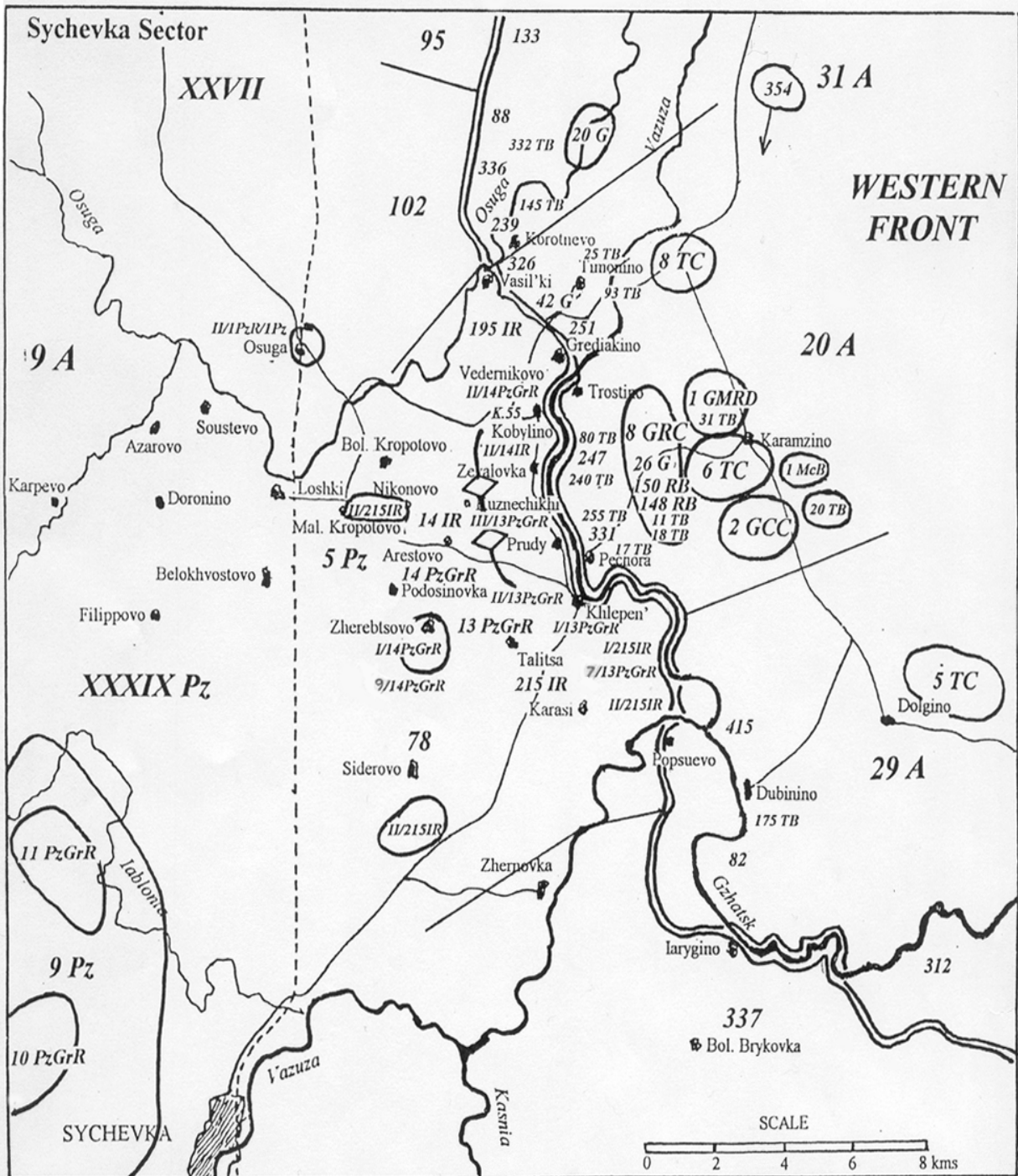
3. We will inform you later of the movement plan.

For the Supreme High Commander

The chief of the General Staff A. Vasilevsky [33]

Late in the planning process, at a date still to be determined, the *Stavka* decided to employ the 2nd Mechanized Corps in operations against German forces defending Velikie Luki. It reached this decision either because it assumed Solomatin's 1st Mechanized Corps was sufficient force with which to destroy the German Belyi grouping or because it wished to conduct an even wider encirclement of German forces in the Smolensk region by means of a stronger assault southward from Velikie Luki toward Smolensk. In this case, from the standpoint of weather and terrain, the reinforcements provided to the 43rd Army by the order described above (principally the 5th Guards Rifle Corps and possibly the 8th Estonian Rifle Corps) the far were better suited to operate in the 43rd Army's sector than the 2nd Mechanized Corps. A release of *Stavka* and *front* orders associated with the Velikie Luki operation should shed additional light on this matter.

After several postponements, Operation "Mars" commenced early on 25 November when five Soviet armies simultaneously assaulted the eastern, western, and northern flanks of the German's Rzhev salient.[34] The Western Front's 20th and 31st Armies' struck hard at the defensive positions of the German XXXIX Panzer Corps along and north of the Vazuza and Osuga Rivers and northeast of the vital German railhead of Sychevka (see Map-3). Although the Germans expected an attack of lesser ferocity, it caught the defenders at an awkward moment, at a time when the 5th Panzer Division was relieving the 78th Infantry Division in its forward defenses along the Vazuza River.[35] Despite the ensuing confusion amongst the Germans, fog and heavy snowfall hindered the attacking Red Army forces. At the same time, the lead rifle divisions and tank brigades of the 31st Army assaulted the defenses of the German 102nd Infantry Division north of the Osuga River for three days, but all of the assaults failed with heavy casualties.[36] Meanwhile, the three lead rifle divisions of the 20th Army, which were attacking between the Vazuza and Osuga Rivers met the same grisly fate. Despite strong armored support, their attacks stalled after frightful losses.[37] Undeterred by the initial failures, Zhukov and Konev insisted these forces continue their attacks in support of the more successful attacks further south.



Map 3 - Dispositions in the Sychevka sector on 24 November 1942

Further to the south, the lead divisions of Major General N. I. Kiriukhin's 20th Army achieved signal, if limited, success along the banks of the frozen Vazuza River. Exploiting the Germans' temporary confusion, Major General G. D. Mukhin's 247th Rifle Division lunged across the Vazuza River and seized a foothold on its far bank.[38] Kiriukhin then committed Colonel P. F. Berestov's 331st Rifle Division across the river and into the breach. Fierce fighting raged all day as the 20th Army's infantry struggled to expand the tenuous bridgehead. It was vital that they do so, since Konev and Kiriukhin planned to commit first the 8th Guards Rifle Corps and later the 6th Tank and 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps into the breach so as to enlarge the bridgehead and exploit the operation westward.[39] All day Zhukov, Konev, and Kiriukhin raged at and cajoled their commanders to move forward. Although the bridgehead was still too small, at day's end on 25 November Konev took the risk and ordered Kiriukhin to commit his second echelon and cavalry-mechanized group into combat the next morning.

The desperate German resistance, however, made this risky decision both premature and ill advised. Despite being caught midst a complex regrouping, the 5th Panzer and 78th Infantry Division soldiers fought with grim abandon. Forming small ad hoc combat groups, the beleaguered Germans formed hedgehog defenses around the numerous stone villages that dotted the partially wooded region west of the Vazuza River. Attacking Red Army infantry lapped around these defenses, overcoming some but leaving others unscathed as deadly obstacles strewn throughout their rear area. Beset by command, control, and communications problems, the German XXXIX Panzer Corps did not realize the chaos their fragmented resistance was causing in Soviet ranks. Nevertheless, the panzer corps desperately shored up its sagging defenses by ordering its 9th Panzer Division, which was in reserve west of Sychevka, to march to the sounds of the guns and plug the developing breach.

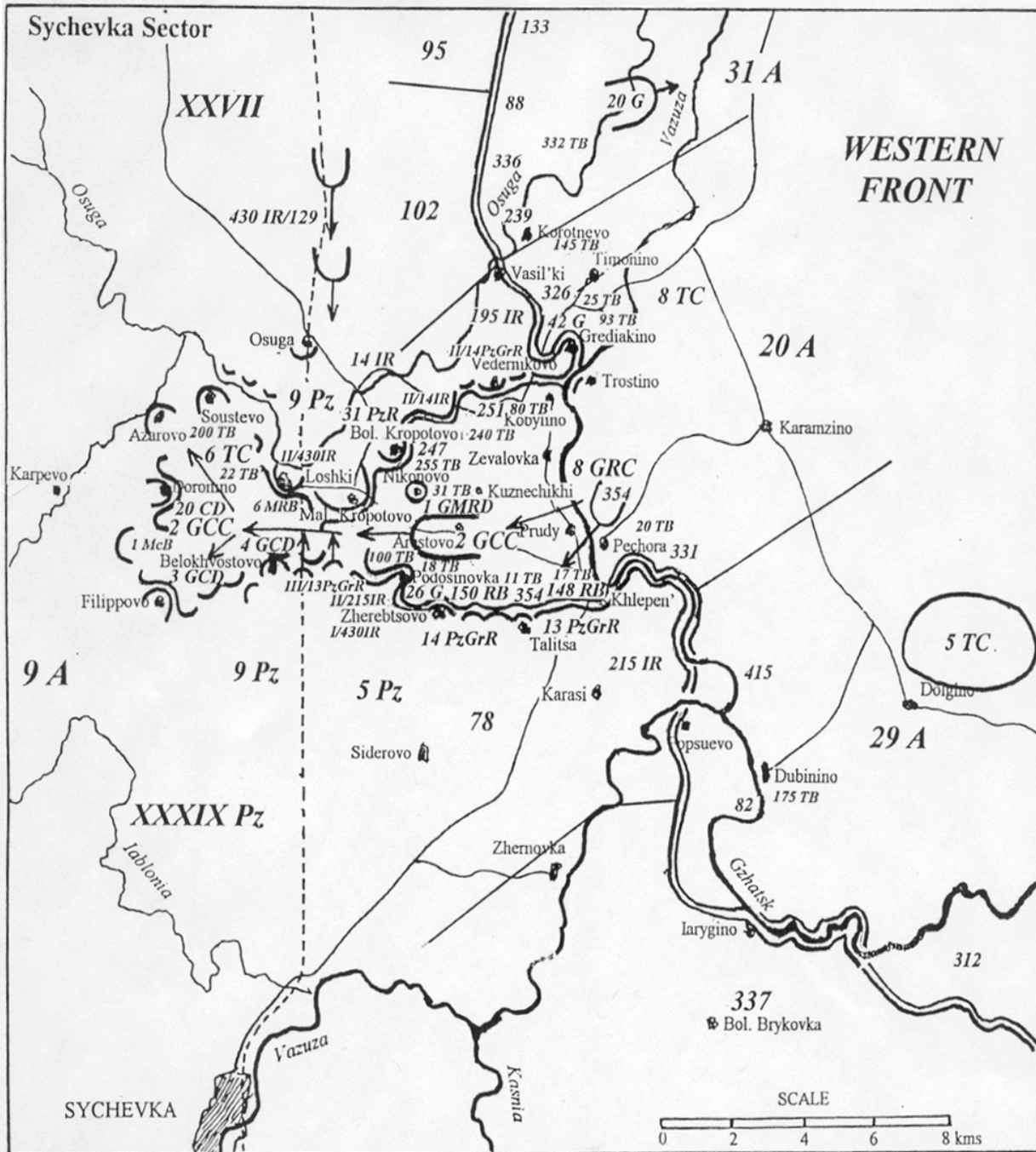
Zhukov and Konev also completely understood the gravity of the situation and, therefore, acted decisively to remedy the situation by insisting the 20th Army's second echelon and mobile group enter combat as soon as possible. While Mukhin's and Berestov's riflemen strained to expand their tenuous bridgehead, the 20th Army's second echelon and exploitation forces struggled forward on the night of 25 November and the morning of the 26th. Under constant German artillery fire, over 200 tanks, 30,000 infantry, and 10,000 cavalymen, along with their accompanying logistical trains, moved inexorably forward along the only two roads to the river. Since both roads had been unmercifully chowdered up by artillery fire, the consequences were predictable. Chaos reigned supreme. The reinforcing infantry and tanks of 8th Guards Rifle Corps clogged the crossing sites over the Vazuza as harried *front* and army staff officers tried in vain to clear the way for the 6th Tank and 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps' advancing armor and cavalry. It was an impossible task. Although most of the rifle corps's forces made it across the river, the tank and cavalry forces could not. Not until mid-day on 26 November were the 170 tanks of

Colonel P. M. Arman's tank corps able to go into action, and Major General V. V. Kriukov's 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps remained east of the Vazuzua River until 27 November. To Zhukov and Konev's utter frustration, the offensive momentum of the attack was already flagging.

The defending Germans finally felt the full force of Kiriukhin's assault on 27 November. By that time, however, the advancing German reserves and the German's skillful but desperate forward defense condemned the Red Army forces assaulting west of the Vazuza River to a disastrous fate. The 9th Panzer Division's counterattacking combat groups and the stubborn defenders of countless fortified villages west of the Vazuza thoroughly disrupted the Soviet armored and cavalry exploitation. Shortly after 1200 hours on 27 November, the lead tank brigades of Colonel Arman's 6th Tank Corps lunged through the Germans' hedgehog defenses, followed on horseback by the cavalymen of the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps.

Unable to crush the tens of German fortified village strong points scattered across their front, the Soviet attack fragmented. Three of Arman's tank brigades managed to "run the gauntlet" and crossed the vital Rzhev-Sychevka road, while one could not.[40] Kriukov's cavalry corps suffered frightening losses when his three cavalry divisions advanced through withering German fire across the road into the German rear, leaving the corps headquarters and logistical trains isolated in the bridgehead far to the rear.[41] All the while, reinforced Red Army infantry painfully sought to expand the bridgehead against undiminished German resistance. German forces counterattacked incessantly from north and south along the Rzhev-Sychevka road against the exposed flanks of the exploiting Soviet forces.

