

# **Ostfront 1943**

**Notebook #10:**

**Die Schlacht im Kursker  
Bogen (Jul 43)**

**(Notizen)**

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**“Die Stimme des Blutes deines Bruders  
schreit zu mir von der Erde.“  
(Genesis 4:10)**

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<sup>1</sup> **Note:** My notes, Nov 09.

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## NOTEBOOK #10:

### *“Die Schlacht im Kursker Bogen”* (Jul 43)

#### **10.1: The Oxford Companion to World War II. I.C.B. Dear (Gen. Ed.).<sup>2</sup>**

##### Kursk:

In the Soviet view, Kursk was the *decisive turning-point* of the German-Soviet war, the point after which the Soviet forces permanently held the initiative. In fact, the battle confirmed but did not decide that: Hitler and his generals knew it beforehand. The most they expected was to extract psychological leverage from a precarious, strategically insignificant advantage, as Hitler put it, to “light a bonfire” that would impress the world and possibly intimidate the Soviet Command. (517)

The **1942/43** winter campaign left a westward bulge **190 km (118 mi.)** wide and **120 km (75 mi.)** deep in the front around Kursk, an important railroad junction some **800 km (500 mi.)** to the south of Moscow. Inside were five [**5**] Soviet armies. On the north, von Kluge had shortened Army Group Center’s front and had an army, **9. Army**, to spare. On the south, Manstein’s Army Group South had acquired three [**3**] almost new SS panzer divisions. In Germany, Panther and Tiger tanks, somewhat superior to the Soviet **T34/85** and **KV85**, were coming into quantity production. On **15 Apr 43**, Hitler ordered Kluge and Manstein to be ready by **4 May 43** to start an operation (CITADEL) that would pinch off the bulge. On **6 May 43**, he postponed the offensive until mid-**Jun 43**, later telling his tank expert, Guderian, that thinking about CITADEL made his stomach turn over. (517)

German offensive began on **5 Jul 43**. Model’s three panzer corps (**9. AOK**) had the village of Olkhovatka, about a third of the way to Kursk, as their first objective. By nightfall on the second day, they had covered **21 km (13 mi.)** and were approaching Olkhovatka. Rokossovsky then committed his reserves . . . forcing the panzer corps into a battle of attrition reminiscent of the First World War. On **9 Jul 43**, Model (O.B. **9. AOK**) told Kluge that a breakthrough to Kursk was hardly any longer to be expected. (517)

In the south, the Germans managed to achieve the only element of surprise in the entire operation. In two days, the **4. PzArmy** (Hoth) attack gained **20 km** on a **40 km** front. Hoth managed another **15 km** by **11 Jul 43**. The next day, **2. SS PzK** crossed the last trench line [accurate?] and at Prokhorovka encountered the Soviet **5. Gds Tank Army**, which had been part of the Stavka reserve. The ensuing melee involving some **1200** tanks, three-quarters of them Soviet, became the largest tank battle of the war.<sup>3</sup> (517)

The events of **12 Jul 43** around Kursk combined w/ the Anglo-American landings on Sicily two days earlier to extinguish Hitler’s bonfire. . . Hitler cancelled CITADEL on **13 Jul 43**; and what was left of the initiative passed to the Soviets. (517)

Soviet histories treat the battle as including also the subsequent elimination of the Orel and Kharkov salients in late **Jul** and **Aug 43**. (517)

**Note:** See good map on p. 518.

<sup>2</sup> **Note:** This entry prepared by Earl Ziemke.

<sup>3</sup> **Note:** Collate these figures w/ Glantz and Dunn.

## **10.2: “Die Schlacht im Kursker Bogen.” DRZW / Bd. 8: Die Ostfront 1943/44. Der Krieg im Osten u. an der Nebenfronten (S. 83-208):**

-- Unterlegenheit der Wehrmacht: Book apparently demonstrates that the *hoffnungslose Unterlegenheit der Wehrmacht* from **1943** on was *greater* than has been hitherto assumed; and that it was the *sowjet. Fuehrungsmangel* that prevented an earlier end to war.<sup>4</sup>

-- Deutsche Generalitaet: Nach Wegner, verschrieb sie sich mehrheitlich einer zweifelhaften *Kriegsfuehrung des „als ob*,” – als ob der Krieg noch zu einem annehmbaren Ende zu bringen sei.<sup>5</sup>

-- Battle lost in *myth and legend*. Myth of decisive German defeat propagated by Soviets after war; particularly by Gen. Lt. Rotmistrov, cdr of **5. Gds Tank Army**. Surprisingly, until recently, historians had virtually ignored *German sources* on the battle.

-- No turning point of World War II. Flower of the German tank force not destroyed in the battle in **Jul 43**. The Germans, in fact, had *more* tanks in the East in **Dec 43** than at start of Operation “Zitadelle.” (See Table, p 157.) Ironically, for first time, the Germans actually demonstrated the *superiority* of their new tank designs (i.e., Tiger and Panther) over Red Army tanks. As author writes: “Kursk markiert in der Tat eine Wende auf dem Gebiet der Panzertechnik – allerdings zugunsten der deutschen Panzerwaffe.“ (158-65)

-- Ein britischer Historiker [i.e., Richard Overy] urteilt ueber diese Schlacht: „Der sowj. Erfolg bei Kursk, wo so viel auf dem Spiel stand, war der wichtigste Einzelsieg des gesamten Krieges. Sein Stellenwert kommt dem der grossen Entscheidungsschlachten der Vergangenheit gleich – Sedan im Jahre **1870** sowie Borodino (1812), Leipzig (1813) u. Waterloo (1814) in napoleonischer Zeit. Kursk bezeichnet den Wendepunkt.“<sup>6</sup> (169-70)

In der neueren historischen Forschung wird die strategische Bedeutung dieser Schlacht ausgesprochen unpraetentioes eingestuft. Danach stellte das Unternehmen „Zitadelle“ lediglich eine „Verlegenheitsoperation“ dar, weil dem Angriff jede strategische Zielsetzung fehlte. . . Das Unternehmen war keine strategische Offensive mehr [i.e., in comparison to the strategic offensives of **1941** and the summer of **1942**], sondern nur eine begrenzte Angriffsoperation aus der strategischen Defensive heraus. Wie bereits angefuehrt, wollte Hitler in diesem Jahr an der Ostfront keinen „K.o.-Sieg,” sondern „nur kleine Haken schlagen.“ Ausserdem war es inzwischen zu einer derartigen Verschiebung des militaerischen Kraefteverhaeltnisses gekommen, dass die Wehrmacht keine Chance mehr besass, den Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion in einer entscheidungssuchenden Operation – gleichsam mit einem einzigen Schlag – zu gewinnen. So verfolgten Hitler u. die Generale im **OKH** mit dem Unternehmen „Zitadelle“ eigentlich nur zwei [2] begrenzte operative Ziele (For details see, p 170)

<sup>4</sup> **Note:** This insight from J. Huerter’s review of this volume. In his review, Huerter points out that the book is often based on the memoirs and post-war studies of the German generals: “In dieser ‘Rekonstruktion des Zweiten Weltkrieges aus dem Geist des Generalstabes’ ging es vor allem darum, alle Schuld auf den mil. Dilettanten Hitler abzuwaelzen, der die ‚Profis‘ dauernd behindert hat. Dieser Linie folgt Frieser weitgehend kritiklos.“ Yet as Huerter makes clear, „die Kapitel Bernd Wegners ueber die Strategie der deutschen Fuehrung zeichnen ein wesentlich differenzierteres Bild. Danach sind viele militaerischen Fehler nicht auf den Dilettantismus Hitlers, sondern auf Kompetenzengerangel, Ehrgeiz, Eifersucht u. schlichtweg Unfaehigkeit innerhalb der Generalitaet zurueckzufuehren.“ As a result, „Frieser unterschaezt den originaeren Anteil der Heeresgeneralitaet an der deutschen Katastrophe.“

<sup>5</sup> **Note:** Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> **Note:** R. Overy, Die Wurzeln des Sieges, S. 130.

Actual losses on both sides as follows: (150-52)

Gesamtverluste beim "Zitadelle"  
**(5.-16.7.43)**

German

Pz./Stug. = **252**  
Men = **54,182**  
Acft = **159**

Soviet

Tanks = **1614 – 1956** (official vs. estimated)  
Men = **177,847 – 319,000** (same)  
Acft = **459 – 1961** (same)

Hitler and German High Command did *not* seek a *kriegsentscheidende Schlacht* at Kursk. Objective was to pre-emptively disrupt the planned Soviet summer offensive, which threatened to overwhelm the German defensive front.

**Prochorovka:**<sup>7</sup> Soviet accounts of this battle are "voll von Mythen." Myth of this decisive encounter spread by Soviets after war (primarily by former cdr of Soviet **5. Gds Tank Army**). Marshall Konev characterized the battle melodramatically as the "swan song" ("Schwanengesang") of the German panzer troops. Ca. **1500** tanks did not meet on a **4 km-sq.** battlefield. Only one [1] German tank battalion in this tiny sector.<sup>8</sup> (124)

Title of one of the books on the battle, "The Tigers are Burning," by Martin Caidin. However, only **10** Tiger tanks lost during the entire Kursk battle. (151)

The **II. SS PzKs** was not totally destroyed in the Kursk battle (as Russians have claimed); in fact, it lost only **33** tanks/assault guns in the entire Operation "Citadel!" (121)

Moreover, German archive documents - which had been strangely neglected by historians until only a few years ago – show in minute detail the tank losses of H.Gr.Sued. From these emerge the surprising yet definitive result, that on **12 Jul 43**, the **II. SS PzK** did *not lose a single tank or assault gun* (i.e., not one tank or Stug was a total loss). However, three [3] of the panzer corps' disabled tanks could not be salvaged, and were later designated as "Totalverluste." (129-30)

As author writes: "Die These von Kursk als 'Wendepunkt' kann allein durch die Statistik widerlegt werden." (158)

An innovation ("Novum") in the Battle of Kursk was that, for the first time, tanks were attacked from the air in large numbers. The Germans, of course, had a special version of the "Stuka, the **JU 87G**, each outfitted w/ two **37mm** cannon (Flak 38). The Germans also had the Henschel **HS 129** "Schlachtflieger,"

<sup>7</sup> **Note:** „Die Panzerschlacht, die nicht stattfand.“ (131)

<sup>8</sup> **Note:** An dieser Stelle gilt es festzuhalten: In der Enge von Prochorovka zwischen Bahndamm u. Psel stand keineswegs eine deutsche Pz.-Armee mit **800** Kampfpanzern bereit, wie sowj. Darstellungen behaupten, sondern lediglich ein einziges Panzerbataillon. (124)

armed w/ a **30mm** cannon. Conversely, the Soviets had their **IL-2** "Sturmovik" available in large numbers. (164-65)

### Kriegswende Stalingrad?:<sup>9</sup>

Es wurde bereits von zeitgenoessischen Beobachtern innerhalb wie ausserhalb Deutschlands weitgehend empfunden, dass nach Stalingrad das deutsche Reich den Krieg nicht mehr gewinnen konnte.<sup>10</sup> Die Tragoedie an der Volga habe, so wusste z.B. der Sicherheitsdienst der SS in der zweiten Januarhaelfte **1943** zu berichten, „*das ganze Volk [ . . . ] bis ins tiefste aufgewuehlt.*“ Sie veraenderte darueber hinaus nachhaltig die Bewertung der Gesamtkriegslage durch die Bevoelkerung. „Allgemein ist,“ so ein anderer Lagebericht vom **4 Feb 43**, „die Ueberzeugung vorhanden, dass Stalingrad einen Wendepunkt des Krieges bedeutete.“ Es ist kaum ueberraschend, dass die Stimmung der Bevoelkerung damit „einen bisher nicht gekannten Tiefstand“ erreichte. . . Selbst die Person des „Fuehrers“ . . . wurde von nun an zu einer Zielscheibe der Kritik. Vor diesem Hintergrund wirkte der Untergang der **6. Armee** zugleich als Katalysator der sich neubelebenden . . . Widerstandsbewegungen. (3-4)