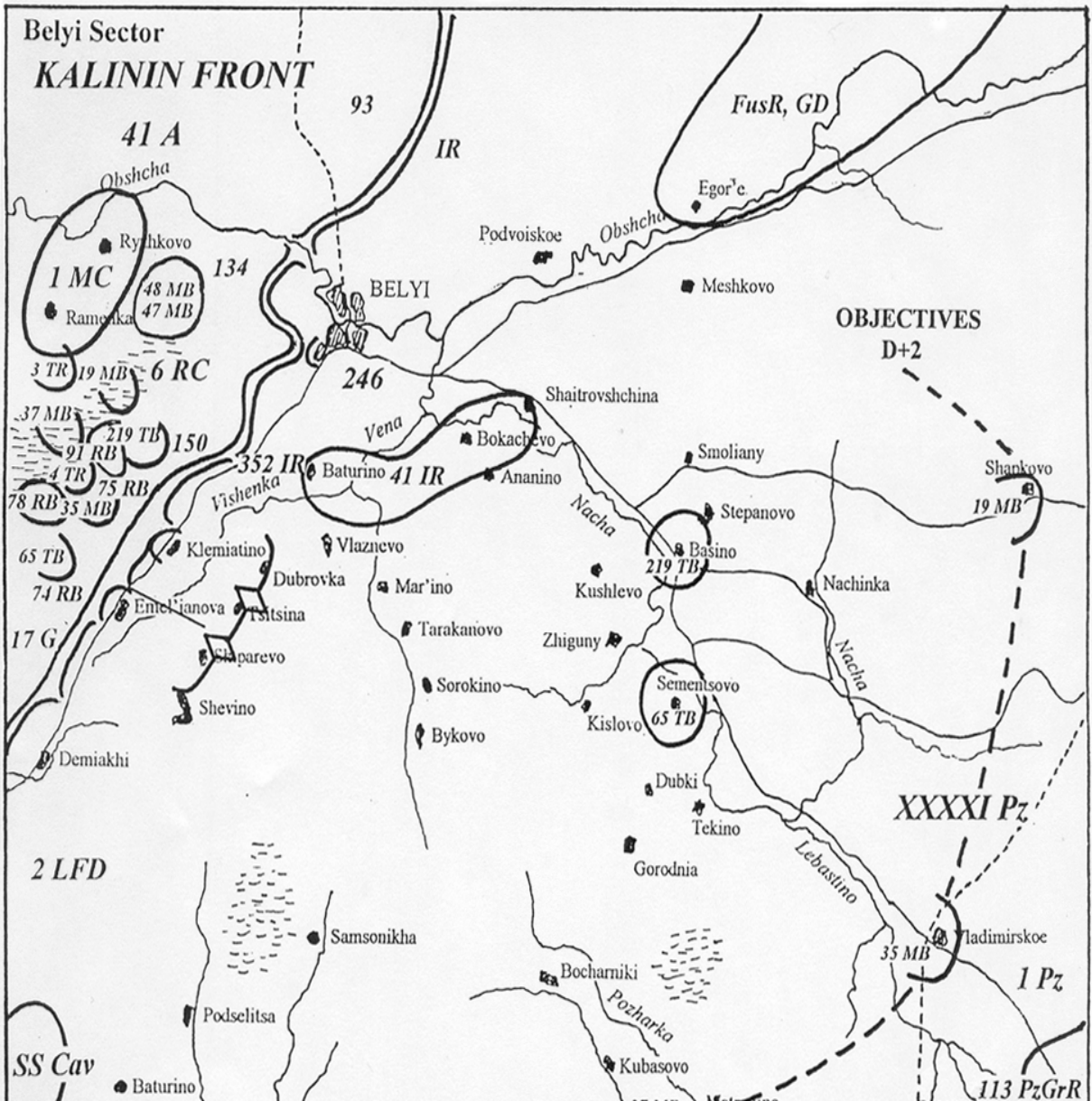
By nightfall on 28 November, it was clear that the Kiruikhin's assault had faltered (see Map-4). Although the bulk of Arman's tank corps and three of Kriukov's cavalry divisions were across the Rzhev road, the attrition in armor had been staggering, and German counterattacks along the Rzhev road had slammed the door on their withdrawal. Worse still, the exploiting tankers and cavalymen were no longer within the range of their supporting artillery since there was no room for it in the bridgehead.[42]

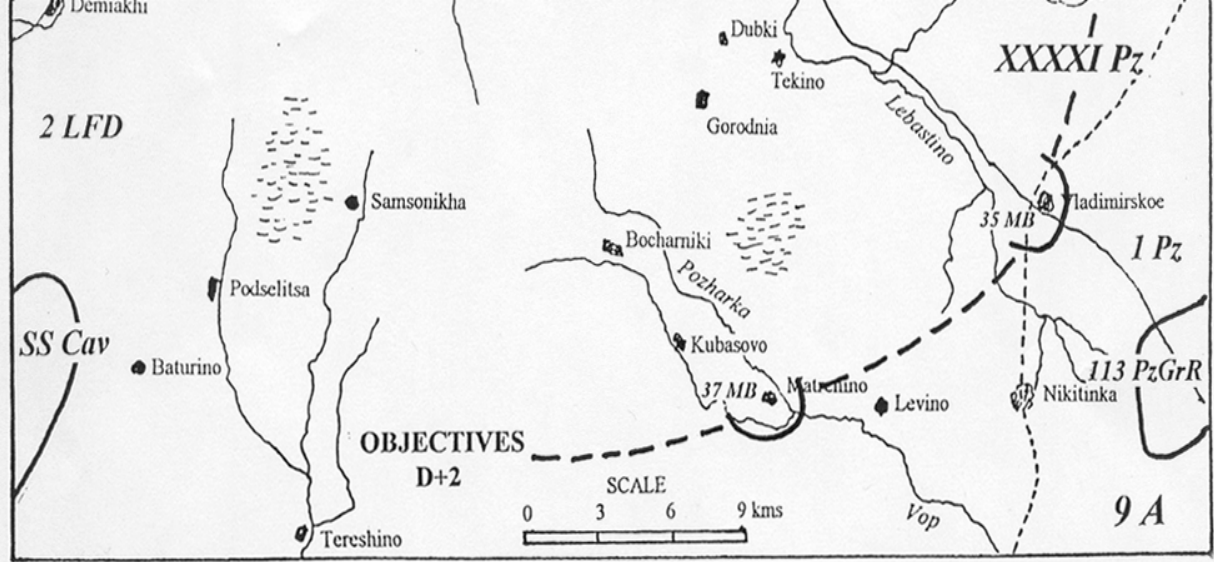


Map 4 - Situation in the Sychevka sector on 28 November 1942.

However, Zhukov and Konev, remained undeterred by the day's failures. Immediately, they ordered their beleaguered "tankisti" to organize a breakout to the west during the night of 28-29 November, while exhorting their remaining forces to widen the bridgehead and, simultaneously, support the breakout attempt. Zhukov's optimism was conditioned, in part, by his stubborn refusal to admit defeat and by the striking success Red Army forces seemed to be achieving along the western flank of the Rzhev salient.

To the west, in the Belyi and Luchesa River sectors, Major General F. G. Tarasov's 41st Army and Major General V. A. Iushkevich's 22nd Army had made striking progress during the first three days of the offensive and, by day's end on 28 November, appeared to be penetrating deep into the defending Germans' rear area. Once they had done so, reasoned Zhukov, the temporary difficulties along the Vazuza River would become irrelevant (see Map-5).





Map 5 - Planning and Dispositions in the Belyi sector on 24 November 1942.

The lead forces of Tarasov's 41st Army struck the German defenses south of Belyi at 0900 hours on 25 November.[43] Advancing across the frozen, forested swamps astride the Belyi-Dukhovshchina road in a driving snowstorm, the riflemen of Major General I. I. Popov's 6th Volunteer Rifle Corps, supported by tank detachments from General M. D. Solomatin's 1st Mechanized Corps, easily overcame forward German defenses and lunged into the villages along the Vishenka River in the Germans' tactical rear.[44] Heartened by his success on the first day of operations, Tarasov ordered Solomatin's mechanized corps into action at dawn on 26 November. Marching in brigade column with his 65th and 219th Tank Brigades in the lead, the 15,200 man and 224 tank-strong corps made spectacular initial progress.[45] Moving painfully through the heavy and virtually roadless forests, by nightfall on 27 November, Solomatin's brigades had torn a hole 20 kilometers wide and nearly 30 kilometers deep in the German defenses, and his lead brigades had reached the Belyi-Vladimirskoe road astride critical German communications routes into Belyi.[46]

Despite Solomatin's dramatic progress, however, all was not well with Tarasov's overall assault. Although Zhukov and Purkaev had ordered him to avoid becoming involved in a prolonged struggle for the town of Belyi, which the German had turned into a virtual fortress, Tarasov's attention was drawn inexorably toward the enticing target, particularly since Belyi seemed available simply for the taking.[47] Drawn like a magnet to the town, Tarasov first committed Colonel N. O. Gruz's 150th Rifle Division against the town's southern defenses, and then reinforced Gruz's division with one of Solomatin's mechanized brigades.[48] However, the formidable German defenses south of Belyi halted Tarasov's forces in their tracks.

Credit for the successful defense of Belyi belongs to Colonel General Joseph Harpe, the commander of the German XXXXI Panzer Corps. Early on in the offensive, Harpe decided to hold on to the town at all costs and to rely on fate, luck, and anticipated German reserves to save the situation.[49] First, he ordered his 246th Infantry Division forces to establish a hedgehog defense south of the city, and he then asked for and received combat groups from Panzer Grenadier Division *Grossdeutschland* and 1st Panzer Division, which were located in reserve positions northeast and southwest of Belyi. At the time, the 1st Panzer Division had only 5 tanks operational and *Grossdeutschland* Division's Fusilier Regiment had none. Racing forward across the frozen, snow-covered roads, Combat Group von Weitersheim (1st Panzer Division) reached Belyi on late morning of 26 November, and Combat Group Kassnitz (*Grossdeutschland* Division) arrived several hours later.[50] Together, the two groups began a successful but bloody struggle to hold the town.

Meanwhile, an increasingly frustrated Solomatin, whose forces now faced the 1st Panzer Division's combat groups, which were deployed in battalion groups along the critical supply artery, tried to consolidate his positions along the critical Belyi-Vladimirskoe road.[51] Solomatin repeatedly and urgently asked Tarasov to reinforce his flagging attack with two additional mechanized brigades that were in the army's reserve.[52] On 28 November, however, Tarasov denied Solomatin's request and, instead, committed the brigades along his army's flanks. Colonel I. F. Dremov's 47th Mechanized Brigade attacked northward east of Belyi in yet another attempt to envelop the town from the east. Although Dremov's brigade managed to cut the Belyi-Vladimirskoe road, it ended up in an exposed and unsupported position northeast of Belyi.[53]

All the while, Solomatin's overextended brigades struggled bitterly in a 30-kilometer sector along the Belyi-Vladimirskoe road. Solomatin's frustration increased when on 29 November his forward forces announced the arrival of fresh German armored reserves. Solomatin then knew what Tarasov did not – that his offensive momentum was ebbing and prospects for success were vanishing. Preparing for the inevitable, Solomatin ordered his forces on the defense to await the expected German counterattacks (see Map-6).

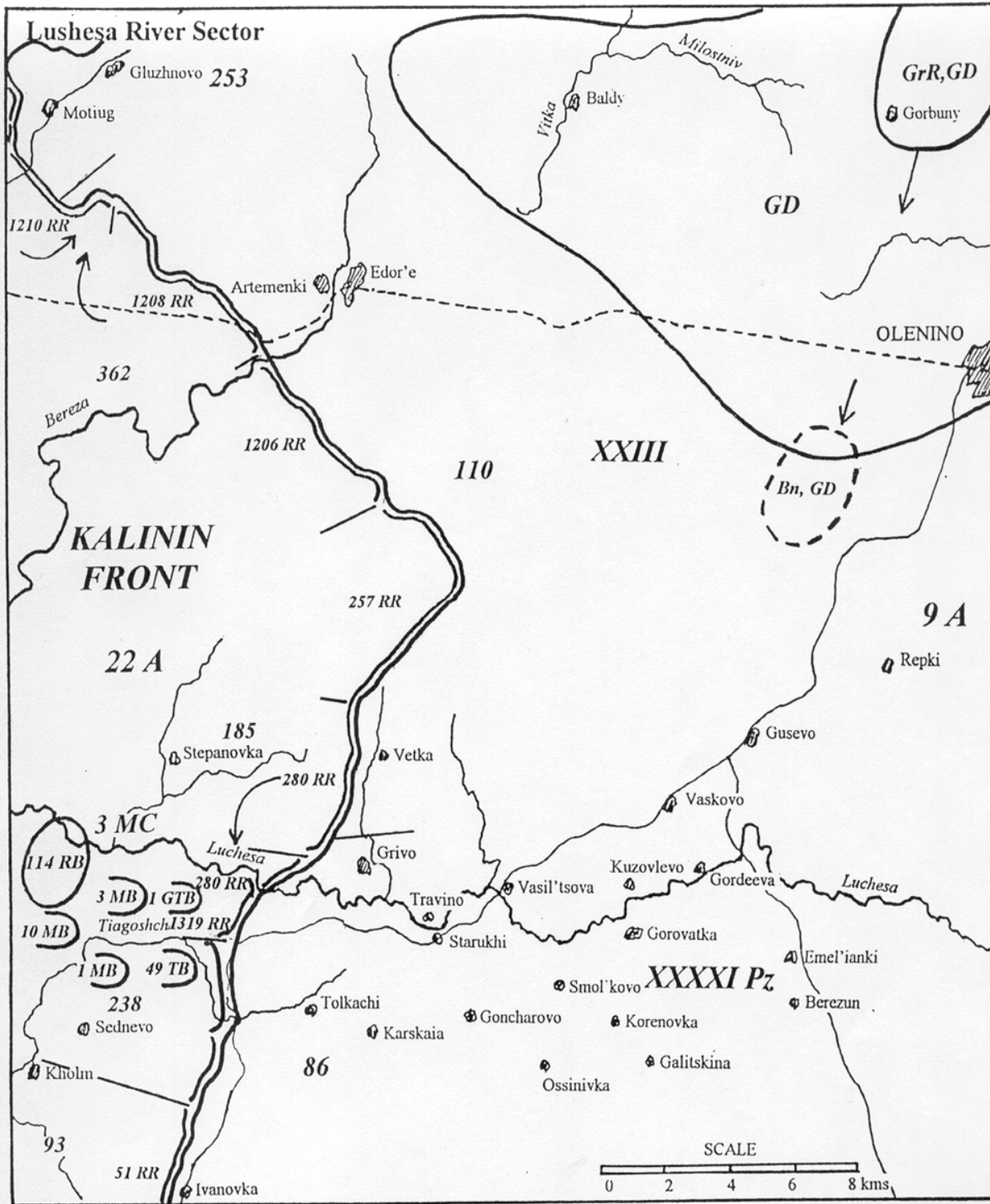


Map 6 - Situation in the Belyi sector late on 30 November 1942

Solomatin was correct. The fresh German forces he detected were the advanced elements of the force with which General Harpe hoped to defeat the Soviet offensive. Days before, Harpe had ordered the 1st Panzer Division to hold on to the Belyi strong point and the thin defense line along the Belyi-Vladimirskoe road, while he requested all available reserves from the Ninth Army and Army Group Center. Harpe's superiors, General Alfred Model and Field Marshal Guenther von Kluge, responded by promptly ordering the 12th, 20th, and 19th Panzer Divisions to march to the sound of the guns. This regrouping, however, was no easy task since the three panzer divisions had to march long distances over difficult routes in the worst of winter conditions. Until they arrived, the fate of the XXXXI Panzer Corps and Ninth Army hung in the balance.

Worse still, Field Marshal Model, the Ninth Army's commander, was preoccupied with other pressing concerns. Although the situation along the Vazuza River now seemed under control, Red Army forces had breached his army's defenses farther north along the Luchesa River and were conducting fierce assaults against his defenses along the Molodoi Tud River to the north. The deteriorating situation at Stalingrad also preoccupied German headquarters across the front and lent a special degree of urgency to their grim task.[54]

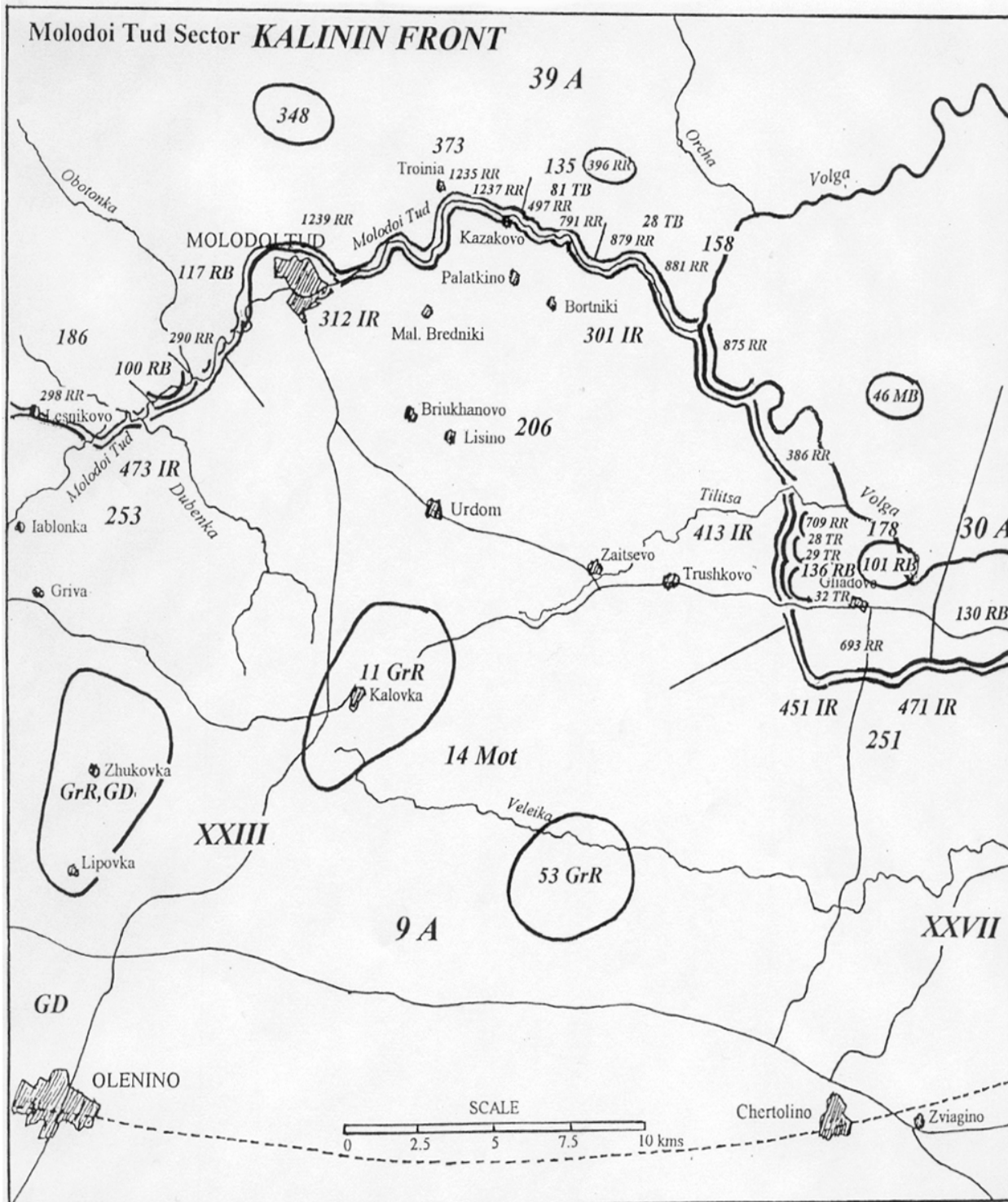
Model's concern was justified. Iushkevich's 22nd Army assaulted up the Luchesa River valley early on 25 November, spearheaded by Colonel I. V. Karpov's 238th Rifle Division, two regiments of Colonel M. F. Andriushenko's 185th Rifle Division, and a tank brigade from Major General M. E. Katukov's 3rd Mechanized Corps (see Map-7). The attack routed a regiment of the German 86th Infantry Division and tore a gaping hole at the boundary between the XXXXI Panzer Corps' 86th Infantry and XXIII Army Corps' 110th Infantry Division. Iushkevich then committed Katukov's full corps, forcing defending German forces to withdraw eastward up the valley.



Map 7 - Dispositions in the Luchesa River sector on 24 November 1942

The German XXIII Army Corps responded to this threat quickly by committing *Grossdeutschland* Division's Grenadier Regiment into the fray.[55] Heavy fighting raged for the village of Starukhi as Iushkevich's forces advanced inexorably eastward toward the vital Olenino-Belyi road. Although German forces were not able to close the yawning gap created by Iushkevich's attack, the rough terrain, deteriorating weather, and skillful German defense exacted a heavy toll on the attacking forces and halted them just short of their objective. By 30 November Iushkevich's army had carved an 8-kilometer wide and almost 15-kilometer deep salient in the German defenses. Try as they did, however, Iushkevich's army could not overcome German resistance and reach the key Olenino-Belyi road.[56]

Red Army attacks against the northern extremity of the German Rzhev salient only exacerbated the deteriorating situation along the Luchesa River. Major General A. I. Zygin's 39th Army struck German defenses along the Molodoi Tud River on a broad front.[57] Since the army's attack was only secondary in nature, Zygin was not able to exploit several fleeting opportunities for success on the first day of combat (see Map-8).[58] Skillful reaction by German operational reserves, including the 14th Motorized Division and several battalions from *Grossdeutschland*'s Grenadier Regiment, prevented major Red Army gains, and by 30 November the struggle degenerated into a series of grinding Soviet attacks that achieved only limited gains. Although the XXIII Army Corps' defending 206th Infantry and 14th Motorized Divisions conducted some tactical withdrawals, they managed to preserve a continuous defensive front denying Zygin's forces access to their objective, the vital Olenino-Rzhev road and rail line.

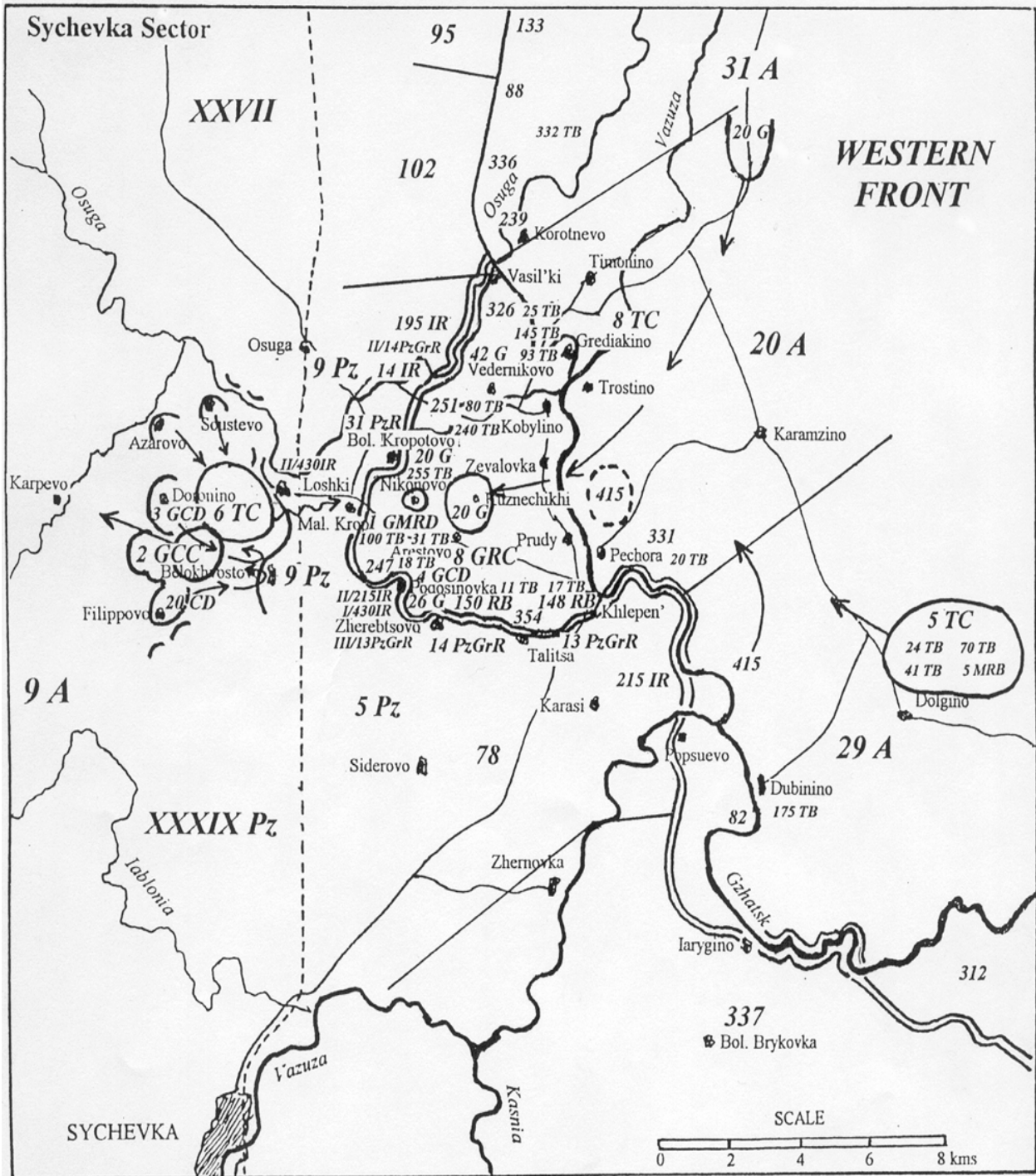


Map 8 - Dispositions in the Molodoi Tud sector on 24 November 1942

Zhukov, Konev, and Purkaev were both elated and frustrated over the results of the first five days of operations. First, it was clear that the Western Front's main attack in the Sychevka sector had faltered. Although the 20th Army had a seized foothold over the Vazuza River, its exploitation forces were in a precarious position astride the Rzhev-Sychevka road. The 31st Army's attack had utterly failed, and the 29th Army had not yet joined the assault. However, both the 41st and the 22nd Armies had made significant progress, and Konev still possessed strong reserves, which included the uncommitted 5th Tank Corps.

Therefore, at Zhukov's direction, Konev reinforced the 20th Army and ordered it to rescue the tank and cavalry forces isolated west of the Rzhev-Sychevka road.[59] After completing this regrouping, Kiriukhin was to continue his assault, and Purkaev's two armies west of the Rzhev salient were to continue their attacks in support of the 20th Army. What Zhukov did not realize, however, was that German Ninth Army was preparing to strike back in the sector where Zhukov's forces had achieved their greatest success, namely the Belyi sector.

West of the Rzhev-Sychevka road, Arman's 6th Tank Corps and cooperating cavalry, which were running short of ammunition and other supplies, had no choice but to attempt a breakout to the east. Arman's force launched their desperate breakout attempt on the night of 29-30 November in conjunction with fierce attacks by 20th Army infantry from within the Vazuza bridgehead (see Map-9). Although the bitter and chaotic fighting that ensued cost Arman nearly all of his remaining tanks, of the tank corps' personnel reached the bridgehead safely.[60] The more fragile cavalry, however, fared far worse. While many individual cavalrymen made it out of the trap, Colonel Kursakov's 20th Cavalry Division did not. For weeks thereafter, the Tadzhik cavalrymen fought alongside Soviet partisans within the salient before the remnants of the force finally reached Soviet lines in the Luchesa valley in early January.[61]



Map 9 - Situation in the Sychevka sector from 29 November - 1 December 1942

Zhukov was bitterly disappointed by this failure. The 20th Army had lost over 30,000 men and 200 tanks in 5 days of vicious combat and the 31st Army's losses were just as severe. However, little had been gained by the effort. More disconcerting still for Zhukov, the 41st Army's seemingly certain victory was about to degenerate into catastrophic loss.