Nicht weniger gravierend als in Deutschland waren die psychologischen Rueckwirkungen der Stalingrad-Tragoedie in den mit dem Reich verbuendeten Laendern. . . Ein besonders markantes Beispiel hierfuer bietet Finnland, wo vertrauliche Meinungsumfragen einen geradezu dramatischen Verfall der Siegeszuversicht in der Bevoelkerung registrierten. . . Nicht sehr viel anders verhielten sich die Dinge bei den uebrigen Verbueundeten Deutschlands. . . (4-5)

Das Ausmass der deutschen Niederlage u. die Stosskraft der sowj. Winteroffensive wurden auch bei den neutralen Maechten mit Ueberraschung, in der Regel auch mit Besorgnis registriert. Sie fuehrten in Istanbul ebenso wie in Bern u. Stockholm zu einer nun durchweg pessimistischen Einschaeztung der den Achsenmaechten verbleibenden Siegeschancen. Dabei war es, aehnlich wie schon ein Jahr zuvor, wiederum einem schwedischen Beobachter vorbehalten, die Lage Deutschlands am treffendsten zu prognostizieren: Am **16 Mar 43** schrieb der in Berlin akkreditierte Militaerattache, von der Unausweichlichkeit der deutschen Niederlage laengst ueberzeugt, „es werde voraussichtlich noch **2-3** Jahre dauern, ehe Deutschland zusammenbreche.“ (5)

Auch die politische u. militaerische Fuehrung Grossbritanniens u. der USA ging, als man sich Mitte **Jan 43** in Casablanca traf, davon aus, dass – sofern nur die alliierte Koalition Bestand habe – die Sowjetunion den Krieg ueberstehen u. Deutschland ihn verlieren werde. (5-6)

Die unter zeitgenoessischen Beobachtern verbreitete subjektive Empfindung Stalingrads als Kriegswende ist im Nachkriegsschrifttum . . . bis hin zur spaeteren Gedenkliteratur,<sup>11</sup> mit bemerkenswerter

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<sup>9</sup> **Note:** Zeitler selbst gab seiner (unveroeffentlichten) Stalingrad-Darstellung den Untertitel: „Der Wendepunkt des Krieges.“ (6, f.n. 25)

<sup>10</sup> **Note:** Diese Position, fuer die der vorliegende Band (wie schon fruere Baende derselben Reihe) eine Fuelle von Materialien bereitstellt, ist in der internationalen Forschung umstritten. So vertritt Overy (Die Wurzeln des Sieges) die Auffassung, der Krieg habe sich erst im Laufe der Jahre **1942-44** zugunsten der Alliierten entschieden (aehnlich auch Weinberg, Eine Welt in Waffen). Demgegenueber scheint sich v.a. unter deutschen Historikern zunehmend die Meinung durchzusetzen, dass Deutschland mit dem definitiven Scheitern seiner Blitzkriegskonzeption im Spaet-herbst **1941** seine Chancen auf einen „Endsieg“ verspielt habe. Die im Folgenden entwickelte Auffassung geht darueber noch hinaus. (3, f.n. 1)

<sup>11</sup> **Note:** Charakteristisch schon die Titel der Gedenkbeitraege aus Anlass diverser Jahrestage der Schlacht: Stalingrad: „Wendepunkt des Krieges“ (Der Spiegel, **31.1.93**); Kriegswende Stalingrad (Europaeische Wehrkunde, 32, [1983]. . . Gravierender als derartige journalistischen Schnellschuesse [sic?] ist, wenn Alan Bullock noch **1991** in Missachtung neuerer Forschungen urteilt: „**1943** entschied sich der Krieg. Als das Jahr zu Ende [!] ging, stand die Niederlage fest. . . „ (Hitler u. Stalin, S. 1024) Vgl. aehnlich auch Hubatsch (Erlaeuterungen zum KTB OKW, Bd. 3,

Selbstverstaendlichkeit in den Rang einer *scheinbaren geschichtlichen Tatsache* erhoben worden. Indes liegen die Dinge aus der Perspektive des Historikers aus mehreren, hier nur anzudeutenden Gruenden weit weniger klar. (6)

Da ist zum einen die spaetestens seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg unabweisbare Erfahrung, dass moderne, mithin hochgradig komplexe Kriege offenbar *nicht mehr durch einzelne „Entscheidungsschlachten“ entschieden werden*.<sup>12</sup> [Note: Dies verkannt zu haben, war, wie bereits Hillgruber (Das Russlandbild der fuehrenden deutschen Militaers, S. 258 f.) ueberzeugend nachgewiesen hat, einer der Grundirrtuemer des deutschen Generalstabs in der Planungsphase des „Barbarossa“-Unternehmens gewesen. Bemerkenswert in diesem Sinne erscheint auch Speers Fazit seiner Nachkriegsreflexionen: „Letzen Endes werden moderne Kriege durch die *groessere technische Kapazitaet entschieden*, u. die lag nicht bei uns.“ (Spandauer Tagebuecher, S. 91)] Weit ausschlaggebender erscheinen, zumal bei langer Kriegsdauer, die den beteiligten Parteien verfuegbaren *personellen u. materiellen, logistischen u. technologischen Potentiale* sowie die Faehigkeit, diese effizienz zu mobilisieren u. systemgerecht zu koordinieren. . . (6-7)

Zum anderen ist die Kriegswende-Diskussion auch darum problematisch, weil sie die Vorstellung impliziert, der Krieg habe seit u. bedingt durch Stalingrad einen grundlegend anderen Verlauf als vordem genommen. Bezogen auf Deutschland hiesse dies, dass mit dem Ausgang der Schlacht die Strasse des Sieges endgueltig verlassen worden sei, ein bis dahin noch gewinnbarer Krieg sich nunmehr in einen aussichtslosen verwandelt habe. Indessen kann *davon keine Rede sein*. Die Masslosigkeit der Hitlerschen Kriegsziele, die aus deutscher Sicht *viel zu fruehe Globalisierung des Krieges*, die extrem *ungleiche Verteilung aller Ressourcen*, der amerikanische Vorsprung in der *Nuklearwaffenentwicklung* sowie nicht zuletzt die Entschlossenheit der alliierten Grossmaechte, den ihnen aufgezwungenen Krieg nicht vor einer deutschen Totalkapitulation zu beenden: All dies zusammengenommen, entzieht im Rueckblick einer jeden These den Boden, das Deutsche Reich habe jemals eine reale Chance besessen, den Krieg als *ganzen* im Sinne Hitlers zu gewinnen. Von Stalingrad als einer Kriegswende ganz allgemein u. uneingeschraenkt zu sprechen, ist insofern also irrefuehrend. (7)

**CruX:** *Anders* steht es mit der Frage, ob die Vernichtung der **6. Armee** eine *Wende des Krieges im Osten* markierte. Dort zumindest war die deutsche Wehrmacht einer Entscheidung von strategischer Bedeutung zweimal nahe gewesen. Sowohl im Herbst **1941** vor Moskau als auch im folgenden Sommer am Suedabschnitt der Front hatte ein Zusammenbruch der sowj. Verteidigung, wenn nicht gar des stalinistischen Regimes im Bereich des Moeglichen gelegen. . . Der Faehigkeit, vergleichbare Entscheidungssituationen noch einmal zu erzwingen, war das deutsche Ostheer *mit der Niederlage an der Wolga endgueltig verlustig gegangen*. Es hatte die **strategische Initiative** auf diesem Kriegsschauplatz – wie anderswo auch – *fuer immer eingebuesst*. Insofern stellen die Stalingrader Ereignisse den Schlusspunkt eines Prozesses schrittweise abnehmender Siegesoptionen im Osten dar. Die wesentlichen Stationen dieses Prozesses waren die Schlacht von Smolensk im **Jul 41** u. der aus ihr resultierende Halt des deutschen Vormarsches, das Scheitern vor Moskau im **Dez 41**, die zu Recht als „oekonomisches Stalingrad“ bezeichnete Ostverlagerung grooser Teile der sowjetischen Industrie sowie Hitlers Entscheidung zur Aufspaltung der Operation „Blau“ im **Jul 42**. Nach jedem dieser Ereignisse waren die Grundlagen eines deutschen Sieges im Osten bruechiger, die Zahl der Optionen geringer geworden. In diesem Prozess einer *sich kumulativ vollziehenden Wende* stellte die Stalingrader Tragoedie die letzte militaerische Konsequenz dar. Jenseits von ihr gab es keinerlei begruendete Hoffnung mehr auf einen Sieg im Osten. (7-8)

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S. 1487 ff.), der aus einem allzu engen operativen Verstaendnis des Krieges heraus vom „Kulminationsjahr 1943“ spricht. (6, f.n. 26)

<sup>12</sup> Note: So was the German General Staff's long-standingt obsession w/ a Clausewitzien "Entscheidungsschlacht" now fundamentally obsolete?

Dass seit Herbst **1942** *nicht nur der globale Krieg als solcher, sondern auch der Landkrieg im Osten fuer Deutschland nicht mehr zu gewinnen war*, beruhte auf einer letztlich irreversiblen Konstellation mittel- und langfristig-situativer u. langfristiger-struktureller Gegebenheiten. (8)

#### Die personelle Lage des Ostheeres u. das Scheitern der totalen Mobilmachung:

Wie schon in den Monaten des „Barbarossa“-Feldzuges [i.e., in **1941**] waren naemlich im zweiten Jahr des deutsch-sowj. Krieges (d.h. in der Zeit von **Mai 42** bis einschl. **Apr 43**) ueber **95 %** aller Heeres- u. immerhin **70%** aller Luftwaffenverluste an der Ostfront zu beklagen. [Note: See detailed table of losses on p. 9.] Schlimmer noch: Auch an der *absoluten Groessenordnung der Verluste* hatte sich trotz der Begrenzung der Sommeroffensive **1942** auf nur einen Frontabschnitt *praktisch nichts geaendert*. Noch immer gingen dem Ostheer Monat fuer Monat durchschnittlich knapp **109.000 Mann**,<sup>13</sup> darunter mehr als **3000 Offiziere**, als Gefallene, Verwundete oder Kriegsgefangene verloren.<sup>14</sup> Bedingt vor allem durch den sprunghaften Anstieg der Kriegsgefangenen hatte der Anteil der unwiederbringbaren Verluste sogar zugenommen. Deutlich angestiegen waren aufgrund des massierten Einsatzes zur Versorgung Stalingrads auch die Verluste der Luftwaffe. (8-10)

Die mit insgesamt ueber **1.3** Millionen Mann in jeder Hinsicht horrenden Verluste des zweiten Ostkriegsjahres [i.e., **Mai 42 – Apr 43**] hatten aehnlich wie im Vorjahr auch diesmal durch den Zugang von Ersatz u. Genesenen *nicht annaeherd ausgeglichen werden koennen*. So hatten sich trotz der **1942** abgesenkten Sollstaerken der Divisionen<sup>15</sup> die monatlichen Differenzen zwischen Zu- u. Abgaenge in der Hauptoperationsphase von **Aug 42** bis **Feb 43** auf insgesamt nicht weniger als **825.000 Fehlstellen** summiert.<sup>16</sup> (10)

Gleichermassen katastrophal wie um die Deutschen stand es um die im Verband des Ostheeres kaempfernden Armeen der Verbuendeten. . . die weitgehende Zerschlagung der verbuendeten Streitkraefte noch im Fruehjahr **1943** zu einer vollstaendigen Ruecknahme der italienischen u. ungarischen Kampfverbaende aus der Ostfront u. einem spuerbar reduzierten Engagement der rumaenischen Truppen fuerhten. (See, pp 10-11)

#### Gesamtverluste der Roten Armee:

Inwieweit die hier skizzierte Dimension stetigen Ausblutens von strategischer Bedeutung fuer die weitere deutsche Kriegfuehrung im Osten war, musste entscheidend davon abhaengen, wie die gleichzeitigen Verlusten der Sowjetunion u. die kurz- u. mittelfristig verfuegbaren Menschenreserven beider Seiten eingeschaezt wurden. Sicher war, dass die Sowjetunion im abgelaufenen Jahr wiederum Opfer ungeheuerlichen Ausmasses erlitten hatte, deren absolute Zahlen die deutschen Verluste bei weitem ueberstiegen. . . Neuere russ. Forschungen beziffern die Gesamtverluste von Roter Armee u. Marine (ausschl. NKVD) im hier diskutierten Zeitraum [d.h. bis zum Fruehjahr **1943**] auf knapp **14** Millionen<sup>17</sup> u. belegen, dass das zweite Jahr des Krieges (von **Mai 42** bis einschl. **Mar 43**) die Sowjetunion entgegen land-

<sup>13</sup> Note: This figure does not include Luftwaffe losses.