In fact, Solomatin's worst fears were materializing. Not only did the Germans hold on to Belyi firmly, but they were also orchestrating an effective counterstroke. The situation began deteriorating on 1 December after Solomatin had narrowed his front and gone over to the defense. From 2 through 6 December, the XXXXI Panzer Corps' 1st Panzer Division and the newly arriving 12th Panzer Division regained control of the Belyi-Vladimirskoe road, cut off and destroyed Dremov's isolated 47th Mechanized Brigade northeast of Belyi, and began pressuring Solomatin's defenses southeast of the city.[62] The 12th Panzer Division, which had just been completed refitted after in battles near Leningrad, numbered 71 tanks on 20 November and was able to bring at least half of these tanks to bear against Solomatin's forces.[63]

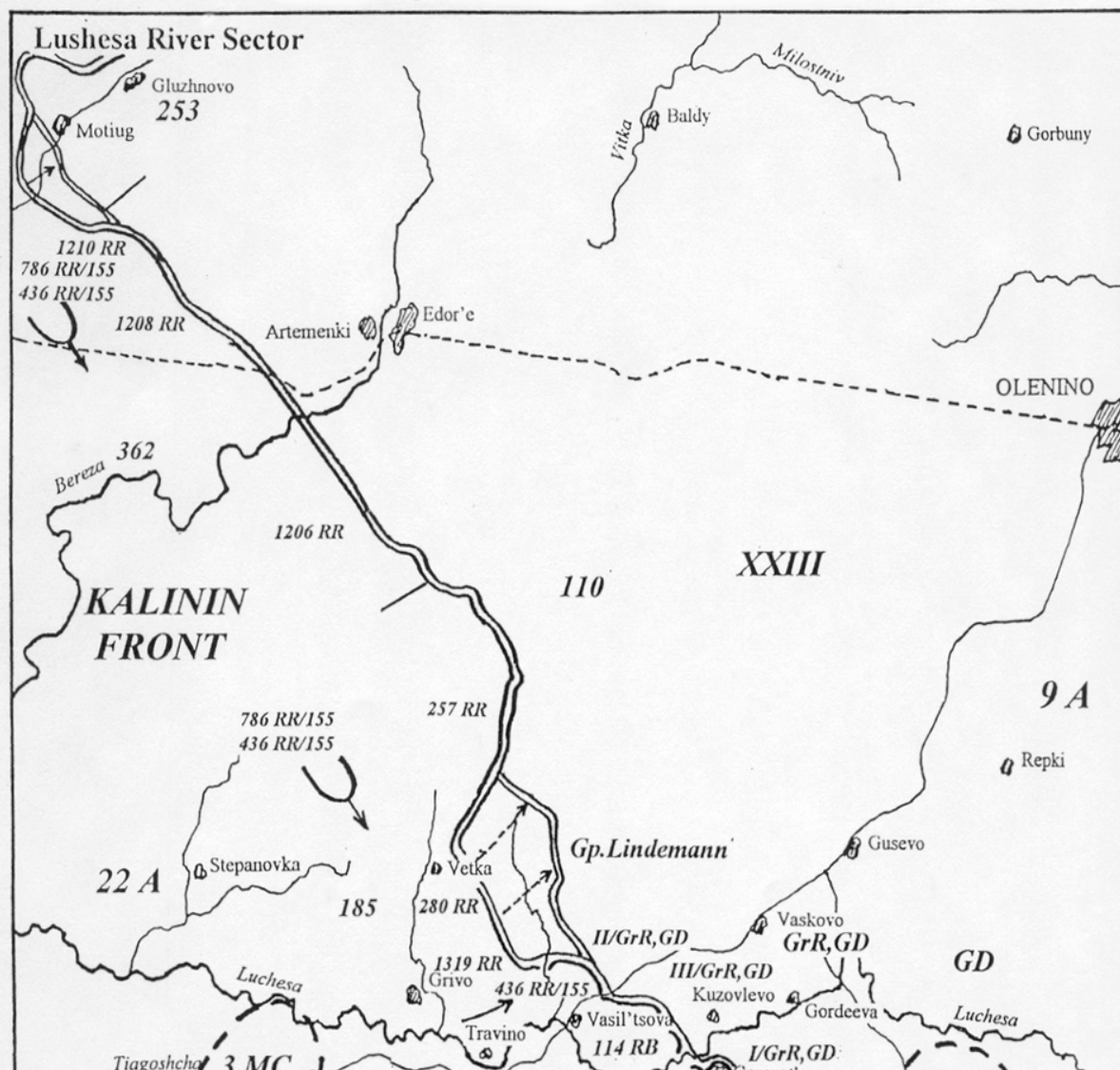
More devastating still, the German XXX Army Corps' 19th and 20th Panzer Divisions began to assemble south of the Belyi penetration. It was no easy task since terrible weather conditions, abysmal roads, and heavy resistance from Soviet partisans hindered German movement.[64] Nevertheless, by late on 6 December, the XXX Corps was prepared to begin striking back at Tarasov's exploiting 41st Army. The panzer corps began its counterattack on the morning of 7 December in conjunction with local attacks by the 1st Panzer Division and the *Grossdeutschland* Division's Fusilier Regiment south from Belyi (see Map-10).

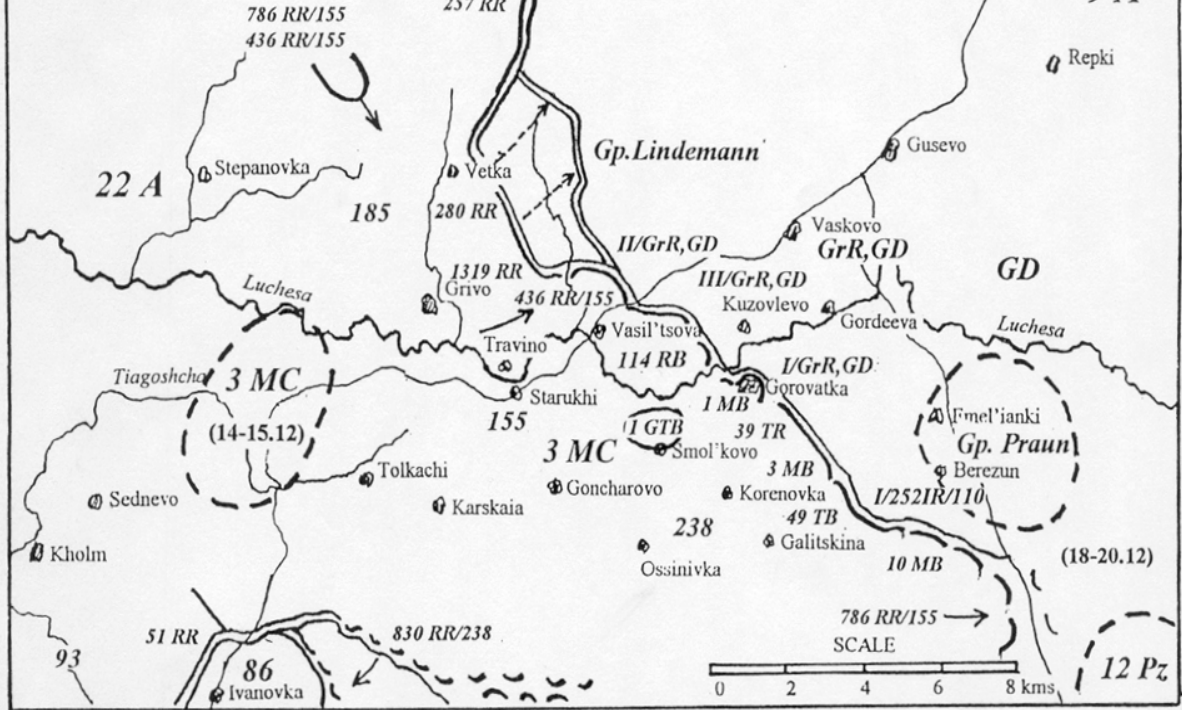


Map 10 - Situation in the Belyi sector from 7-10 December 1942.

Subsequently, in three days of intense and complex fighting, the combined German force slashed through 41st Army's rear, encircling most of Tarasov's army southeast of Belyi. By this time, the 41st Army's triumphant thrust had blundered into an inglorious trap. Although Solomatin did what he could to organize a breakout, his initial attempts to do so utterly failed. Thereafter, he had no choice but to organize his forces, which now included a major portion of the 6th Rifle Corps, for all-round defense and to wait for help that never arrive.[65]

Nor was the situation in the Luchesa River valley any more promising (see Map-11). Despite lushkevich's strenuous efforts, his 22nd Army lacked the strength necessary to expand its penetration. Nor could the Germans eliminate it. Although the ensuing struggle ebbed and flowed for several days, the stalemate persisted and would continue to persist until events elsewhere settled the fate of the overall Red Army offensive. All the while, the forces of Zygin's 39th Army made only slow progress west of Rzhev against stout German resistance in a sideshow that would soon represent Zhukov's last hope for victory.





Map 11 - Situation in the Luchesa River sector from 3-11 December 1942.

Zhukov responded in characteristic fashion to the depressing news he received from the Belyi sector. Unwilling to admit defeat, he relieved Kiriukhin from command of the 20th Army and replaced him with Lieutenant General M. S. Khozin and ordered a massive force build-up of forces in the 20th Army's sector.[66] Then, while the fighting raged on at Belyi, he ordered the 20th and 29th Armies to resume their assaults on 11 December in concert with a fresh drive in the north by Zygin's 39th Army, which he reinforced with a stream of divisions from the 30th Army, which manned the sector immediately north of Rzhev.

Two documents illustrate Zhukov's resolve to salvage victory out of apparent defeat. The first, which removed Kiriukhin from command and reinforced his 20th Army, read:

**Instructions of the Supreme High Commander to the *Stavka* Representative
[Zhukov] Concerning the Strengthening of the 20th Army**

4 December 1942

The *Stavka* APPROVES your proposals for the improvement of the 20th Army's operations.

Relieve Kiriukhin from his position as 20th Army commander. Temporarily appoint Lieutenant General Khozin to direct the 20th Army's operations. You can postpone the operation against Gzhatsk [ed., "Jupiter" or

perhaps "Neptune"]. Take the required number of rifle divisions and the 5th Tank Corps from the grouping of force for the Gzhatsk operation and transfer them to reinforce the 20th Army. One hundred and fifty tanks are being sent for Stepanov's (Konev's codename) use.

Vasil'ev (Stalin's codename) [67]

The *Stavka* order, which sanctioned the second phase of Operation "Mars", read:

***Stavka* VGK Directive No. 170700 to the Western and Kalinin Front
Commanders Concerning the Missions to Destroy the
Enemy's Rzhev-Sychevka-Olenino-Belyi Grouping**

2215 hours 8 December 1942

The *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command ORDERS:

The forces of the Kalinin and Western Front will destroy the enemy's Rzhev-Sychevka-Olenino-Belyi grouping and dig in firmly along the Iarygino, Sychevka, Andreevskoe, Lenino, Novoe Azhevo, Dentialevo, and Svity front by 1 January 1943.

While conducting the operation, the Western Front will accomplish the following:

a) Penetrate the enemy's defenses in the Bol'shoe Kropotovo and Iarygino sector on 10 and 11 December and capture Sychevka no later than 15 December. Commit no fewer than two rifle divisions into battle in the Andreevskoe region to organize an encirclement of the enemy together with the Kalinin Front's 41st Army.

b) After penetrating the enemy's defense and the main grouping's arrival at the railroad line, turn the *front* mobile group and no fewer than four rifle divisions to the north for an attack on the rear of the enemy's Rzhev-Chertolino grouping.

c) The 30th Army will penetrate the [enemy's] defense in the sector from Koshkino to the road junction northeast of Burgovo and reach the railroad in the vicinity of Chertolino no later than 15 December. When [it] reaches the railroad line, [it will] establish close cooperation with the *front* mobile group and attack the city of Rzhev by an advance along the railroad with the mission of capturing Rzhev on 23 December.

While fulfilling its mission, the Kalinin Front will conduct the following:

a) Continue to develop the 39th and 22nd Armies' attacks in the general direction of Olenino with the mission of destroying the enemy's Olenino grouping and reaching the Olenino region no later than 16 December.

Part of the 22nd Army's forces will conduct a secondary attack in the direction of Egor'e to assist the 41st Army in the destruction of the enemy's Belyi grouping.

b) The 41st Army will destroy the penetrating enemy grouping in the Tsytsyno region and restore its lost positions in the Okolitsy region by 10 December.

In cooperation with the Western Front's units, part of its forces will reach the Mol'nia, Vladimirskoe, and Lenino regions no later than 20 December to contain the encircled enemy grouping from the south.

Capture Belyi no later than 20 December.

Bear in mind that, after regrouping their forces, the Kalinin and Western Fronts will subsequently destroy the enemy's Gzhatsk, Viaz'ma, and Kholm-Zhirkovskaia grouping and reach our old defensive line by the end of January 1943.

When our forces occupy Viaz'ma and arrive at last year's defensive positions west of the Rzhev-Viaz'ma [line], we will consider the operation to have been completed, and the forces can go into winter quarters.

Confirm receipt and report fulfillment.

Pass this order to all commanders down to regiment.