<sup>14</sup> Note: Kriegsjahr **1941/42** = **22.6.41 – 30.4.42**. Monatliche Gesamtausfaelle an der Ostfront (Heeresverluste) = **110.243** (davon **3255** Offiziere). Figuren ohne Finnland. Quelle: OKH/GenStdH/GenQu, Der Heeresarzt, Statistik „Personelle Ausfaelle“ vom **6.7.44**. (9)

<sup>15</sup> Note: So waren im Fruehjahr **1942** von den insgesamt **75** Inf.-Div. der H.Gr. Mitte u. Nord nicht wengier als **69** von je neun [9] auf sechs [6] Bataillone reduziert worden; aehnliche Kuerzungen erfuehren auch die uebrigen Waffengattungen mit Ausnahme der Verbaende der H.Gr.Sued. (10, f.n. 34)

<sup>16</sup> Note: In other words, during this critical period the Ostheer was losing well over **100,000** men per month.

<sup>17</sup> Note: These Soviet losses included some **5.4** prisoners taken by the Germans thru **Mar 43**. (11)

laeufiger Auffassung keineswegs weniger Menschenleben kostete als seine fuer das Ueberleben des Landes so kritischen ersten **10** Monate. (11-12)

#### Menschenreserven:

**Note:** Urspruenglich verfuegbare maennliche Gesamtbevoelkerung:<sup>18</sup>

- a) Deutsches Reich (Jahrgaenge **1888-1925**) = **19.8** Millionen;
- b) Sowjetunion (Jahrgaenge **1888-1926**) = **43.7** Millionen. (13)

Wenn der Roten Armee nunmehr eine verfuegbare Menschenreserve von **3.4** Millionen Wehrtauglichen (einschl. des Geburtsjahrganges **1926**) unterstellt wurde [i.e., Nach Einschaeztung der Abteilung „Fremde Heere Ost“ vom **1 Mar 43**, see, table, p 13], so erlaubte dieser gegenueber dem Vorjahr um **75%** nach oben korrigierte Ansatz gerade angesichts der erwahnten sowj. Massenverluste nur den ernuechternden Schluss, dass die Rote Armee „menschenmaessig“ eben nicht niederruingen war. Dass der deutschen Wehrmacht 1943 an personellen Reserven – fuer *alle* potentiellen Kriegsschauplaetze der „Festung Europa“ zusammengenommen! – mit **0.5** Millionen nur einen Bruchteil jener **3.4** Millionen zur Verfuegung stand, macht diese Einsicht nur noch zwingender. (12-13)

Die in dieser Situation fuer die oberste deutsche Fuehrung zentrale Frage war, wie – das „Ob“ wurde gar nicht diskutiert – die notwendigen Kraefte verfuegbar zu machen seien, um der sich abzeichnenden Gefahr zu begegnen. [**Note:** Author goes on to discuss efforts of Germans to find addition soldiers, for example, by combing out the armaments industry. Also addresses efforts, beginning in **Jan 43**, to effect a total mobilization of the German people/resources for the war effort: “Mit dem am **13 Jan 43** von Hitler unterzeichnete Fuehrererlass “ueber den umfassenden Einsatz der arbeitsfaehigen Maenner u. Frauen fuer Aufgaben der Reichsverteidigung” schien dann auch die (quasi)-gesetzliche Grundlage fuer die angestrebte Totalmobilmachung gegeben. . .“ However, while through various means several hundred thousand additional personnel were freed up for Wehrmacht- and Ruestungszwecke, the goal of a “total” – d.h. gesamtgesellschaftlichen Kriegsanstrengung – mobilization remained in every respect far off. Not until the summer of **1944** did the German leadership once again attempt a total mobilization of German society for the war effort. (13-16)

[**Note:** Author discusses use of foreign forced labor – Soviet POWs, and civilians – in German industries; failures to organize an effective Russian anti-Communist national army w/in the framework of the Ostheer, etc. The latter idea was strongly supported by GFM v. Kluge, but strictly rejected by Hitler, who, in **Jun 43**, called it “ein Phanton ersten Ranges.” (17)]

Es war also alles in allem ein ueberaus komplexes Krisensyndrom, das die verzweifelte, ja aussichtslose personelle Lage des Reiches im Fruehjahr **1943** kennzeichnete. (18)

#### Materielle Verluste u. kriegswirtschaftliche Scheinerfolge:

Die materielle Lage der deutschen Kriegfuehrung war jener im personellen Bereich insofern aehnlich, als auch hier eine unueberbrueckbare Kluft zwischen dem Ausmass von Verbrauch u. Verschleiss einerseits u. der fuer eine erfolgreiche Kriegfuehrung unabdingbare Reproduktionsquote andererseits bestand. Ein charakteristisches Beispiel hierfuer bietet der Munitionssektor. Schon im ersten Ostkriegsjahr (bis einschl. **Apr 42**) hatten die Verschusszahlen mit durchschnittlich **90.000 Tonnen monatlich** die schlimmsten Befuerchtungen der zustaendigen Experten weit uebertroffen,<sup>19</sup> stiegen aber gleichwohl im

<sup>18</sup> **Note:** According to estimates of “Fremde Heere Ost.” See, Table, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> **Note:** Siehe DRZW, Bd. 6, S. 788 ff. (Beitrag Wegner).

Verlauf des folgenden Jahres auf **117.000** Tonnen im Monatsdurchschnitt an.<sup>20</sup> Der Verbrauch an Inf.-Munition hatte sich, bedingt insbesondere durch die Stalingrader Kaempfe, im gleichen Zeitraum sogar verdoppelt. . . (19)

So verbreitet das Bewusstsein von der gefaehrlichen Dimension derartiger Munitionsverluste in der obersten deutschen Fuehrung auch war, so schien doch die gleichzeitige Steigerung der industriellen Ausstosszahlen Anlass zu vorsichtigem Optimismus zu geben. In der Tat naemlich erhoelte sich der Index der deutschen Munitionsendfertigung von **100** im Jahresdurchschnitt **1942** auf **149** im folgendem Jahr u. auf **184** im Jahre **1944**. . . Wenn sich im Zeichen dieses Aufschwungs der Gesamtausstoss an Ruestungsguetern binnen zwei [2] Jahren von Anfang **1942** bis Ende **1943** mehr als verdoppelte [i.e., unter der Regie Speers], war dieser Erfolg um so eindrucksvoller, als er unter schwierigsten infrastrukturellen Bedingungen (alliierte Luftangriffe, Arbeitskraeftemangel, Rohstoffknappheit, etc.) errungen wurde. Es steht ausser Diskussion, dass es sich hier um eine *aussergewoehnliche organisatorische Leistung des Regimes* handelte, die zur Verlaengerung des Krieges wesentlich beitrug. Eine ganz andere – u. im Kontext dieser Untersuchung die entscheidende – Frage freilich ist, ob sich damit irgend etwas an der Aussichtslosigkeit des Reiches aenderte, den Krieg fuer sich zu entscheiden. Die Antwort hierauf kann nur ein klares „Nein“ sein. . . So erreichte das deutsche Produktionsvolumen im Vergleich zu jenem der Hauptkriegsgegner **1941** nur **31%** u. fiel in den beiden folgenden Jahren trotz seiner systemimmanent beachtlichen Steigerungsraten auf gut **21%** zurueck. Selbst unter Hinzurechnung der sich auf niedrigerem Niveau ebenfalls dynamisch entwickelnden japanischen Produktion aendert sich diese Relation nur unwesentlich. (19-20)

Author continues w/ discussion of Soviet material losses and war production: “Die Tatsache, dass die Materialverluste der Roten Armee aehnlich wie ihre Menschenverluste auch **1942** offenbar noch ein Mehrfaches der entsprechenden Ausfaelle der *Wehrmacht* betragen hatten, war fuer die deutschen Beobachter alles andere als beruhigend. Sie war vielmehr der schlagende Beweis dafuer, dass die noch im Fruehjahr **1942** formulierten Annahmen ueber den maroden Zustand der sowj. Kriegswirtschaft nach dem Verlust des Donec-Beckens u. anderer industrieller Zentren *grundlegend falsch gewesen war*. Wie sonst haetten die Monat fuer Monat immensen Verluste des Gegners immer wieder ersetzt u. darueber hinaus derart viele neue Divisionen ausgeruestet werden koennen, so dass die Rote Armee nunmehr den deutschen Verbaenden an fast jedem Frontabschnitt ueberlegen war. (22)

Offenkundig waren sowohl die Organisationskraft des Stalinschen Regimes als auch die Leistungsfahigkeit der nach Osten transferierten sowj. Industrien sowie – zumindest partiell – die weitgehende rohstoffwirtschaftliche Autarkie des Gegners *grob unterschaezt worden*. Auf der Basis dieser seit dem Sommer des Vorjahres langsam gereiften Einsicht kamen die zustaendigen deutschen Dienststellen nach zwei missglueckten Feldzuegen nun *endlich zu einem neuen u. – wenigstens in den quantitativen Dimensionen – **realistischen Bild** der materiellen Grundlagen der sowj. Kriegfuehrung*. (23)

Betrachtet man diese Zahlen [i.e., sowj. Ruestungszahlen, Leih-Pacht-Lieferungen, usw.] u. Vergleichswerte zur personellen u. materiellen Lage des Deutschen Reiches in den Monaten nach Stalingrad, so ergibt sich ein in jeder Beziehung eindeutiges Bild, das sich durch drei [3] Feststellungen charakterisieren laesst:

a) Das sich aus dem wechselseitigen Verhaeltnis von Verlusten u. Ressourcen der kriegfuehrenden Maechte definierende strategische Koordinatensystem hatte sich – weitgehend unabhaengig von den Stalingrader Ereignissen – bis zum Fruehjahr **1943** in *geradezu grotesker Weise zum Nachteil des Reiches verschoben*. Die Diskrepanz in der Verfuegbarkeit von Menschen, Rohstoffen u. Kriegsgeraet, wie sie sich zwischen Deutschland u. der Sowjetunion, erst recht aber im globalen Massstab entwickelt hatte,

<sup>20</sup> **Note:** Dies entsprach dem Umfang von monatlich 260 (!) Munitionszuegen. (19, f.n. 79)

hatte rein *quantitativ* ein Ausmass erreicht, das von *qualitativen* Ungleichgewichten, wie sie hinsichtlich der Ausbildung u. Motivation des Soldaten, Technologie u. Wirkungsweise der Waffensysteme in Massen durchaus noch bestanden, weitgehend unberueht blieb;

b) Trotz einer in den Fuehrungszirkeln des NS-Staates gaengigen Sprachregelung, die diese immer augenfuellere *quantitative Unterlegenheit* der Wehrmacht durch pauschale Hinweise auf die angeblich *qualitative Ueberlegenheit* „des deutschen Soldaten“ u. seines Materials zu kompensieren suchte, besteht kein Zweifel, dass die im Rahmen der Obersten Fuehrung mit der strategischen Lageanalyse befassten Dienststellen das *Ausmass der Katastrophe durchaus erkannten* oder doch zumindest ahnten. Nicht bedingt, aber psychologisch gefoerdert durch den Schock der Stalingrader Niederlage, wurde in diesem Zusammenhang der sowj. Gegner nun *erstmalig in diesem Kriege* in seiner demographischen, oekonomischen, administrativen u. militaerischen Leistungsfahigkeiten *realitaetsnah* eingeschaezt;

c) Die aus der Einsicht in die eigene verzweifelte Lage erwachsene Politik einer rigiden Ausrichtung von Gesellschaft u. Wirtschaft auf die Erfordernisse des „totalen Krieges“ mobilisierte zwar – insbesondere auf ruestungstechnischem Gebiet – betraechtliche Reserven, scheiterte jedoch an ihrem eigentlichen Anspruch, naemlich dem Reich die Chance auf einen „Endsieg“ zu erhalten. (27)

**Mar-Mai 43:** Moechte es bei oberflaechlicher Betrachtung so erscheinen, als sei nach GFM Erich von Mansteins glaenzenden Erfolgen im **Mar 43** zumindest an der Ostfront der Status quo ante wieder hergestellt. In der Tat entsprach der bis zum Beginn der Schlampperiode erreichte Frontverlauf, von einigen wichtigen Ausnahmen wie dem sowj. Durchbruch bei Leningrad abgesehen, im grossen u. ganzen jenem vom Fruehjahr **1942**. Dennoch war die Lage eine voellige andere als damals – u. die Verantwortlichen im Generalstab des Heeres wie auch im Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab *waren sich dessen sehr wohl bewusst*. Der im Hinblick auf die Fortfuehrung des Krieges wohl entscheidende Unterschied zum Vorjahr bestand darin, dass das bis zum Sommer **1942** grundlegende strategische Kalkuel Hitlers, naemlich den Krieg im Osten noch vor der vollen Entfaltung des von ihm gefuerchteten amerikanischen Ruestungspotentials zu einem gewissen Abschluss zu bringen, nun *endgueltig fehlgeschlagen war*.

Dabei hatte der europaeische Mehrfronten-Landkrieg, den der Diktator in Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg um jeden Preis vermeiden wollte, noch gar nicht begonnen. Und doch war die haushohe Ueberlegenheit der angelsaechsischen Ruestungs- u. Transportkapazitaeten bereits ueberall spuerbar: Sie zeigte sich in der Aufstockung des Leih-Pacht-Programms ebenso wie in den sich praktisch ungehindert ausweitenden alliierten Luftangriffen auf deutsche Staedte, im Zusammenbruch des deutschen U-Boot-Krieges ebenso wie in der Kapitulationi der deutsch-italienischen Streitkraefte in Nordafrika, einer Armee nicht kleiner als die bei Stalingrad eingeschlossene. Gerade die beiden letztgenannten Ereignisse – beide in den Monat **Mai 43** fallend – sind in ihren psychologischen u. strategischen Konsequenzen von erheblicher Bedeutung. (28)

#### Die Illusion des Sonderfriedens:

Zwar war der Diktator [i.e., Hitler] einer „Verstaendigung“ mit Grossbritannien nach wie vor nicht grundsaeztlich abgeneigt, hielt sie jedoch mit der Regierung Churchills – vor dem Hintergrund der „Unconditional-Surrender“-Forderung der Alliierten zu Recht – fuer voellig unerreikbaar. . . Bruesker noch war Hitlers Ablehnung einer Fuehlungnahme mit Moskau – dies uebrigens keineswegs erst nach dem Verlust Stalingrads u. des Kaukasus. Selbst die von Mussolini schon *vor* Beginn der sowj. Winteroffensive u. *vor* dem Zusammenbruch der italienischen **8. Armee** am Don, naemlich erstmalig am **6 Nov 42** ueber den Verbindungsgeneral zum italienischen Hauptquartier Gen.-Lt. Enno von Rintelen, u. knapp einen Monat spaeter nochmals ueber Hermann Goering an Hitler herangetragene Idee eines zweiten Brest-Litowsker-Friedens waren vom „Fuehrer“ ignoriert worden. [Note: Author then addresses

Japanese peace initiatives, whose origins reach back to the initial months of Operation “Barbarossa.”] (51-53)

Waren alle Sonderfriedensbestrebungen demnach von vornherein ein hoffnungsloses Unterfangen? Angesichts der Eindeutigkeit der deutschen Quellen wird man diese Frage kaum verneinen koennen, ihre Bejahung aber doch mit einigen Qualifikationen verknuepfen muessen. So ist **bis heute** eine quellenmaessig breit fundierte Interpretation der sowjetischen Haltung zur Friedensfrage nicht moeglich. Immerhin legen eine Reihe von Umstaenden die Vermutung nahe, dass Moskau in den Monaten zwischen den Schlachten von Stalingrad u. Kursk *ein Interesse an Sondierungen mit Berlin gehabt haben koennte*. (For more details see, pp 55-61)

Hitlers Generaale: Je laenger der Krieg dauere, desto geringer werde seine Meinung von den Generaalen, notierte sich am **20 Apr 43**, dem Tage von Hitlers **54.** Geburtstag, einer der hellstichtigsten Koepfe des konservativen Widerstandes: „*Sie haben wohl technisches Koennen u. physischen Mut, aber wenig Zivilcourage*, gar keinen Ueberblick u. Weltblick u. keinerlei innere, auf wirklicher Kultur beruhende geistige Selbstaendigkeit u. Widerstandskraft, daher sind sie einem Manne wie Hitler voellig unterlegen u. ausgeliefert.“<sup>21</sup> (60)

Die aussichtslose deutsche Ausgangslage:

Die Schlacht bei Kursk gilt als groesste Landschlacht des Zweiten Weltkrieges, ja der Militaergeschichte ueberhaupt.<sup>22</sup> Waehrend dieser Kaempfe wurden auf beiden Seiten mehr als 4 Millionen Soldaten, **69.000** Geschuetze u. Werfer, **13.000** Panzer u. Selbstfahrlafetten sowie nahezu **12.000** Flugzeuge eingesetzt. Selbst die Schlacht von Stalingrad erscheint im Vergleich hierzu in kleinem Format. (83)

Kraeftevergleich: Der Ansturm gegen eine Lawine:

Die Deutschen konnten lediglich **2.5** Armeen fuer ihre Offensive aufbieten. Doch allein im Kursker Bogen (Voronezer Front u. Zentralfront) u. der dahinter in Stellung gebrachten Steppenfront waren **18** sowj. Armeen konzentriert. [Note: Moreover, the Soviet forces were deployed in depth in extremely strong defensive positions and the Germans had lost any prospect of achieving surprise – i.e., the Soviets knew they were coming.] (86)

Bilanz: Das sowj. Uebergewicht u. die Unmoeglichkeit einer Entscheidungsschlacht:

Wie gross das Uebergewicht der Roten Armee im Raum Kursk-Orel tatsaechlich war, ergibt sich aus den graphischen Darstellungen der zwei folgenden Seiten. Doch in Wirklichkeit war die Ueberlegenheit noch erdrueckender, da in der Tiefe des Raumes weitere Reserven mit starken Panzerverbaenden bereit standen, die das sowj. Oberkommando im Verlauf der beiden Gegenoffensiven in die Schlacht warf. . . (99)

Es ist eine irrtuemliche Annahme, Hitler habe bei Kursk eine Entscheidung herbeizwingen wollen, um dem Krieg, der verlorenzugehen drohte, doch noch eine Wende zu geben. . . Der deutsche Generalstab plante ebensowenig wie Hitler einen Entscheidungssieg in einer „Vernichtungsschlacht“ im Sinne Schlieffens. . . Hitler u. das **OKW** wollten eigentlich wegen des unvermeidbaren Mehrfrontenkrieges Kraefte von der Ostfront abziehen, um den bevorstehenden alliierten Invasionen in Sueditalien u. spaeter

<sup>21</sup> Note: Hassell, Vom andern Deutschland, S. 360 (20.4.43).

<sup>22</sup> Note: Die Schlacht im Kursker Bogen im Sommer **1943** bestand aus drei [3] z.T. gleichzeitig verlaufenden Operationen: der deutschen Offensive „Zitadelle“ (**5.-16.7.43**) sowie den beiden sowj. Gegenoffensiven bei Orel (**12.7.-18.8.43**) u. Belgorod/Char'kov (**3.-23.8.43**) (83, f.n. 1)

in Westeuropa begegnen zu koennen. Dies aber erschien unmoeglich angesichts der sowj. Sommer-offensive, die wie eine Lawine ueber die deutsche Front hereinzubrechen drohte. Deshalb entschloss sich das **OKH**, die Flucht nach vorne anzutreten u. gleichsam in die noch ruhende Lawine hinein anzugreifen, bevor dies sich loesen konnte. Es sollte also verhindert werden, dass – physikalisch ausgedrueckt – die ueberlegene Masse des Gegners noch mit dem Faktor Geschwindigkeit multipliziert wuerde. Denn wenn die sowj. Lawine erst einmal ins Rollen gekommen war, erschien es *kaum noch moeglich, sie zum Stehen zu bringen.* (99-101)

Gegenueberstellung der Kraefte im Raum Kursk-Orel  
(5 Jul 43)

	<u>Deutsche Kraefte</u>	<u>Relation</u>	<u>Sowjetische Kraefte</u>
Personal <sup>23</sup>	<b>625.271</b>	<b>1:3.2</b>	<b>1.987.463</b>
Pz. u. Sturm- Geschuetze	<b>2699</b>	<b>1:3</b>	<b>8200</b>
Artillerie <sup>24</sup>	<b>9467</b>	<b>1:5</b>	<b>47.416</b>
Flugzeuge <sup>25</sup>	<b>1372</b>	<b>1:4.3</b>	<b>5965</b>

(**Note:** For many more details see, pp 100-101)

Betr. Artillerie: Waehrend die Rote Armee bei ihren Grossoffensiven in der zweiten Haelfte des Krieges haeufig eine zigfache artilleristische Ueberlegenheit<sup>26</sup> im Durchbruchsabschnitt besass u. die deutschen Stellungen regelrecht pulverisierte, gelang es den deutschen Verbaenden bei Kursk nicht einmal, die einfache Ueberlegenheit zu erzielen. Im Gegenteil: Im Durchbruchsabschnitt der **9. Armee** war, wie in sowj. Darstellungen hervorgehoben wird, die Artilleriedichte des Verteidigers um das Eineinhalbfache hoeher als die des Angreifers. (103)

CruX: Eine nuechterne Analyse der Zahlenverhaeltnisse fuehrt zwangslaeufig manche Klischee-vorstellung ad absurdum. Die deutschen Verlusten waren keineswegs derart hoch u. unersetzlich, dass man das Unternehmen „Zitadelle“ als „Entscheidungsschlacht“ oder „Wendepunkt des Krieges“ bezeichnen kann. . . Weder waren die Divisionen „weissgebluet“, noch ist „die Bluete des deutschen Heeres endgueltig u. entscheidend dahingewelkt.“<sup>27</sup> Das deutsche Heer verlor **252** Panzer u. Sturmgeschuetze, aber es gilt zu beruecksichtigen, dass im selben Monat **817** neue Kampfwagen produziert wurden. (157)

<sup>23</sup> **Note:** Einsatzstaerke der Kampftruppen.