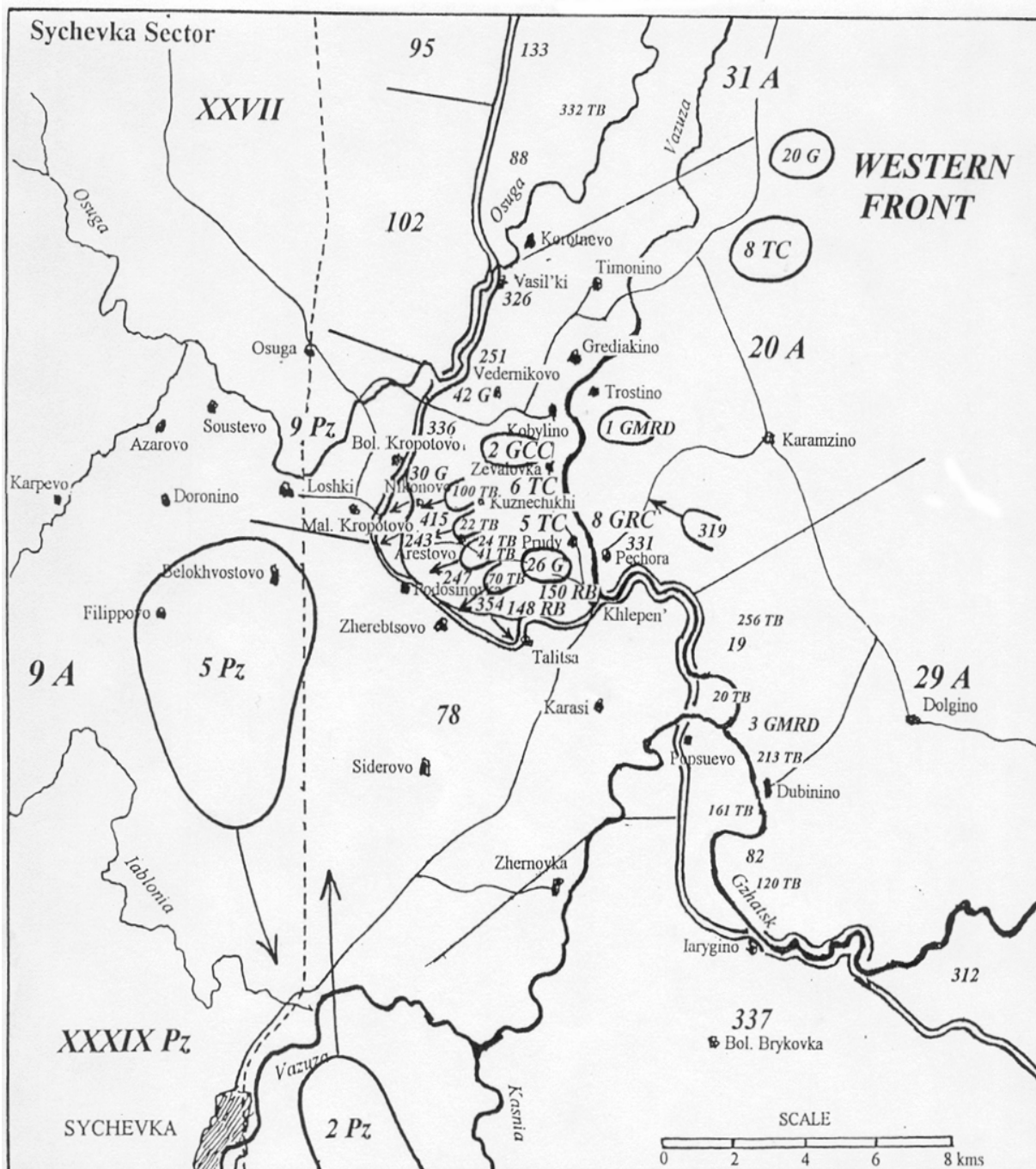
The *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command

I. Stalin

G. Zhukov [68]

The curtain rose on the last act of the continuing drama on the morning of 11 December in the Vazuza River valley. At 1010 hours that morning, the massed riflemen of the 20th and 29th Armies began an assault across the entire breadth of their fronts. Despite the deadly German fire, Konev and Khozin committed the 5th and 6th Tank Corps into combat (see Map-12). Attacking with abandon across a 4-kilometer-wide sector into the teeth of reinforced the German antitank defense's,

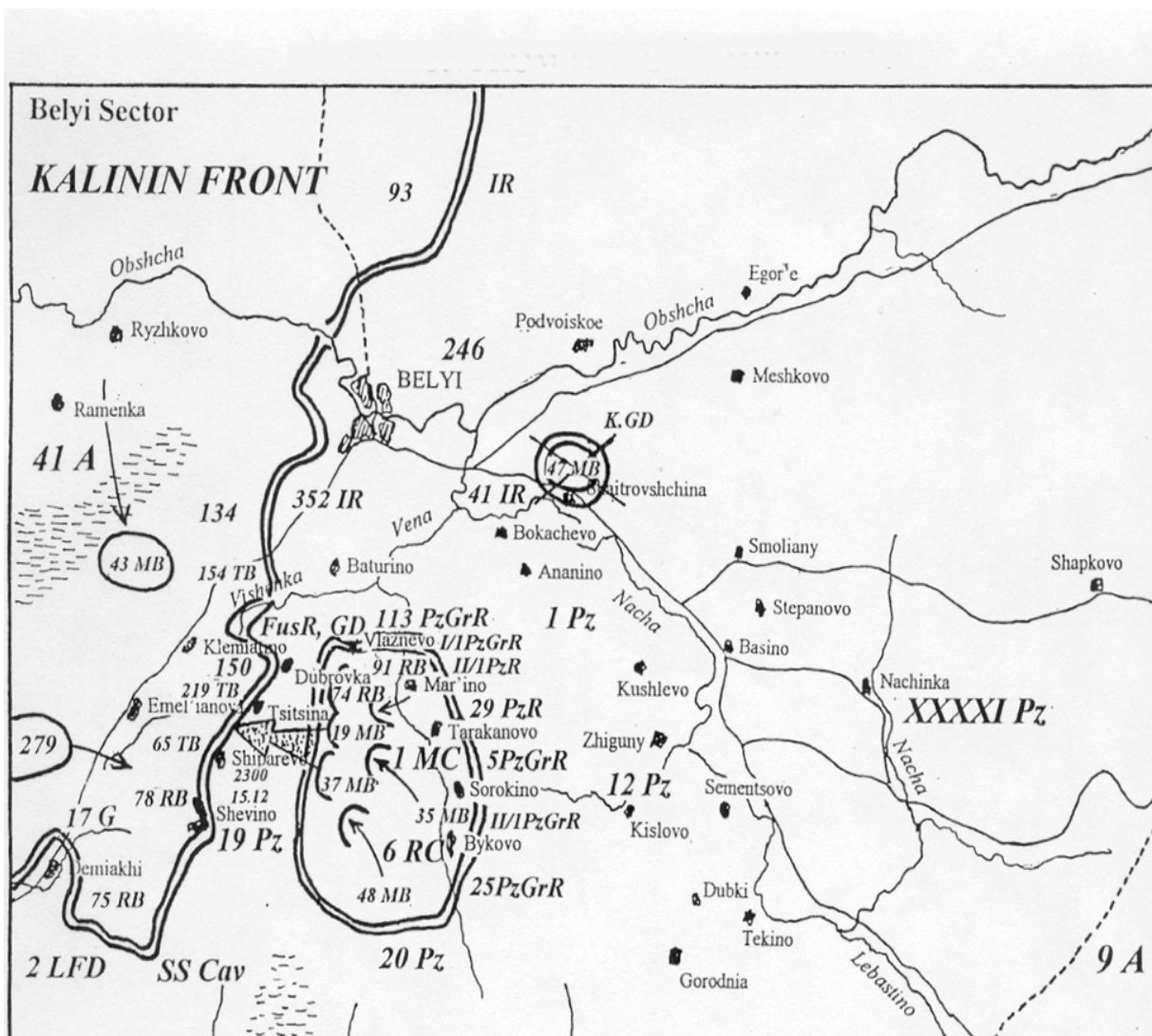
the desperate assault cost the 2 tank corps about 300 lost tanks in 2 days of incessant deadly combat.[69] The carnage was frightful in the attack sectors of both armies. Despite these losses, however, Zhukov and Konev urged their forces on. The assaults continued for three days more before the forces collapsed in utter exhaustion on 15 December. By that time it was clear to everyone, soldiers and generals alike, that defeat was at hand. If the carnage along the Vazuza River did not confirm that fact, the fate of Solomatin's force at Belyi certainly did.

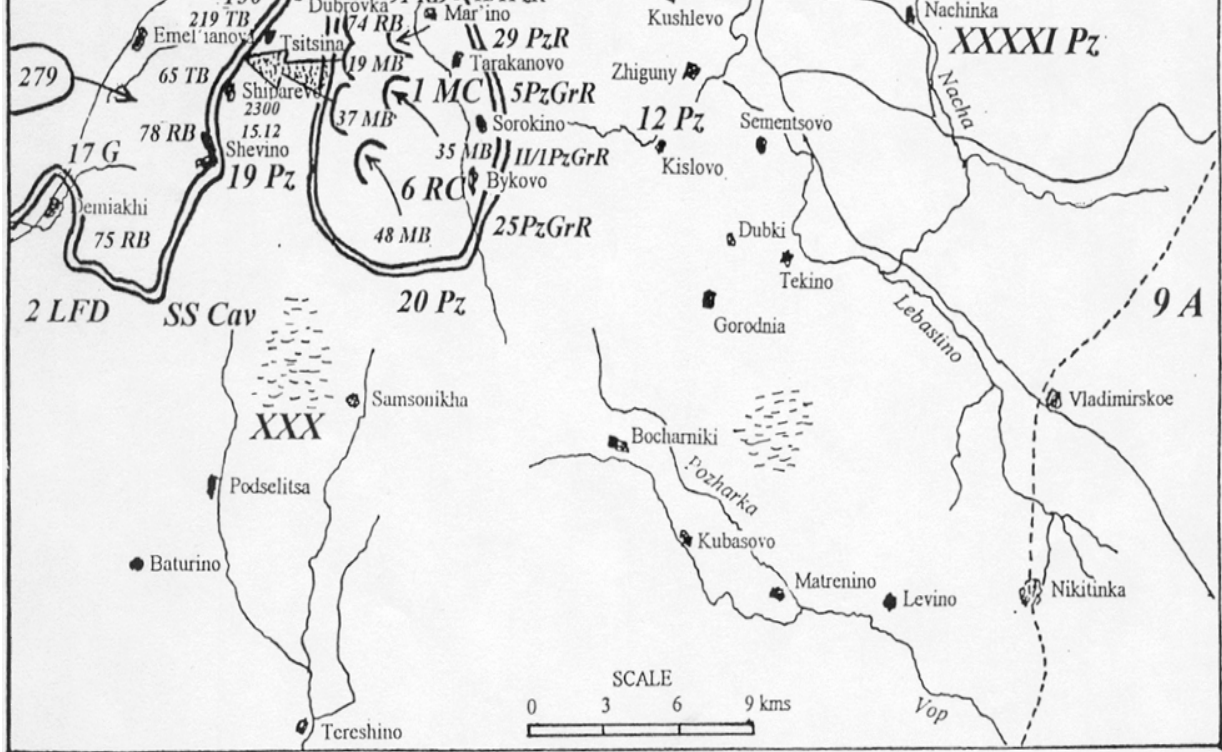




Map 12 - Situation in the Sychevka sector from 11-14 December 1942.

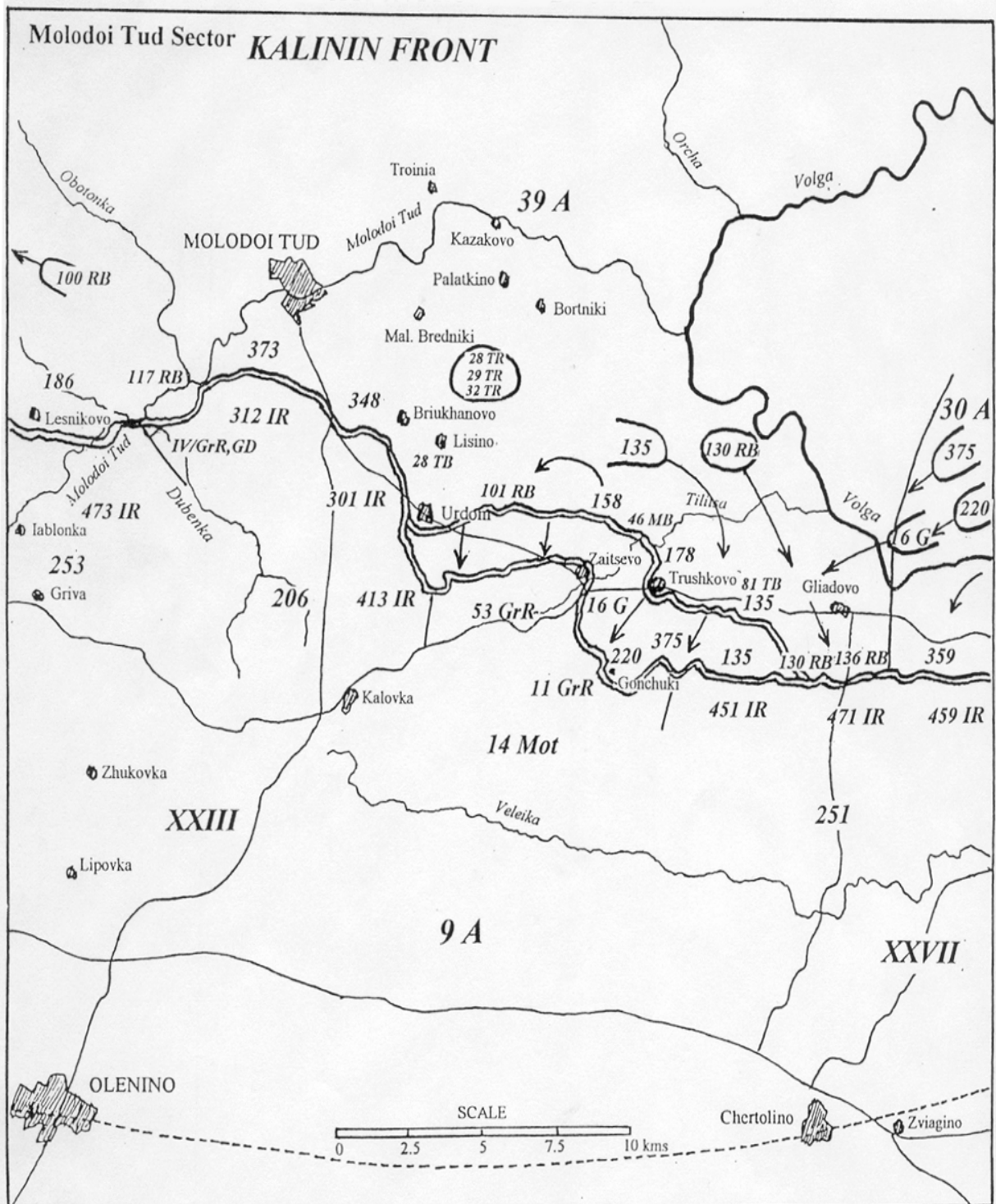
Solomatin held his ground south of Belyi for as long as was humanly possible. However, without logistical support or other assistance from the outside, his task was hopeless, and he had no choice but to order a breakout. He did so on the night of 15-16 December. Drawing in his perimeter defense, he destroyed his remaining tanks and heavy weapons and thrust westward with his remaining infantry through a flaming gauntlet of heavy German fire (see Map-13). Although Solomatin's decision saved a sizeable portion of his two corps, the cost was devastating. The 1st Panzer Division reported over 102 Red Army armored vehicles destroyed, and Solomatin's after-action-report noted that over 8,000 of the 12,000 men under his command were killed or wounded and most his over 200 tanks were either destroyed or abandoned.[70] The toll in the remainder of Tarasov's 41st Army was equally grim.