<sup>24</sup> **Note:** Summe der Artillerie-, Pak-, Flak-Geschuetze, Granatwerfer u. Raketenwerfer. Bei der sowj. Zentralfront erreichte die Artl.-Konzentration im Verteidigungsschwerpunkt 125 Geschuetze pro km. (103)

<sup>25</sup> **Note:** Einsatzbereit.

<sup>26</sup> **Note:** So z.B. bei der Zerschlagung der H.Gr.Mitte im Sommer **1944:** Auf deutscher Seite waren im weissrussischen Bogen pro Kilometer durchschnittlich **2 bis 3** Artl.-Geschuetze eingesetzt u. auf sowjetischer [Seite] im Durchbruchsabschnitt **178**. [!] In der zweiten Phase dieser Operation wurden auf dem linken Fluegel der **1. Weissrussischen Front** sogar **356** Geschuetze pro Kilometer massiert. (103, f.n. 82)

<sup>27</sup> **Note:** Mellenthin, Panzerschlachten, S. 165 u. 171. Sogar einige deutsche Generale ueberdramatisierten die angeblich unersetzlichen Verluste. Bei naeherer Betrachtung stellt sich heraus, dass es sich um dezidierte Gegner des Unternehmens „Zitadelle“ handelt, die im nachhinein beweisen wollten, wie sehr sie recht gehabt haetten. (157, f.n. 42)

### **10.3: Hitler's War. Germany's Key Strategic Decisions 1940-1945, Heinz Magenheimer. 1997.**

**13.3.43:** The decision once more to undertake a limited offensive on the eastern front was laid down in Operational Directive No. 5 of **13 Mar 43**. . . The bulge in the front at Kursk – extending westwards to a depth of **120 km** on a **200 km-wide** front – appeared to offer an opportunity for such an attack. . . The decision-making process and the preparations for “Operational Citadel” demonstrate the many weighty factors involved and the various alternatives that had to be considered. A diversity of motives included political, military, economic and psychological elements which interacted and were difficult to evaluate. (202-03)

From a political viewpoint, a rapid and impressive victory was required in order to convince the enemy coalition of the resurgent strength of the Wehrmacht and the continued power of the Axis. . . It would also greatly improve the conditions under which Germany could *respond to the feelers being extended by a Soviet Union that was perhaps ready to make peace*. The psychological intention – after the defeat at Stalingrad – was once more to enthuse the nation w/ reports of victory, but also to rekindle confidence in German arms among her allies, particularly Japan, Italy and Finland. . . The economic motives had to do w/ the expected immense number of prisoners and materials, the armaments industry in particular placing great value on prisoners as future workers. Considering that in the event of a resounding success in the Battle at Kursk the German General Staff was counting upon the encirclement of **8-9** armies which would promise the capture of **600,000 – 700,000** men, then the hope of *closing the gap in the labor requirements* of the armaments industry does not appear to be all that unrealistic. With these prisoners and additional Russian civilians, the Speer ministry was confident that it could cover most of the unfilled jobs. The establishment of “staffs for requisition and booty” in the three attacking armies underlies the value placed in Soviet prisoners and future forced laborers.<sup>28</sup> (202-03)

Outweighing all other motives, however, were the military arguments. [See text for details.] . . . In the spring of **1943** intelligence concerning the size and deployment of the enemy indicated that the Red Army was obviously obtaining arms and munitions more rapidly than the Wehrmacht, and was therefore further increasing its material superiority. . . In **Mar 43** tank production was estimated to be **1500** vehicles per month, to which had to be added deliveries from the USA and Britain. In **1943** actual production is said to have been about **24,000** tanks and SP guns, and **37,000** acft.<sup>29</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that by the end of **Jun 43** the strength of the Red Army along the whole eastern front is given as **6.61** million men, **10,200** tanks and SP guns, and **10,250** acft. [Note: Latter figure comes from a Soviet source; see, f.n. 70, 307.] For this reason alone it was considered paramount to anticipate the enemy by an attack, to deal him a costly defeat, to *draw as many of his operational reserves as possible into the battle*, and at the same time shorten the front drastically by **220 km**. (203-07)

What was to prove decisive for the outcome of “Operation Citadel,” however, was the massive Soviet defensive strength in the greater Kursk area as well as the selection of a highly unfavorable date for the attack. As is easily proved today, the STAVKA soon learned of German intentions to attack in the Kursk area and by the end of **Mar 43** had already begun to make extraordinarily elaborate and thorough preparations for defense. . . The extremely strong Soviet zone of defense along the Kursk salient consisted of three [3] systems of positions to a depth of up to **40 km** in the area held by the armies deployed on the front line; augmented by the “Voronezh,” “Central” and “Steppe” Fronts to an added depth of up to **300**

<sup>28</sup> **Note:** This objective – to capture prisoners for work as forced laborers in German war industry – speaks to a certain desperation involved in “Citadel.”

<sup>29</sup> **Note:** At the end of **Mar 43**, Foreign Armies East calculated total enemy strength on the European front to be **5.7** million men in **62** armies, **3** tank armies and **28** armored and mechanized corps, which comprised a total of almost **400** infantry divisions, **194** infantry brigades, **171** armored brigades and **48** mechanized brigades. (205-07)

km [!] . . .<sup>30</sup> According to Soviet statements, a total of **8 defense zones** had been erected in sequence. In addition, two tank armies, a further army and several independent corps were available as operational reserves. . . This overview is intended to show that when the German offensive at Kursk, which still had a *reasonable chance of success in May 43*, began on **5 Jul 43**, it came up against Soviet dispositions whose defensive power had in the meantime outstripped the German power of attack. (208-09)

[**Note:** See text for details on dramatic rise in German tank strength from Jan – Jul 43.] In fact, from barely **500** tanks and SP guns on the whole eastern front at end of **Jan 43**; by early **Jul 43** the number had risen to **3700**, not including light tanks, half-tracks and captured tanks. Even though it had been possible to increase the armored attack forces of both army groups – AGC and AGS – to **16 1/3** Panzer and Panzer Grenadier divisions w/ **1900** heavy and medium tanks and SP guns [among them the new Tiger and Panther tanks] by **5 Jul 43**, this was still insufficient compared to the progress meanwhile achieved by the Soviets. . . . The repeated postponement of the date of attack by Hitler, first from **3 May 43** to **12 Jun 43** and then to **5 Jul 43**, was explained in terms of bringing in reinforcements of modern tanks, SP guns and artillery. This was far outweighed, however, by the loss of time. (209-11)

**5.7.43:** The failure of the German attack on **5 Jul 43**, which after modest gains came to a halt within only a few days, obviously marks a turn in the war which has received particular emphasis on the Soviet side. . . . The issue of Hitler's directive of **13 Jul 43** to break off the battle was influenced by the enemy's evidently unbroken resistance, the massive Soviet attacks against the Orel bulge, the heavy German losses, and new of the landings by British and American troops on Sicily on **10 Jul 43**. . . From mid-**Jul 43** onward the initiative had clearly passed to the enemy. (212)

Kursk: The significance of the battle to either side can be gauged from the fact that about **50%** of all Soviet and **64%** of all German armored forces, including strategic reserves, were concentrated in the Kursk sector. An overwhelming success by the Wehrmacht at Kursk would not necessarily have resulted in victory over the Soviet Union, but that it had been the last chance to achieve a “draw” on the eastern front. . . . In the final analysis it was the Red Army's sheer superiority in manpower and *materiel* that decided the battle.

German losses: While both German attack groups did suffer high losses, particularly in tanks and SP guns, the actual total losses of **15 – 20%** were still within tolerable bounds. The most important factor was that the infantry was not able to adequately protect the flanks of the armored formations because of its numerical weakness, while the armored forces could not capitalize on their tactical strength in the deeply echeloned enemy defense system. (212-13)

**Crux:** Even if it is inaccurate to speak of the “crucible of Kursk” in which the German panzer arm simply melted away, the importance of the battle can most aptly be summed up as the “*completion of the basic turn*” which had begun w/ the *Battle of Stalingrad*. . . (214)

**Note:** The losses suffered by the attacking [German] armies were far lower than Soviet literature claims. The total losses in tanks from **Jul – Sep 43** were *almost completely made good by new production*. . . Yet even though in **Jul 43** the eastern armies were still capable of launching counter-attacks on the operational level, as the battles in the Ukraine were subsequently to demonstrate, Germany had nevertheless become strategically dependent on the enemy. The Wehrmacht no longer had the chance to reverse the military balance of power. (214)

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<sup>30</sup> **Note:** According to Russian sources, the Central Front and the Voronezh Front deployed for the immediate defense of the Kursk salient alone disposed of **1.3** million men, about **20,000** guns/mortars, almost **3000** tanks/SP guns, and ca. **2900** acft. Added to these were the five [5] armies of the Steppe Front w/ their **1600** tanks and SP guns, as well as four [4] further armies of the STAVKA reserves in the areas south and SW of Moscow. (211)

**Note:** [And yet]: It seems highly doubtful that the power of the Red Army alone could have defeated the Wehrmacht w/o the attacks of the Western Allies in Italy and France and w/o the destructive air offensive against Germany. . . The subsequent struggle for the Dnieper line in **1943-44**, which was costly for both sides, together w/ von Manstein's counter-blows, *do not suggest that the Red Army would have gained the victory all by itself.* (214-15)

#### **10.4: Hitler's Panzer Armies on the Eastern Front, Robert Kirchubel. 2009.**

General Hoth's **4 PzArmy** given "pride of place" as Citadel's Schwerpunkt. Well supported by Luftwaffe CAS, Hoth wielded a massive armored hammer. [See text for order of battle details.] All told, Hoth had **1176** AFVs. (166)

**5.7.43:** **4 PzArmy**, applying armored wedge tactics, achieved a penetration of **30** km deep and **30** km wide at its base, but was outpacing *Armeeabteilung Kempf's* flank guard which struggled forward w/o much Luftwaffe support. (167)

**6.7.43:** By the second day, Hausser's progress [i.e., **II SS PzK**] of a mere **5** km was described as "good." Slow progress of *Armeeabteilung Kempf* continued to arouse concern, and necessitated diverting *SS Totenkopf* from **II SS PzK's** spearhead to security duties on Hoth's increasingly insecure right. Luftwaffe sorties dipped from **1958** on Citadel's first day, to **899** on the second. Conversely, the number of Soviet sorties rose to **1632**. Kursk was still over **100** km away, and Model's progress [i.e., **9. Army**] paled even compared to **4 Pz Army's** modest advances. (167)

**7.7.43:** On this morning, Hoth threw **700** AFVs against the Soviet **1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army**, at one point cramming **500** vehicles onto a front of **6** km wide. *Stukas* from **VIII Fliegerkorps** darkened the sky above, but *Sturmoviks* wreaked havoc among the attackers as well. . . but the Germans had blasted a sizeable hole in Vatutin's lines [i.e., Voronezh Front] and were deep into his second echelon (of **8** belts) . . . (167)

**8.7.43:** This day represented the last day of meaningful German progress as von Manstein tried to lever the Soviets out of their stout positions. . . Soviet CAS was overwhelming, and all defensive efforts seemed to concentrate on Hausser's spearheads. German intelligence calculated they had destroyed over **500** tanks in **4** days, but Vatutin still had **1500** remaining. (167)

**9.7.43:** Von Manstein thought he could overpower the Soviet defenses by widening the breach, so he orders Hoth to send *Grossdeutschland* peeling off to the left in an attempt to destroy Soviet **6. Tank Corps**. On same day, the panzer army commander decided to change plans and shift his main effort NE, and have **II SS PzK** attack toward Prokhorovka. To Hoth, this option represented the indirect approach to Kursk, and if he could secure the cooperation of Kempf's **3. PzK**, could enjoy decent chances of success. Little did he know that he would be turning his forces directly into **5. Gds Tank Army**. . . The little railroad station gave its name to the engagement that is often considered the signature of the Kursk battle. (168)