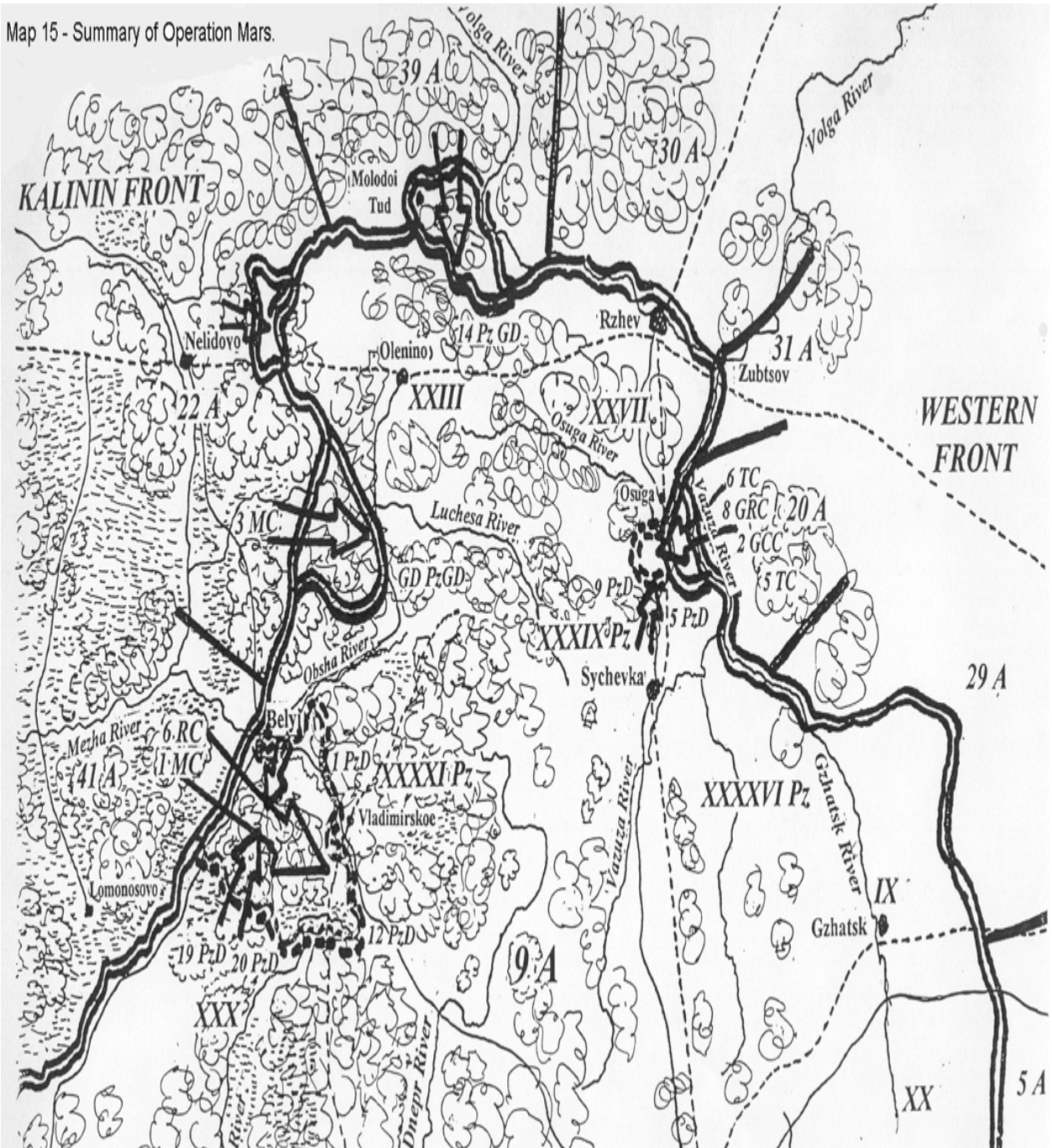
Map 13 - Situation in the Belyi sector, 11-16 December 1942.

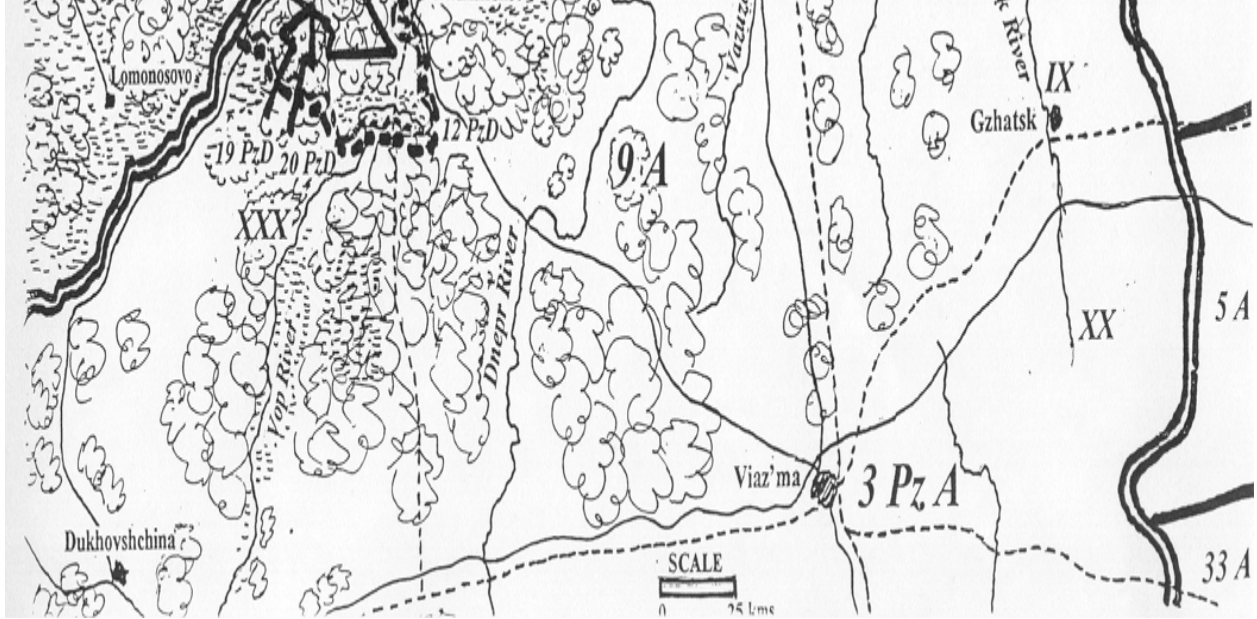
Even the twin defeats along the Vazuza River and at Belyi did not totally destroy Zhukov's resolve. Having been thwarted on the flanks of the Rzhev salient, Zhukov continued to attack in the north with his 39th Army until mid-December (see Map-14). Despite Zhukov's stubbornness, however, by 15 December Operation "Mars" was a shambles. Stalin, the *Stavka*, and Zhukov himself well understood that the offensive had failed. Long before, for example, Stalin had abandoned any hopes for a follow-on operation, and, as a result, in early December Stalin was already dispatching *Stavka* reserves southward to reinforce Vasilevsky's successful Operation "Uranus" in the Stalingrad region.



Map 14 - Situation in the Molodoi Tud sector, 7-23 December 1942.

Zhukov conducted Operation "Mars" in characteristic fashion. His assaults were massive in scale and unsparing in manpower and material. Discounting the harsh terrain and weather conditions, he relied on unrelenting pressure across the entire front and simple maneuver by his powerful mechanized and tank corps to achieve victory. Neither measure, however, succeeded. Numerous small German combat groups conducted a skillful tactical defense by taking maximum advantage of the terrain and bottling up attacking Red Army mobile forces before they reached the operational depths of their defenses (see Map-15). All the while, the *Wehrmacht's* forces wore down the attacking Red Army infantry and separated them from their supporting mobile forces. By avoiding panic and holding only where necessary, the German command slowly assembled reserves necessary to conduct successful counterattacks and counterstrokes and, ultimately, achieve victory.





Nevertheless, the German victory was a "close thing." While the heavy fighting produced catastrophic Red Army casualties, it also seriously weakened the defending German divisions. As a result, within a period of only two months, Model asked for and received permission to abandon the Rzhev salient. He and his army could ill afford another such victory.

Source materials regarding Red Army losses in Operation "Mars" are contradictory. German Ninth Army estimated that the operation cost the Red Army about 100,000 dead and as many as 200,000 men wounded or captured.[71] On the other hand, recently released Russian figures indicate 70,373 dead, captured, or missing in action and 145,301 wounded or ill. However, whichever figures prove correct, the personnel losses were substantial, particularly in an offensive, which many Russian historians claim was only diversionary in nature. This is apparent from the documented losses of the 20th Army's subordinate formations (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The 20th Army's combat losses during the period from 25 November through 18 December 1942

<i>Formation</i>	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing in action</i>	<i>Total</i>
251 RD	765	1,911	328	3,004
326 RD	1,248	3,156	81	4,485
42 GRD	1,118	2,858	175	4,151
336 RD	749	2,297	---	2,946
247 RD	1,143	5,301	---	6,444
1 GMRD	423	1,641	---	2,064
20 GRD	515	2,913	---	3,425
415 RD	692	1,865	---	2,557
30 GRD	652	1,768	170	2,590
354 RD	524	2,223	183	2,929

243 RD	748	1,954	4	2,706
8 GRC	2,311	7,434	360	10,105
331 RD	597	1,445	106	2,148
379 RD	182	527	---	709
2 GCC	1,222	2,858	49	4,129
2 Bn, ATR	8	22	3	33
52 Bn, ATR	22	28	---	50
Others	1,010	2,892	138	4,040
TOTAL	13,920	41,999	1,596	58,524

Source: "Opisanie boevykh deistvii na rubezhe r. Vazuza za 25 noiabria-18 dekabria 1942 goda" [An account of combat operations along the Vazuza River line from 25 November-18 December 1942], Polevoe upravlenie 20 Armii [The 20th Army's field headquarters], TsAMO RF [Central Archives of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense], F. 373, Op. 6631, D. 65, Ll. 41-42

For comparisons sake, Figure 2 shows the 20th Army's strength on 25 November and 11 December.

Figure 2. The 20th Army's combat strength at the beginning of each stage of Operation "Mars"

<i>Category</i>	<i>25 November 1942</i>	<i>11 December</i>
Personnel (Overall)	114,176	112,411
Personnel (Combat)	95,557	80,322*
Horses	10,976	9,774
Rifles	66,103	62,786
Heavy machine guns	455	410
AA machine guns	182	76
Light machine guns	1,902	1,927
PPD and PPSH	9,692	7,045
Mortars	1,473	1,159
Field guns	614	866
Guards mortars	334	345
Antitank guns and AA guns	365	74 (AA guns)
Antitank rifles	1,942	1,586
Vehicles	6,104	4,254
Tanks	334	91

*The 20th Army received 8,296 personnel replacements between 25 November and 18 December 1942.

Source: "Opisanie boevykh deistvii na rubezhe r. Vazuza za 25 noiabria-18 dekabria 1942 goda" [An account of combat operations along the Vazuza River line from 25 November-18 December 1942], Polevoe upravlenie 20 Armii [The 20th Army's field headquarters], TsAMO RF [Central Archives of

The Red Army's tank losses in "Operation Mars," which the Germans correctly estimated as roughly 1,700 vehicles, was equally staggering since it exceeded the total number of tanks the Red Army initially committed in Operation "Uranus".[72] The way in which the Red Army fought during Operation "Mars" and the carnage the operation produced have few parallels in the later war years. In its most grisly form, the offensive proved to be a precursor to the Red Army's famous frontal assault against German defenses on the Zeelow Heights during the Berlin offensive during April 1945. It is not just coincidental that Zhukov orchestrated both assaults. Unlike the case in November and December 1942, however, the victorious conclusion of the Berlin operation required no alteration of the historical record to preserve Soviet pride or generals' reputations.

The legacy of Operation "Mars" was total numbing silence. Stalin and Soviet historical imperatives dictated that Vasilevsky's feat at Stalingrad remained unblemished by the Rzhev failure. Stalin recognized Zhukov's greatest quality -- that he fought -- and, at this stage of the war, Stalin needed fighters. Therefore, Zhukov's reputation remained intact, and he shared with Vasilevsky the plaudits for the Stalingrad victory. Zhukov did gain a measure of revenge over German Army Group Center at Kursk in the summer of 1943 and in Belorussia in the summer of 1944. Ironically, however, it would be Vasilevsky who, as key *Stavka* planner, would be instrumental in the final defeat of German Army Group Center in East Prussia during January 1945. Such is the fickleness of history.

End Notes

- 1 Among the many traditional accounts of the Battle of Stalingrad and combat elsewhere along the German Eastern Front during the summer campaign of 1942, see William Craig, *Enemy at the Gates: The Battle for Stalingrad* (N.Y.: E. P. Dutton, 1973); Heinz Schröter, *Stalingrad: The Battle that Changed the World* (N.Y.: Ballentine, 1958); V. E. Tarrant, *Stalingrad* (N.Y.: Leo Cooper, 1992); Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad, The Fateful Siege: 1942-1943* (N.Y.: Viking Penguin, 1998); A. M. Samsonov, *Stalingradskaia bitva* [The Battle of Stalingrad] (Moscow: "Nauka," 1960); K. K. Rokossovsky, ed., *Velikaia bitva na Volge* [The great battle on the Volga] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965); and A. M. Samsonov, ed., *Stalingradskaia epopeia* [The Stalingrad epic] (Moscow: "Nauka," 1968).
- 2 For details on the strategic debate within the *Stavka* during the late winter and spring of 1942, see David M. Glantz, *Kharkov 1942: Anatomy of a Military Disaster* (Rockville, NY: Sarpedon, 1998), 21-59.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 59-248.
- 4 David M. Glantz, *Forgotten Battles of the Soviet-German War (1941-1945), volume III: The Summer Campaign (12 May-18 November 1942)* (Carlisle, PA: Self-published, 1999), 86-101.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 6-86.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 101-129.
- 7 For details see David m. Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad 1941-1944* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 213-233.