**10.7.43:** Hausser got off to a slow start in the morning, because a few hours were not enough to concentrate his three [3] divisions. No assistance came from Kempf. . . Prokhorovka became a graveyard: **400** tanks [Soviet?] and **320** panzers and *Sturmgeschuetze* littered the countryside. **4. Pz Army** now calculated it had destroyed over **1000** tanks in a week. The SS had won bridge-heads over the Psel and Donets. (168)

**13.7.43:** Hitler knew what von Manstein, Hoth, Kempf and others did not: Operation Citadel was dead. He told von Manstein and Model as much when he summoned them to *Rastenburg* on this day.<sup>31</sup> (168)

While Germany had no more reserves, it seemed that the Soviets had an endless supply. Operation Citadel, like the Ardennes offensive over a year later, can technically be considered an *operational-level maneuver*. Forfeiting surprise and attacking into the Soviets' defensive strength, **4. Pz Army** had only the slimmest chances of success, odds that a few hundred Tigers and Panthers could not appreciably improve. (168)

Operation Citadel had been a German failure by any and every measure. It did not meet any of its objectives. It *greatly weakened the Ostheer*, especially in mechanized forces and did not appreciably damage the Red Army. The Soviets promptly came back w/ a vengeance and the German retreat would not end for **20** months until they reached Berlin. In fact, Citadel had been so non-threatening to the Soviets that *Stavka* had been able to deflect its feeble blows [?] and then almost immediately counterattack. . . Within a week of Hitler's cancellation of Citadel, the Soviets launched attacks of their own in the Orel & Mius River sectors. During the last week of **Jul 43**, the Italian king arrested and replaced Mussolini, so Hitler stepped up the transfer of military formations from the USSR to Italy. (169)

During the second half of the month [i.e., **Jul 43**], Vatutin made good many of the losses incurred during Citadel, and completed his own preparations and made ready for his next move. For his Operation Rumantsev, he commanded **980,000** men to the panzer army's **210,000**, plus **12,627** guns and **2439** AFVs – practically *ten times* the **250** panzers and *Sturmgeschuetze* available to Hoth. (169)

**3.8.43:** At **0500** hours, elements of the Voronezh, Steppe and Southwest Fronts attacked (*Stavka* “coordinator:” Zhukov), obliterating the **167. ID** on the **4. Pz Army** boundary w/ *Armeeabteilung Kempf*. Though poorly trained, the masses of *frontovicki* easily crested a **16** km gap, and by **1300** hours Vatutin could confidently deploy his exploitation force: the reconstituted 1. and 5. Gds Tank Armies. Rumantsev completely caught German intelligence by surprise (*they had figured the Soviets would need months to recover from Citadel*). So von Manstein had quickly to recall **SS “DR”** and **SS “T”** from the Mius. . . (169)

Author goes on to describe fighting in **Aug 43**, during Operation Rumantsev; he concludes: Hoth [in his counterattacks] claimed to have taken **32,000** POWs and to have destroyed over **2000** tanks and almost as many artillery pieces. These numbers sound impressive and it is clear that Zhukov and Vatutin had underestimated the strength of **4. Pz Army**. But Rumantsev had had *limited objectives* all along and had deliberately eschewed the overambitious penetrations and encirclements that had marred similar operations earlier that winter. The Soviets had generally avoided becoming encircled themselves and suffered from no breakdowns in discipline at the front. On the German side of the front, numerous infantry regiments and divisions had been obliterated either by the massive preparation fires of the Red artillery or uneven combat when their remnants came up against

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<sup>31</sup> **Note:** On **9 Jul 43**, the western Allies had invaded Sicily.

strong Soviet forces. . . Through **22 Aug 43**, the Germans fought the fourth and final Battle of Kharkov, and then began the long retreat to the Dnepr River. (171)

Race to the Dnepr: **24** months minus a week earlier, the two combatants discovered how even a massive river like the Dnepr (between **500 – 1000** meters wide in the area defended by **4. PzArmy**) could not halt a modern army. Granted, the *west bank* was generally up to **100 meters higher** than the *east bank*, giving the Germans more of a defensive advantage in **Sep 43** than Kirponos had enjoyed two years earlier. But at that later date, the German defenders were exhausted and weakened by years of combat, *perhaps at no time worse than the preceding 10 weeks*. (172)

## **10.5: The Battle of Kursk, David M. Glantz & Jonathan M. House. 1999.**

### **Preface:**

In preface authors speak of “battle’s immense scope, ferocious nature, epic consequences and staggering human and material costs.” Battle of Kursk has often been the “subject of *myth and misconception*.” . . . Sheer drama of the battle juxtaposed against the limited quantities of exploited Soviet source materials has given rise to a certain mythology that has surrounded the battle. This mythology has accepted the German framework and definition of the battle and maintains that it took place from **5-23 Jul 43**. In so doing, it ignores the essential Soviet framework for Kursk, which placed the defensive battle in the Kursk salient w/in the proper context of the Soviets’ *two-month long Kursk Strategic Offensive Operation*. . . Moreover, historians have consistently exaggerated both the scope and importance of the tank clash at Prokhorovka – saying that it was the greatest tank battle in history and the field where Germany’s wartime fate was determined. . . Today, newly available Soviet and German sources permit a reevaluation of every aspect of the Battle of Kursk.(xi-xii)

### **Chapter I:**

#### **Background:**

Logistics: Ultimately, Operation Barbarossa failed because of German logistics and Soviet perseverance. The vast, roadless spaces of European Russia defeated German efforts to refuel, rearm, and repair their spearheads. The *highly centralized German maintenance system*, which relied upon returning vehicles to the factory for major repairs, could not keep pace w/ the demands of the Russian campaign. Panzer divisions that began the campaign in **Jun 41** w/ **120 – 130** tanks ended in **Dec 41** w/ no more than a dozen functional tanks. With limited rail and truck transportation, German logisticians chose to delay shipment of cold weather clothing in order to supply their troops w/ fuel, ammunition, and spare parts for the final advance on Moscow. With **2/3** of all German motor vehicles immobilized, the advance sputtered to a halt in the first week of **Dec 41**. (7-8)

Soviet mobilization: Surprisingly, the Soviets were able to field new divisions faster than the Germans could destroy them. By **31 Dec 41**, the Red Army had created **385 new divisions** and **267 separate brigades**, more than compensating for the loss of at least **229** division equivalents in battle. Whereas prewar German intelligence had estimated an enemy of ca. **300** divisions, by **Dec 41** the Soviets had fielded almost three times that many units. Many of these new units were poorly trained and equipped, but destroying them cost the Germans more casualties, fuel, ammunition, and time. The dogged perseverance of the Soviet soldier contributed markedly to the German failure in **1941**. (8)

**5 Dec 41:** On this day, the Soviets launched a counteroffensive, using carefully hoarded reserves to attack the overextended Germans outside Moscow.

**May 42:** The shattered Soviet mechanized forces were reborn w/ the creation at this time of the first tank corps. (See, p 9)

#### Rebuilding the German Army:

After continuous operations from **Jun 42 – Mar 43**, most German units were worn out. The most pressing need was for manpower. Paradoxically, the totalitarian dictatorship of the Third Reich had been much slower to mobilize its population than were the Western democracies or the shattered Soviet Union. Hitler had *steadily resisted radical disruptions of German life*, such as reductions in consumer goods and using more women in factory work. In **Jan 43**, however, he reluctantly appointed a committee of three men to find **800,000** new recruits for the armed forces. (14)

In **Feb 43**, Hitler recalled Guderian from disgrace to oversee the reconstruction of the mechanized forces. . . . By **Jun 43**, many panzer divisions once again possessed **100 – 130** tanks each, thereby regaining much of the combat power of previous years. Guderian also attempted to increase the supply of SP assault guns, which were a cheap form of armored support for infantry troops, and of armored half-tracks. . . . While nominally authorized at **13,000 – 17,000** men, the average **1943** panzer division, despite all of Guderian's efforts, was probably closer to **10,000** or **11,000**. (16)

#### German infantry:

The infantry divisions that made up most of the German Army were *steadily losing their combat capabilities*. In the spring of **1942**, **69** of the **75** infantry divisions of Army Groups North and Centre had been reorganized to reflect these losses. The old structure of nine infantry battalions and artillery batteries of four guns each was replaced by an organization of six infantry battalions w/ three-gun batteries. In essence, therefore, these divisions were expected to perform the same missions w/ two-thirds of their previous combat power. By the spring of **1943**, this reduced organization became almost universal on the Eastern Front, and an infantry division was fortunate to have **8000** effectives, supplemented by up to **1000** unarmed Russian "helpers." Continuing reductions in available horses and motor vehicles made this infantry division far less mobile than its **1941** predecessor. Soviet attackers sometimes overran German artillery batteries because the guns could not be moved, and German infantry units had to use bicycles for reconnaissance and local counterattack forces. (17)

[**Note:** For discussion of the new Tiger and Panther tanks see, p 17, ff.]

#### Why Kursk?:

The general impression among commanders like von Manstein was that the Germans had *ended the winter campaign* [of **1942/43**] w/ a *relative advantage* over the Reds, an advantage that should be exploited by a renewed offensive as soon as the *rasputitsa* ended in **Apr** or **May 43**. . . Now, in **1943**, Operation Citadel emerged as the most important in a series of limited offensives designed to consolidate the German defenses while inflicting sufficient damage on the Red Army to *delay any Soviet offensive* [while also chewing up Soviet strategic reserves]. Citadel in particular was expected to destroy two Soviet fronts while shortening the German defensive line by **120** kilometers. (20-21)

## Chapter II:

### The Red Army in 1943:

Begins w/ discussion of Soviet general Zhukov: He was an “energetic, stubborn and often ruthless commander who approached war w/ dogged determination. His force of will, often combined w/ an utter disregard for casualties, propelled Soviet forces through their trials in the initial period of the war and, ultimately, to victory. Like the American General Grant, he understood the terrible nature of modern war and could endure its effects. He demanded and received absolute obedience to orders . . . and, at times, he stood up to an incurred the wrath of Stalin. *There was little finesse in his operations, and he used the Red Army as a **club rather than a rapier***. His temperament was admirably suited to the nature of war on the Soviet-German front, and Stalin knew it.” Glantz notes the “sheer power, crudeness, and even brutality of Zhukov.” (27, 41-42)

Given the extensive Soviet planning, almost from its inception, the German Citadel plan had *no chance of strategic surprise*. . . Although various “tank armies” had participated in the **1942** campaigns, these had been ad hoc, mixed formations of armor, cavalry, and infantry. On **28 Jan 43**, the State Defense Committee, or GKO, the highest body in the Soviet defense structure, took the next logical step. Decree No. **2791** directed the creation of tank armies of homogenous composition, w/ all elements able to move cross-country at the same pace. . . For the first time in the war, Germany’s opponents were creating large-scale armored and mechanized forces capable of independent, deep operations. The tank army was equivalent in size and capability to the panzer corps that had spearheaded the blitzkrieg campaigns. (See, p 32)

Soviet vs. German armor: The Soviet tank inventory rose from **7700** tanks in **Jan 42** to **20,600** tanks at beginning of **1943**; in contrast, German tank inventories rose far more modestly during the same period – from **4896** in **Jan 42** to **5648** in **Jan 43**. As a result, the Soviet tank forces during the Kursk battles had a substantial numerical advantage over the German panzer force. In comparison to the new German tanks, though, the *Red tank force was at its lowest qualitative level of the entire war*. (**Note**: For a discussion of “Red Armor, Trucks, and Antitank Weapons,” see, p 35, ff.)

**Note**: While accepting the defensive first phase of the Kursk operation, Stalin and his three generals – Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Anotov – unanimously agreed that the *Kursk operation* in particular and the summer campaign in general would be *fundamentally offensive in nature*. Even though they agreed to absorb the initial German attack, they were determined to seize the strategic initiative as quickly as possible. (42-43)

## Chapter III:

### Preparations:

The German Buildup: See, p 51, ff., for discussion.

The Soviet Buildup: See, p 55 ff.

Soviet Defensive Planning: See, p 63 ff.

Correlation of forces: It is an axiom of military theory and a studied product of Soviet combat analysis that the attacker should outnumber the defender, ideally by at least three to two [3:2] *strategically*. With

artful concentration, such an overall superiority can produce an operational superiority of between **3** and **5:1** and tactical superiority at the main points of attack of between **8** and **10:1**. Yet, by Soviet calculations, at Kursk the Red Army actually *outnumbered the attackers* by about **2.5:1** in men and exceeded the Germans in tanks and guns. These ratios were somewhat less favorable to the Soviets in the narrow sectors where the Germans focused their main attacks, but no amount of German tactical and technical superiority, real or perceived, could guarantee success under such circumstances. (64)

The peculiar grayish-yellow topsoil of the Kursk region both facilitated and hampered all attempts to conceal and camouflage the gathering host; turning over even a single shovel full would expose the black Russian earth underneath. (74-75)

Partisan operations: Soviet reconnaissance teams and partisans operated throughout the German rear areas, gathering information and sabotaging the logistical buildup for Operation Citadel. During **Jun 43** alone, partisans operating behind Army Group Centre destroyed **298** locomotives, **1222** railroad cars, and **44** bridges. Every day railroad tracks were cut in **34** places, causing the Germans endless difficulties as they moves supplies and ammunition forward. This vast network of agents gave the Red Army far more accurate intelligence about German capabilities than the Germans had about their opponent. (78)

#### **Chapter IV:**

##### **Frontal Assault, 5-9 Jul 43:**

Chapter begins w/ discussion of the field of battle – the Orel-Kursk region, which formed a rolling plateau called the Central Russian Uplands. . . The uplands were drained by several major rivers. . . In short, the terrain resembled that of southern Ohio or Surrey, England, and was excellent tank country. . . Kursk was a key rail and road hub, whose loss would render the Soviet salient indefensible. . . Outside the city, the Soviet bulge was punctuated by scattered large and small farming hamlets, flanked by rolling farm country and abandoned fields. . . Clumps of trees punctuated the rolling landscape. . . The famous Russian “black earth,” which characterized the soils in the region, was extremely fine, producing considerable dust when dry and then dissolving into a muddy morass after a rain. As in most of the Soviet Union, the roads were largely unpaved, dirt trails that could not support heavy wheeled vehicle traffic, particularly in wet weather. . . (See, 79-80)

Stalin Organ: As *Leibstandarte’s* lead elements lunged on toward Bykovka, the Soviet **1 Btn./ 5 Gds Mortar (Katiusha) Rgt.**, leveled its multiple rocket launcher tubes and fired over open sights at the advancing Germans. This novel and terrifying use of *Katiushas* would become commonplace over the ensuing days. (100)

**9. AOK:** Clearly, Gen. Model had almost shot his bolt. After four days of high-intensity combat, the troops of **9. Army**, particularly the infantry and tankers, were worn down and worn out. . . Model’s final failure epitomized German frustrations in the Kursk operation. In six [**6**] days, Model’s troops had advanced no more than **15** kilometers. Despite sacrificing about **50,000** men and **400** tanks, they had utterly failed to penetrate even the Soviet tactical defenses. . . By **8 Jul 43**, any hope of German success at Kursk rested squarely on the shoulders of Hoth’s armada struggling tens of kilometers to the south. Model’s defeat, however, would make Hoth’s task that much more difficult. . . (121)

The **II SS PzK** as a whole recorded **121** enemy tanks destroyed on **8 Jul 43**. By this time, the SS Pz.K. had irrevocably lost **17 tanks**, and about **100** required repair. This loss ratio of **8:1** in favor of the Germans persisted throughout much of the operation. (135)

**9 Jul 43:** The day of fateful decisions by both sides. For example, Hoth makes fatal decision to shift axis of **II SS PzK** advance NE toward Prokhorovka. (See, 138 ff.)

## Chapter V:

### Prokhorovka: 10-15 Jul 43:

Glantz begins here by trying to separate fact from fiction about the battle. Notes, for example, that while history has recorded that between **1200 – 1500** tanks clashed on the fields of Prokhorovka, the true number, while still impressive, was considerably lower. . . According to author, around **572** tanks (German/Soviet) met on the field of Prokhorovka itself. Moreover, P. was not the single titanic struggle of legend. In reality, it was a confused and confusing series of meeting engagements and hasty attacks, w/ each side committing its forces piecemeal. . . Even more important to the overall outcome of the Battle of Kursk was the vicious struggle that took place between **10-14 Jul 43** along the **48 PzK** left flank. Yet this battle was overshadowed by the momentous events along the Prokhorovka axis and is now almost wholly forgotten. . . (See, 151, ff.)

## Chapter VI:

### The Germans Halt:

All the while, von Manstein at Army Group South remained confident that something positive could still be gleaned from the heavy fighting. (209)

Stalemate (13 Jul 43): See, p 210, ff.

The combat on **13 Jul 43** clearly demonstrated that a turning point was at hand. . . Against the almost surreal combat mosaic, both High Commands reached decisions that would *inexorably alter the course of the war*. (210)

**13.7.43:** In response to Hitler's summons, his two army group cdrs, Manstein and Kluge, flew to Fuehrer HQ at Wolfsschanze. . . Manstein still so convinced he could prevail at Kursk, he was prepared to commit his operational reserve, the **24 PzK**. Hoth and Kempf also remained "bellicose and confident that victory could be achieved." Yet Hitler categorically rejected von Manstein's counsel. (see, 217-18)

Four days later [17.7.43], **OKH** ordered **II SS PzK** to be withdrawn from combat and prepared for movement to the West<sup>32</sup> [Allies had landed in Sicily]. . . What von Manstein, Model, and even Hitler did not know, and probably could not comprehend, was that the German Army in the East now faced the *most ambitious Soviet strategic offensive of the war*, one that would forever end major German offensive operations in the East. (218)

**Note:** The *Leibstandarte* alone counted **501** enemy tanks destroyed through the evening of **14 Jul 43**, and Hausser's corps **1149**. (221)

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<sup>32</sup> **Note:** As it turned out **2 SS PzK** headquarters, **SS "DR"** and **SS "T"** divisions would remain in the East; they moved south to the Mius front to deal w/ Soviet offensive there. The Izium offensive and the Mius offensive terminated on **27 Jul** and **3 Aug 43**, respectively. (245)

## Chapter VII:

### Soviet Counteroffensives:

In mid-**May 43**, when it approved the concept of a premeditated defense at Kursk, the *Stavka* had also mandated the preparation of a series of major counteroffensives, which taken together, formed the impressive Soviet summer strategic offensive. (227)

- a) Operation Kutuzov: *Stavka* ordered the Western, Briansk and Central Fronts to prepare an offensive against German forces defending the Orel salient – code-named Operation Kutuzov – which was to commence as soon as the German attack at Kursk halted. . . This attack in the Orel salient commenced on **12 Jul 43**,<sup>33</sup> (227)
- b) Operation Rumiantsev: Within weeks after the Orel blow, the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts would conduct a second and even larger offensive along the Belgorod-Khar'kov axis, code-named Rumiantsev, designed to complete the demolition of Manstein's Kursk shock force, now denuded of its powerful **II SS PzK**. . . Its objective was nothing less than the destruction of **4 PzArmy & Army Dtch Kempf**. Indeed, Stalin and Antonov, Chief of the General Staff's Operations Directorate, hoped to cut off the other two elements of Army Group South, **1 PzArmy** and **6 Army**, by advancing **180 kilometers** thru Khar'kov to Dnepropetrovsk and then on to the Black Sea coast. . . This offensive began on **3 Aug 43**. (229, 241)
- c) Thereafter, the Soviet strategic blow would expand to encompass forces of the Kalinin, Southwestern, and Southern Fronts. By mid-**Aug 43**, the entire front from Velikie Luki to the Sea of Azov would be set ablaze in a titanic struggle that the *Stavka* hoped would break the back of the *Wehrmacht* in the East. (229)

What astonished the Germans most about these massive and numerous Soviet offensives was the fact that the defenders of Kursk were able to go from a desperate defensive to a full-fledged offensive in a matter of days. (229)

Although Soviet forces failed to destroy German **4 PzArmy** and **Army Dtch Kempf** in the Belgorod-Khar'kov operation, they added insult to German Citadel injuries and subjected the *Wehrmacht* to a bloodletting it could no longer withstand. German infantry divisions eroded to mere shadows of their former selves. . . The panzer divisions fared little better. . . The Soviet Voronezh and Steppe Fronts paid dearly for their victory. The frontal hammer blows, so characteristic of an operation planned by Zhukov, produced over **250,000** Soviet casualties, more than **25%** of the initial Soviet force. . . (252)

The Soviet tank forces suffered equally appalling losses. Katukov's 1 Tank Army, which had lost up to **80%** of its initial strength of **646** tanks and SP guns in Citadel, lost an additional **1042** tanks in the Belgorod-Khar'kov operation. Rotmistrov's 5 Gds Tank Army had **50** of its original **503** tanks and SP guns serviceable on **25 Aug 43**. (252)

Weighing the relative costs, the *Stavka* was well satisfied w/ what Zhukov, Vatutin, and Konev had achieved. . . Von Manstein's beleaguered forces [i.e., Army Group South] would have no choice but to withdraw rather precipitously to the Dnepr River line. (254)

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<sup>33</sup> **Note:** After weeks of grinding battle that consumed what was left of German **9 Army's** armored strength, German forces fell back to the Hagen line. (273)

Operation Suvorov: While the bitter fighting raged along the Belgorod-Khar'kov axis, the entire Soviet-German front erupted in flames as the Soviet summer offensive took shape. Front after Soviet Front joined the concerted assault. The Western and Kalinin Fronts kicked off Operation Suvorov on **7 Aug 43** by launching a major drive on Smolensk via Dukhovshchina and Roslavl'. The Southwestern and Southern Fronts once again thrust across the Northern Donets and Mius Rivers on **13 Aug 43**, this time w/ a force that the Germans could not endure. The unremitting pressure of the incessant Soviet hammer blows left the German High Command w/ no alternative but to do the unthinkable and to *begin a major strategic withdrawal*. . . As Glantz notes, this was a *decisive turn of events*: "Blitzkrieg was at an end." (254)

Soviet Counteroffensives<sup>34</sup>  
(12.7. – 1.9.43)

- I: 5.7.43: Premeditated defensive at Kursk
- II: 12.7.43: Operation Kutuzov
- III: 3.8.43: Operation Rumiantsev
- IV: 4.8.43: Operation Suvorov
- V. 13.8.43: Donbass Operation
- VI. 26.8.43: Chernigov-Poltava Operation
- VII. 1.9.43: Briansk Operation

**Chapter VIII:**

Conclusions:

In both a defensive and an offensive sense, the battles of **Jul-Aug 43** were the *first modern Soviet operations of the war*. Although it lacked technological superiority in terms of individual weapons systems, for the first time in the war, the Soviet Union learned to *integrate combined arms forces* into a mix that proved lethal of the attacking Germans. . . For the remainder of the war, the Soviets were essentially elaborating upon the doctrine, force structure, and procedures first tested at Kursk, Orel, and Khar'kov. (269)

At Kursk, for the first time in the war, the Soviets contested w/ the Germans *in the air* on an almost *equal footing*. (270)

General Heinrici: This German general lamented the lack of infantry forces available to the attacking Germans [at Kursk], and he claimed this factor had a markedly deleterious effect on the offensive: "The infantry forces available to the army groups were too weak to drive a screening front to the east along the intended line. Above all, infantry divisions – especially in the Army Group South area of operations – were lacking to screen the flanks of the attack groups; therefore, this mission had to be taken over by panzer divisions, which were then missing from the attack in the main direction. . ." (for more details see, pp 271-72)

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<sup>34</sup> **Note:** See map, p 268. Numbers "I," "II" and "III" signify the three phases of the Soviet Kursk strategic operation.