- 8 G. Zhukov, *Reminiscences and Reflections, Vol. 2* (Moscow: Progress, 1985), 86.
- 9 "Stavki VGK: Dokumenty i materialy 1942" [The *Stavka* VGK: Documents and materials] in V. A. Zolotarev, ed., *Russki arkhiv, No. 16, 5 (2)* (Moscow: "Terra," 1996), 426.
- 10 The numerous glaring flaws in the historical record during the period 1943 through 1945 include the failed Red Army Central and Western Fronts' Orel-Briansk-Smolensk offensive in February-March 1943, Operation "Polar Star" in February-March 1943, the Red Army's failed offensive into Belorussia in the fall and winter of 1943, the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts' Iassy-Roman [Targul-Frumos] offensive in early May 1944, the Gumbinen-Goldap offensive in late October 1944, and the Olomouc offensive in March-April 1945.
- 11 Existing Soviet accounts, including Zhukov's memoirs, obfuscate when Operation "Uranus" was planned, stating that planning occurred in late October and early November. It is now clear that both Operation "Mars" and "Uranus" were planned in late September.
- 12 Zhukov's memoirs distort both the calendar of events in fall 1942 and his role in and the course of Operation "Mars". He mentions the operation but obfuscates its date, purpose, and course. For an accurate account of Zhukov's complete wartime itinerary, including the vital period of fall 1942, see S. I. Isaev, *Vekhi frontovogo puti* [Landmarks of a front path], *VIZh*, No. 10 (October 1991), 22-25. This calendar of Zhukov's travels shows that he spent the bulk of this critical fall period with the Western and Kalinin Fronts. All subsequent references to Zhukov's activities accord with this calendar.
- 13 At the beginning of war, Zhukov had advocated a "southern" strategy. This accorded with his prior service in the Kiev Special Military District and his role in drafting prewar Soviet defense plans while he was serving as Chief of the General Staff. Zhukov converted to a "northern" strategy after his experiences at Moscow in winter 1941-1942 and strenuously argued that point of view during spring 1942. See David M. Glantz, *Kharkov, May 1942: The Anatomy of a Military Disaster* (London: Ian Allen, 1999).
- 14 Kalinin and Western Front forces, together with the Moscow Defense Zone, comprised 31 percent of the manpower, 32 percent of the artillery, almost 50 percent of the armor, and over 35 percent of the total Soviet armed forces strength. These forces were concentrated along only 17 percent of the overall front
- 15 These Soviet strength figures appear in A. A. Grechko, chief ed., *Istoriia vtoroi mirovoi voiny 1939-1945, tom shestoi* [A history of the Second World War, volume six] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), 34-35. German intelligence records generally substantiate the relative strengths.
- 16 As was the custom, all *Stavka* members participated in the planning of both operations. As deputy Supreme Commander, Zhukov did so as well, which later permitted him to share in the glory of the Stalingrad victory.
- 17 "Comments of Current Events", *Military Attache Report No. 2194* dated 28 September 1942 (Washington, DC: Military Intelligence Division W.D. G. S.), 2, in Army Intelligence Project Decimal Files RG 319, Box 1043. Classified confidential.
- 18 "Incoming message," *Military Attache Report No. 139* dated 10 December 1942 (Washington, DC: War Department Classified Message Center), in Army Intelligence Project Decimal Files RG 319, Box 580, No. 5). Classified confidential.
- 19 The 5th Army consisted of 6 rifle divisions, 4 rifle brigades, 2 tank brigades, and 9 artillery regiments, while 33rd Army included the 7th Guards Rifle Corps, 8 rifle divisions, 4 rifle brigades, a ski brigade, 3 tank brigades, and 5 artillery regiments. They were far stronger than the *front's* other armies, except for those delivering the main attack in Operation "Mars". See *Boevoi sostav*, 211-212.
- 20 The Soviets understood that two Rumanian armies and a portion of German Fourth Panzer Army supported German Sixth Army around Stalingrad.
- 21 Ultimately, Operation "Saturn" was truncated into Operation "Little Saturn" because German resistance at Stalingrad was stronger than anticipated. "Little Saturn" sought to destroy Italian and German forces along the Don River rather than reach deep to Rostov.
- 22 For the contents of the Western Front directive, see *Tsentral'nyi arkhiv ministerstva oborony* {Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense}, abbreviated *TsAMO*, Fond 386, Opis' 8583, Ed. Khr. [individual custody] 144, List [page] 8. All archival references hereafter cited as *TsAMO*, with appropriate fond (F.), opis (Op.), delo (D.), and page (L.).
- 23 "Opisanie boevykh deistvii na rubezhe r. Vazuza za 25 noiabria-18 dekabria 1942 goda" [An account of combat operations along the Vazuza River line from 25 November-18 December 1942], Polevoe

- upravlenie 20 Armii [The 20th Army's field headquarters], *TsAMO RF* [Central Archives of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense], F. 373, Op. 6631, D. 65, L. 2.
- 24 "Sychevsko-Rzhevskai oper. 31 A" [Sychevka-Rzhev operation of 31 Army], *TsAMO*, F. 386, Op. 8583, Ed. Khr. 144, LL. 7-8.
 - 25 "Plan nastupatel'noi operatsii "Mars" v oktiabre-noiabre 1942 g." [The plan for offensive Operation "Mars" in October-November 1942], in *TsAMO* F. 398, Op. 9038, Ed. Kh. 366, ll. 1-31.
 - 26 Late on 26 September, the *Stavka* planners adjourned their sessions and returned to their respective *front* sectors to coordinate planning with *front* commanders and staffs. After surveying the latest conditions in the south, Zhukov intended to rejoin his Western and Kalinin Fronts on 12 October, the initial date set for the launch of Operation "Mars". However, bad weather delayed the preparations for "Mars", and, instead of rejoining his *fronts*, on 12 October Zhukov returned to Moscow to finalize plans for the operation's first phase, now rescheduled for 28 October. On 21 October, while Zhukov traveled to the Kalinin Front to finalize attack preparations, the General Staff prepared final orders and dispatched them to the respective *fronts*.
 - 27 For a full explanation of the operational concept, see "Vvod v proryv konno-mekhanizirovannykh grupp" [Introduction into the penetration of a cavalry-mechanized group], *Sbornik materialov po izucheniiu opyta voiny, No. 9 (noiabr'-dekabr' 1943 g.)* [Collections of materials for the study of war experience, No. 9 (November-December 1943)] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1944), 135-139. This classified study of the operations of 20th Army's mobile group was prepared by the Red Army General Staff's Section for the Exploitation of War Experience. Hereafter cited as *SMPIOV*, with appropriate page.
 - 28 "Sychevsko-Rzhevskai oper.," *TsAMO*, F. 386, Op. 8583, Ed. Khr. 144, L. 10.
 - 29 For a description of 41st Army's mission within the context of Kalinin Front operations, see M. D. Solomatin, *Krasnogradtsy* [The men of Krasnograd] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 11-13 and "Boevye donoseniia i operativnye svodki shtaba 1 mekhkorpusa" [Combat reports and operational summaries of the 1st Mechanized Corps], *TsAMO*, F. 3424, Op. 1. D. 2, L. 31. Solomatin's work contains a thorough and generally accurate account of the 1st Mechanized and 6th Rifle Corps' operations. Less detailed descriptions of the 22nd and 39th Armies' missions are found in M. E. Katukov, *Na ostriie glavnogo udara* [On the point of the main attack] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), 182-183 and K. A. Malygin, *V tsentre boevogo poriadka* [In the center of the combat formation] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 69-70.
 - 30 Although no code name can yet be found, this phase of the operation may have been termed either Operation "Jupiter" or "Neptune." Soviet force concentrations clearly indicate that the *Stavka* intended to conduct this follow-on operation.
 - 31 No Soviet sources, either open or classified, mention specific plans for Operation "Jupiter." German Ninth Army records, however, document a major build-up in the 5th and 33rd Armies' sectors during October and November 1942. Soviet archival sources confirm this build-up. In addition to assigning the 3rd Tank Army to the Western Front in October and positioning it east of Viaz'ma, the *Stavka* deployed the 9th and 10th Tank Corps in the 5th and 33rd Armies' rear area. According to "Prikazy 10-mu TK s 13.5 po 27.12.42" [Orders to the 10th Tank Corps from 13.5 through 27.12.42], *TsAMO*, F. 3404, Op. 1, D. 1, L. 225, at 1800 hours on 13 November 1942, the 10th Tank Corps was shifted from the *Stavka* reserve to Western Front control. Subsequent reports document its deployment in 5th Army's sector. *Boevoe sostav, chast 2*, 190-91, 211-12, 235-36 records the reinforcement of 5th Army with the 30th Guards, 78th, 194th, and 379th Rifle Divisions and both the 5th and 33rd Armies with heavy amounts of supporting artillery.
 - 32 *Stavka* support for the Western and Kalinin Fronts included 31 tank brigades and 12 tank regiments, totaling 2,352 tanks, over 54 artillery regiments, 30 guards mortar battalions, and 23 antitank regiments with almost 10,000 guns and mortars, and 20 separate engineer and sapper battalions. This support included one of the newly fielded separate heavy guards mortar regiments (heavy *Katiushas* or "Stalin organs") and 18 separate heavy guards mortar battalions. See *Boevoi sostav*, 211-212.
 - 33 "Direktiva Stavki VGK No. 170651 komanduiushchemu voiskami Kalininskogo Fronta ob usileni voisk fronta" [*Stavka* VGK directive No. 170651 to the Kalinin Front commander concerning the reinforcement of the front] in Zolotarev "Stavka VGK, 1942," 426.
 - 34 For offensive details, see *SMPIOV*, No. 9, 141-150; A. L. Getman, *Tanki idut na Berlin (1941-1945)*

- [Tanks advance on Berlin], (Moscow: "Nauka," 1973), 70-76; and P. G. Kuznetsov, *Gvardeitsy-moskvichi* [Moscow guardsmen], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1962), 185-190. The latter are the histories of 6th Tank Corps and the 1st Guards Motorized Division.
- 35 For German accounts of the operation along the Vazuza River, see H. Grossman, *Rzhev: The Cornerstone of the Eastern Front*, translated from the German *Rshew: Eckpfeiler der Ostfront*, (Freidberg, 1980), and Anton Detlev von Plato, *Die Geschichte der 5. Panzerdivision 1938 bis 1945*, (Regensburg: Walhalla u. Praetoria Verlag KG Geog Zwickenpflug, 1978), 23-257.
 - 36 The 31st Army led its attack with the 88th, 336th, and 239th Rifle Divisions, supported by the 332nd and 145th Tank Brigades. The defending Germans decimated both tank brigades in three days of battle and inflicted huge losses on the rifle divisions. The story of the German 102nd Infantry Division, in particular, the intelligence situation before the operation, is found in David Kahn, "An Intelligence Case History: The Defense of Osuga, 1942," *Aerospace Historian*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter/December 1981), 242-251.
 - 37 In the sector between the Osuga and Vazuza Rivers, the German 102nd Infantry Division's 195th Infantry Regiment defeated the Soviet 326th, 42nd Guards, and 251st Rifle Divisions, which were supported by the 25th and 93rd Tank Brigades.
 - 38 The 80th and 240th Tank Brigades supported Mukhin's division.
 - 39 The second echelon 8th Guards Rifle Corps consisted of the 26th Guards Rifle Division, the 148th and 150th Rifle Brigades, and the 11th and 18th Tank Brigades. Its mission was to expand the bridgehead. In addition, 20th Army had the 1st Guards Motorized Rifle Division and 31st Tank Brigade in army reserve.
 - 40 Arman's 22nd and 20th Tank Brigades and the 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade made it across the road, but with heavy losses, while his 100th Tank Brigade remained in the bridgehead, stopped by interlocking German strong points.
 - 41 Elements of Kriukov's 2nd and 3rd Guards Cavalry Divisions and his entire 20th Cavalry Division made it across the road. His 4th Guards Cavalry Division and corps headquarters did not.
 - 42 The immense traffic jam along the Vazuza River also delayed the forward deployment of supporting artillery.
 - 43 For details on the Soviet offensive in the Belyi sector, see M. D. Solomatin, *Krasnogradtsy* [The men of Krasnograd], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), "Report by the 3rd Air Army Representative with the 1st MC During Operation ""Mars",," *TsAMO*, F. 311, Op. 311, D. 24, LL. 86-87. Original document from the archives (Translator unknown), and "*Boevye doneseniia i operativnye svodka shataba I mekhkorpua*" [Combat report and operational summary of 1st Mechanized Corps' headquarters], *TsAMO*, F. 3404, Op. 1, D. 2, LL. 2-36.
 - 44 Popov's rifle corps consisted of the 150th Rifle Division and the 74th, 75th, 78th, and 91st Rifle Brigades, and Solomatin's corps, the 65th and 219th Tank and the 19th, 35th, and 37th Mechanized Brigades.
 - 45 Solomatin's corps numbered 10 KV heavy tanks, 119 T-34 medium, and 95 T-70 light tanks. See the corps' after-action report at *TsAMO*, F. 3424, Op. 1. D. 2. LL. 2-36.
 - 46 Popov's infantry accompanied Solomatin's advance, but, since it lagged behind the armor, it made seizure of the Belyi-Vladimirskoe road more difficult.
 - 47 The initial Soviet assault routed a regiment of the German 246th Infantry Division. Tarasov believed few German reserves were available to defend the city. Moreover, since Belyi had held out during and since the Soviet Winter offensive of 1941-1942, it was an even more enticing target. A recent detailed analysis of the fighting in the Belyi sector states, "I think that the analysis of the Belyi material that I found in your recent book indicates that the German lines south of Belyi were even closer to breaking than you imply in your book. For example, *Grossdeutschland's* 41st Grenadier Regiment was reduced to one company, a bunch of the 246th Infantry Division's artillerymen spiked their guns on the first day of the battle, the better part of the 352nd Grenadier Regiment was destroyed, and *Grossdeutschland's* antitank battalion [StuGBn] was reduced to only 14 guns."
 - 48 Gruz's division was first reinforced by Solomatin's 19th Mechanized Brigade and, subsequently, by the 91st Rifle Brigade.
 - 49 For details on German actions in the Belyi sector, see Grossman, *Rzhev*, and Rolf O. G. Stoves, *1. Panzer-Division 1935-1945*, (Bad Neuheim: Verlag Hans-Henning Podzun, 1961), 375-409.
 - 50 Group von Weitersheim consisted of the 1st Panzer Division's 113th Panzer Grenadier Regiment

- and Group Kassnitz of *Grossdeutschland* Panzer Grenadier Division's Fusilier Regiment.
- 51 The Belyi-Vladimirskoe road was the only German resupply route into Belyi.
 - 52 The 47th and 48th Mechanized Brigades were in army reserve, each with a regiment of 39 tanks.
 - 53 In his memoirs, *Nastupala grozhaia bronia* [Threatening armor attacks], (Kiev: Politicheskoi literary Ukrainy, 1981), 38, Dremov notes only that his brigade took part in "an unsuccessful operation near Belyi."
 - 54 For additional details on Ninth Army's defense and detailed intelligence information on Soviet forces throughout the operation, see "Tatigkeitsbericht der Abteilung Ic/A.O." dated 1 July-3 Dec 1942, AOK 9, 27970/6 in National Archives (NAM) microfilm series NAM T-312, Roll 304. Daily operational and intelligence maps accompany these reports.
 - 55 *Grossdeutschland's* Grenadier Regiment fielded forward a battalion at a time after helping repulse the Soviet assault further north. Details on Soviet operations in the Luchesa valley are sketchy. See M. E. Katukov, *Na ostriie glavnogo udara* [At the point of the main attack], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), which, although it admits the operation took place, says little about its conduct. Memoirs by brigade commanders Babadzhanian and Dragunsky are little better. The records of Ninth Army and *Grossdeutschland* Division provide the best account and confirm the participating Soviet units' identification.
 - 56 During this period Lushkevich committed his reserve 114th Rifle Brigade and 39th Tank Regiment. When these forces proved inadequate, he began shifting rifle regiments into battle from other army sectors. The Germans, however, matched these piecemeal reinforcements with just enough strength to hold Lushkevich's army at bay but not enough to close the breach.
 - 57 Zygin assaulted along the Molodoi Tud with his 373rd, 135th, and 158th Rifle Divisions, supported by the 28th and 81st Tank Brigades. He attacked on the flanks with four rifle brigades, the 100th and 117th on the right and the 136th and 101st on the left, supported by 28th and 29th Tank Regiments. For the few Soviet details see, V. P. Boiko, *S dumoi o Rodine* [With thoughts about the Homeland], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979) and N. M. Khlebnikov, *Pod grokhot soten baterei* [Under the thunder of hundreds of batteries], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979). The former was the commander of 28th Tank Brigade and the later 39th Army chief of artillery.
 - 58 The 100th Rifle Brigade broke through 253rd Infantry Division's defenses southwest of Molodoi Tud city and advanced 5 kilometers into the German rear. A skillful counterattack by two battalions from *Grossdeutschland* Division's Grenadier Regiment thwarted the Soviet advance, which Zygin was unable to reinforce. Thereafter, *Grossdeutschland's* two battalions speedily regrouped to meet the Soviet attack in the Luchesa valley.
 - 59 Most of the reinforcements came from the 31st Army.
 - 60 Getman, 73-74 and *SMPIOV*, No. 9, 148-149. All of Arman's brigades were decimated except for the 100th Tank Brigade, which had been unable to accompany the corps in its drive across the road.
 - 61 For details of 20th Cavalry Division's "raid" through the German rear, see A. I. Sekretov, *Gvardeiskaia postup' (boevoi put' 17-i Mozyrskoi Krasnoznamennoi ordena Lenina, Suvorova i Kutuzova kavaleriiskoi divizii, podvhefnoi Tadjikistnu, v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945 gg.)* [Guards gait (the combat path of the Mozyr, Red Banner, Orders of Lenin, Suvorov, and Kutuzov 17th Guards Cavalry Division, sponsored by Tadjikistan in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945)], (Dushanbe: "Donish," 1985), 40-48.
 - 62 Solomatin, 28-29. Solomatin had already withdrawn his 37th Mechanized Brigade from the outskirts of Vladimirskoe, where it had severed the critical German rail line and road to Belyi.
 - 63 As of 20 November, the 12th Panzer fielded 46 Pz III tanks, 19 Pz IV tanks, 1 T-34 tank, and 8 other command or specialized model tanks.
 - 64 Ninth Army records confirm the interdiction efforts by Soviet partisans, which significantly slowed 20th Panzer Division's advance. Although the tank strength of the two panzer divisions is unknown, given the terrain and movement problems, they probably fielded no more than between 25-30 tanks each.
 - 65 See Solomatin, 30-35 and 1st Mechanized Corps' after-action report, which are remarkably congruous.
 - 66 See Getman, 74, who states that 6th Tank Corps' strength was increased to 100 tanks by 11 December, and A. D. Kochetkov, *Dvinskii tankovyi: boevoi put' 5-go tankovogo dvinskogo korpusa* [The Dvina Tank: the combat path of the 5th Dvina Tank Corps], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1989). The latter provides detail on the tank corps' strength and its role in the December operation. It accords

well with 5th Tank Corps' archival documents. Between 2 and 10 December, Zhukov and Konev reinforced Kiriukhin's army with the fresh 5th Tank Corps and several divisions drawn from 31st Army, ordered the hasty reconstitution of Arman's 6th Tank Corps, and reinforced Lieutenant General M. S. Khozin's adjacent 29th Army to twice its original strength.

- 67 "Rasporiazhenie Verkhovnogo Glavnokomanduiushchego predstaviteliu Stavki ob usilenii 20-i armii" [Instructions from the Supreme High Commander to the *Stavka* Representative concerning the strengthening of the 20th Army], in Zolotarev, "*Stavka* VGK, 1942," 460.
 - 68 "Direktiva Stavki VGK No. 170700 komanduiushchim voiskami Zapadnogo i Kalininskogo frontov o zadachakh po razgromu rzhevsko-sychevsko-olenino-belyiskoi gruppirovka protivnika" [*Stavka* VGK directive No.170700 to the Western and Kalinin Front commanders concerning the missions to destroy the enemy Rzhev-Sychevka-Olenino-Belyi grouping], in Zolotarev, "*Stavka* VGK, 1942," 462-463.
 - 69 See combat reports in 5th Tank Corps archival files at *TsAMO*, F. 3404, Op. 1, D. 9, 10, and 259, which include records of daily actions and losses from 11-15 December.
 - 70 *TsAMO*, F. 3424, Op. 1, D. 2, L. 36.
 - 71 Official figures indicate that 545,070 Red Army troops participated in the operation, and the attacking forces lost 215,674 men, including 70,373 irrecoverable losses and 145,301 medical losses. These figures include the Kalinin Front's 22nd, 39th, and 41st Armies and the 3rd Air Army and the Western Front's 20th, 30th, and 31st Armies and the 1st Air Army. These figures do not include the 29th Army's losses. See "Liudskie poteri Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v 1941-1945 gg.: Novye aspekty" [Personnel losses of the Soviet Armed Forces 1941-1945: New aspects], *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 2 (March-April 1999), 6.
 - 72 The tally in individual Soviet formations was equally shocking. In its after-action report, Kiriukhin's 20th Army recorded 58,524 men lost out of 114,176 originally committed. The army's 8th Guards Rifle Corps lost 6,058 men in the five days of combat, and by 7 December the corps' 26th Guards Rifle Division had just over 400 "fighters" remaining. At the time the 148th Separate Rifle Brigade had 47 riflemen remaining and the 150th Rifle Brigade only 110. The tank and mechanized corps too were decimated. The 6th Tank Corps lost virtually its entire strength twice over, the 1st Mechanized Corps was essentially destroyed, and the 5th Tank Corps, whose tanks went into combat without their white camouflage paint, lost its entire complement of tanks in three days of combat. Its 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade counted over 1,500 dead, fully 70 percent of its combat strength. By 15 December the corps could muster only one composite rifle battalion. These losses were but a microcosm of the price the Soviets paid for defeat in Operation "MARS". For a detailed survey of Soviet losses, see German Ninth Army records and Soviet archival documents cited above.
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IV. German Military Abbreviations and Terms

Abt	Abteilung	Battalion, Detachment
AK	Armeekorps	(Army) Corps
AOK	Armeeoberkommando	Headquarters of an Army
-	Armee	Army
Arko	Artilleriekommandeur	Artillery Commander
Aufk	Aufklärungs	Recon unit
	Bau	Construction
Befh	Befehlshaber	Commander
Btl	Bataillon	Battalion
Beob	Beobachtung	Obersvation
Burko	Bruckenkolonne	Bridge Column
Det	Detachment	
E,Ers	Ersatz	Replacement
FE	Feldersatz	Field Replacement
Fest	Festungs	Fortress
FH	Feldhaubitze	Field Howitzer
FK	Feldkanone	Field Cannon
Flak	Flugabwehrkanone	Anti-Aircraft Gun
Fkl	Funklenk	remote-controlled
FS	Fallschirm	Parachute/Airborne
Füs	Füsilier	Infantry
G, Gesch	Geschütz	gun
Geb	Gebirg-	mountain
gem	Gemischter	mixed
GK	Gebirgskanone	mountain gun
	Gliederung	Formation Organization
gp, gep	Gepanzert	armored
Grp	Gruppe	Group, Force
Gren	Grenadier	infantry
H, Haub	Haubitze	howitzer
H	Heeres-	Army
Hgr	Heeresgruppe	Army Group

IG	Infanterie-Geschütze	infantry gun
Jg,Jäg	Jäger	Light Infantry
K,Kan	Kanone	Cannon
Kdo	Kommando	command
Kfz	Kraftfahrzeug	motor vehicle
Kol	Kolonne	column
Kp	Kompanie	company
KStN	Kreisstärkenachweisung	War Footing Table of Organization
kz	kurz	short
I,le,lei	leicht	light
LG	Leichtgeschütz	recoilless gun
lg	lang	long
Lw	Luftwaffe	German Air Force
M,Mörs	Morser	Mortar
m	mittlere	medium
	mitte	Middle, Center
mot	motorisiert	motorized
mot S	motorisierter Selbstfahrlafette	self-propelled carriage
mot Z	motorisierter mit Kraftzug	motor towed
Nbl	Nebel	smoke
Nachr	Nachricht	Signal
NW,Nbl W	Nebelwerfer	rocket launcher
Ob	berbefehlshaber	Commander-in-Chief
OKH	Oberkommando des Heerse	Army High Command
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht	Armed Forces High Command
Pak	Panzerabwehrkanone	anti-tank gun
Pi, Pio	Pionier	Engineer
Pz	Panzerabwehrkanone	tank, armor
Pz-Bef	Panzerbefehlwagen	command tank
PzGren	Panzergrenadier	motorized infantry
PzGren (gp)	Panzergrenadier (gepanzert)	armored infantry
(r),russ	russisch	Russian
RAD	Reichsarbeitsdienst	Reich Labor Service
RSO	Raupenschlepper Ost	fully tracked load carrier

s,schw	schwere	heavy
Schn	Schnelle	mobile,fast
Sd	Sonder	special
SdKfz	Sonder-Kraftfahrzeug	special military motor vehicle
Sf	selbstfhr	self-propelled
Sfl	Selbstfhrlafette	self-propelled carriage
Sich	Sicherheits	Security
SPW	Schützenpanzerwagen	armored personnel carrier
SS	Waffen-SS	Nazi party military arm
ss,sw	schwerte	super heavy
St,Stb	Stab	staff, headquarters
Strass	Strassen-	road
	Strum-	assault
StuG	Strumgeschütz	(self-propelled) assault gun
StuH	Strumghaubitze	(self-propelled) assault howitzer
StuPz	Sturmpanzer	assault tank, armored heavy infantry
V,Versorg	Versorgungs-	support
Verm	Vermessungs-	calibration,mapping, cartographical
Wfr	Werfer	launcher (rocket,grenade)
WK	Wehrkreis	Corps Area, Military District
z b V zur	besonderer Verwendung	for special purposes (for special use)
z Vfg zur	Verfügung	reserves (at the disposition of)
Zg	Zug	platoon

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E. Archival Records

Formation	Series	Roll	Item #	1st Frame	Contents
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	T-312	297	26791/12	7863068	unit reports, reinforcements, maps
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	T-312	305	28878/1	7871790	oob charts

	T-312	307	29234/3	7873476	daily reports
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	T-312	307	29234/5	7874001	Korps orders
	T-312	307	29234/6	7874012	meeting notes - strength and oob
	T-312	320	35939/1	7888859	situation maps
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	T-312	654	27067/7-9	1	daily reports
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	T-314	777	36056/14-15	1	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
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XXXIX.PzK	T-314	932	26522/14-18	1	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
	T-314	933-4	26522/19-25	1	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
	T-314	937	32745/1	1176	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
XXXXI.AK	T-314	985	31462/2	567	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
	T-314	985	31462/3	833	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
	T-314	985	31462/4	1113	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
XXXXVI.AK	T-314	1069	26341/5	910	daily reports
	T-315	30	29626/1-7	328	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
2.PzD	T-315	93	41962/2	285	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
5.PzD	T-315	271-2	32283/1-6	334	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
6.ID	T-315	314	27419/16 & 17	180	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
7.ID	T-315	381	26774/6 & 7	1	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
9.PzD	T-315	541	24694/2	660	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
	T-315	541-2	24862/1 & 2	1104	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
10.ID (mot)	T-315	553	33130/4	670	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
11.PzD	T-315	594-6	26009/2-5 & 7	663	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
14.ID (mot)	T-315	652	31756/3	395	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
18.PzD (part)	T-315	716	27134/2 thru 5	1	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
31.ID	T-315	867	27848/6	327	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
35.ID	T-315	893	32490/22	1100	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
36.ID (mot)	T-315	900	28375/1	1163	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
72.ID	T-315	1061	31307/7	626	reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
87.ID	T-315	1144	26482/6 thru 13	427	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc
95.ID	T-315	1178-9	27924/1 & 2-3	737	diary with reports, orders, charts, maps, etc