Soviet numerical superiority, the stubborn tenacity of the Soviet soldier, the improved combat skill of his commanders, and the Soviets' ability to sustain staggering losses spelled doom for Operaton Citadel. (272)

For the Soviets, neither Operation Kutuzov nor Rumiantsev was an offensive work of art. Succeed they did, however, and with tragic consequences for the Germans. But they did so at immense cost. (273)

Concerning operations Kutuzov & Rumiantsev: Although the exploiting Soviet mobile forces could validly claim that for the first time in the war they fought German mobile forces to a standstill, the cost was a delay in the capture of Khar'kov and an irrevocable loss rate in tank strength almost *eight times that of the Germans*. Ultimately, the sheer weight of the Soviet strength forces the Germans to abandon the key city. (273-74)

Costs [i.e., Comparative losses]:<sup>35</sup>

- a) Operation Citadel: According to General G.F. Krivosheev [i.e., most authoritative official Soviet account to date] Soviet forces suffered **177,847** casualties in this operation. . . . Germans lost total of **49,822** men in Citadel, somewhat less than **1/3** of admitted Soviet troop losses. . . . The same official Soviet sources indicated that during Citadel the Soviets lost **1614** tanks and SP guns out of **5035** tanks/SP guns committed to action. German armor losses in Citadel are more difficult to pin down. . . . In his analysis, Glantz concludes that the German losses in tanks and assault guns amounted to up to **1612** damaged and **323** destroyed. On the basis of these figures, admitted Soviet tank losses (**1614** destroyed) were at least five times higher than German losses and probably even higher. (275-76)
- b) Orel Operation: Official Soviet sources indicate losses of **429,890** (see table, p 277) out of **1.287.600** men employed. . . . The same source indicates that Soviet forces lost **2586** tanks/SP guns in the operation out of at least **3925** committed to combat (well over **50%**). Precise German armored losses are not available but were certainly less than those incurred during Citadel, probably amounting to about **500** of the committed tanks and SP guns.<sup>36</sup> Thus, armor loss ratios probably amounted to at least **5:1** in the Germans' favor. Once again, this favorable ratio was due, in part, to German repair and evacuation capabilities, as well as to their still-superior tactical skills. [German Army personnel losses not available.] (276)
- c) Belgorod-Khar'kov Operation: Soviet official sources indicate following losses in this operation: **255,566** out of **1.144.000** men committed. . . . Krivosheev also indicates that in this operation Soviet forces lost **1864** tanks and SP guns out of **2439** engaged, or well over **50%** of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts' initial armored strength. Fragmentary data indicate that the Germans lost as many as **327** of the **600** tanks and assault guns they committed in the operation. Hence, the resulting loss ratio of roughly **5:1** would accord w/ losses the Soviets experienced in the Orel operation and Citadel. (276-77)

Summary of Soviet Losses: Of total of ca. **2.5** million men committed – Citadel, Orel, Belgorod-Khar'kov – Russians lost **863,303**. They also lost **6064** out of **7360** tanks and SP guns committed to these three operations. By comparison, the Germans had committed a total of **940,900** men and **3253** tanks/SP guns to these operations; of the latter, **2928** were committed to Citadel. (Table, p 345)

<sup>35</sup> **Note:** See also detailed tables beginning on p 336.

<sup>36</sup> **Note:** Confusing – for only **323** German total armor losses at Kursk.

For force ratios in all three operations see, table, p 346. For example, during Citadel, the ratios were **2.4:1** (men) and **1.8:1** (tanks/SP guns) respectively, in Soviet favor. All told, for the three operations the ratios were **2.7:1** in men and **2.3:1** in armor in the Soviets favor.

Although the *three phases of the Soviet Kursk strategic operation* proved costly to both sides, the Soviets could afford the losses and the Germans could not. (277)

#### Consequences:

Virtually all participants in the Kursk operation and historians writing after the war have agreed on the catastrophic consequences of the German Kursk defeat for the German war effort. Author goes on to quote, Manstein, Guderian, Mellenthin, etc. (277)

The Battle of Kursk meant an *end to the blitzkrieg* in a strategic and operational sense. For the first time in the war, a German offensive was contained in the tactical or shallow operational depths. . . Even more striking, Kursk also spelled doom for German blitzkrieg in a tactical sense, despite their clear technological superiority in tanks and AT weapons. . . Hence, Kursk marked a *turning point in the war strategically, operationally, and tactically*. . . Confronted w/ the death of blitzkrieg and unable to develop defensive tactics necessary to halt the Soviet juggernaut, German defeat simply became a *matter of time and blood*. (280-81)

### **10.6: Kursk. Hitler's Gamble, 1943, Walter S. Dunn, 1997.**

#### **Introduction:**

The Battle of Kursk has suffered from two conflicting interpretations: the official Soviet version and the German version. (See, p. xi)

The major battle at Prokorovka on **12 Jul 43** was fought in the mud rather than clouds of swirling dust. The action resulted from the collision between the tank regiments of the *Adolf Hitler* and *Reich* Divisions, about **200** tanks, astride the Prokorovka road versus three [3] tank brigades and a mechanized brigade (about **200** tanks) of the **5. Gds Tank Army** striking south on the same road. Although there were **1500** German and Soviet tanks "in the area," these were divided into three [3] separate engagements: a) the engagement at Prokorovka; b) another south of P. between the **3. PzK** and the Soviet **69. Army**; and, c) a third north of P., between the *Death Head* Division and the **10. Tank Corps**. (xii)

Even considering the enormous appetite of the Eastern Front for German divisions, the sudden availability of a strategic reserve of over **20** divisions gave Hitler a unique opportunity to seize the initiative once again and deal the Soviets a devastating blow. . . Therefore, we have one factor in Hitler's decision to fight in the summer of **1943** – the availability of a large strategic reserve as a result of the Allied decision not to invade France in 1943. (xiii)

Roads in Russia: In **1940**, of the **400,000** km of roads in the Soviet Union, only **7100 km** were either asphalt or concrete. Of the rest, only **136,000** km were surfaced w/ gravel, and the remaining **250,000** km were scraped dirt trails. After a few vehicles churned up the sparse coat of gravel on the roads, horses would sink into the mud up to their bellies. The steel treads of one tank could literally destroy a Soviet dirt road during the muddy period. (xiii)

Primary reasons for Battle of Kursk briefly summarized: a) because the resources were available to show the world that Germany was still strong; b) German panzer forces were in a time frame that afforded technical superiority over their Russian opponent; and, c) the Kursk salient offered Hitler the opportunity to destroy two Soviet fronts and open a gaping hole in the Russian line. (xv)

### **Chapter 1: The Strategic Position, Apr 43:**

Author begins w/ discussion of the Soviet offensives which began on **28 Jan 43** in effort to destroy German forces in the Ukraine, capture major cities (i.e., Belgorod, Kharkov, Kursk, etc.), and force Germans back across the Dnieper. Notes that behind German lines the railroad lines were in excellent condition and more abundant than in Red Army sectors. (2, ff)

Meanwhile, the Germans had taken steps to make divisions available to shore up the gaps in the south opened by the Soviet offensive. . . For example, to shorten the line and free up divisions for use in the south, Hitler agreed to the withdrawal from the Rzhev salient; this began on **1 Mar 43** and was complete by **25 Mar 43**. The **544** km line was reduced to **176** km. (6)

Farther north, the Germans decided to liquidate another salient at Demyansk for the same purpose of shortening the line and to make divisions available at Leningrad and in the south. The withdrawal began on **20.2.43** and was completed by **18.3.43**. (7)

Numerous German divisions also transferred from France to eastern front ca. **Dec 42 – Jan 43**, among them **6. PD** and **7. PD**. (15)

Summarizing the **Feb 43** events, the Russians were the definite winners at Kursk, the losers at Kharkov,<sup>37</sup> and drew even at Rostov and the Kuban. The stalemate created by the rainy season was a mixed blessing to both the Germans and the Russians. The pause allowed the Germans to move more divisions from France – in fact, the transfer of German divisions from France had played a major role in stabilizing the German defense. Most of the divisions defending southern Russia in **Feb 43** had come from France, from the Rzhev salient, or from the Caucasus. (17)

However, while the Germans rebuilt their divisions, the Red Army was regenerated into a far more formidable foe w/ improved leadership, better weapons, and better trained men that would meet the challenge of the summer. (17)

### **Chapter 2: Rebuilding the Red Army:**

After the repulse in the Ukraine, the Soviet General Staff set about reconstructing the Red Army. Major improvements, in fact a *rebirth*, of the Red Army took place in the first half of **1943**. The Soviet military potential was renovated in four [**4**] areas: leadership, organization, logistics, and weapons production. Improvements in all of these areas produced an *army that was capable of meeting the Germans at any time or place and inflicting a crushing defeat that would deny the Germans the initiative for the remainder of the war*. (for details see, 18 ff.)

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<sup>37</sup> **Note:** After breaching the German line at Kharkov and Poltava, Soviet forces had driven close to Dnepropetrovsk. In this area, the Red Army was forced to return to its late **Jan 43** starting line considerably weakened. This action was called “Manstein’s Miracle.” (16)

Although the Russians lost **1,977,000** troops (male and female) in **1943** and **5,506,000** were hospitalized (i.e., wounded/sick?), most of the losses occurred in the first half of the year. . .<sup>38</sup> The total strength of the field forces of the Red Army grew from 5.3 million on **1 Jan 43**, to 6.4 million on **1 Jan 44**, a gain of **1.1** million men, despite the heavy losses inflicted by the Germans. (20)

**Note:** Calculating losses + net gain of ca. **1,000,000** in the field army, Dunn concludes that the number of recruits added to the Red Army in **1943** was 3.5 million! This total supports the estimate based on the birth rate. (20-21)

Women in Red Army: Interesting discussion of this topic. Particularly notes the unique role women played in Red Army as snipers. Notes that Soviet snipers *caused severe emotional pressure* on the German front line soldier. (21-22)

In summary, in the first half of **1943**, the Red Army lost **781,000** men and women and **1.9** million were hospitalized – a total of nearly **2.7** million troops. Returning wounded probably exceeded the number hospitalized in that period, providing **2,000,000** experienced soldiers. The **1.5** million new recruits increased the total to **3.5** million, for a calculated net gain of **800,000**. In fact, the total manpower in the Red Army increased from 5.3 million on **1.1.43**, to 6.46 million on **30.6.43**. The Red Army gained over **1,000,000** men in the first six months of **1943**. (23)

Author then goes on to discuss growth of Red Army and improvements in the firepower of the Soviet field armies in **1943**. For example, on **1.7.43**, there were **376** Soviet rifle divisions at the front, **58** in reserve (an increase of **50** from **1.1.43!**), **28** in the districts and the Far East, for a total of **462** – an increase of **55**. (24 ff)

The increase in artillery, tank destroyer, and AA units in the first six [6] months of **1943** radically altered the fire power of the Red Army, especially the creation of **27** tank destroyer bdes and **36** AA divisions. Both of these units were essentially defensive formations to protect the troops from German tank and air attack. The lessons of 1942 had been well learned. The troops could not be left defenseless in the face of German tanks and acft, as happened in the Ukraine in the summer of **1942**. (28-29)

#### Armored forces:

The concept of the tank army was revived in early **1943** w/ a radical change in doctrine, organization, and strength. Previous tank armies had included both tank formations and marching infantry. The new tank armies were completely motorized. Rifle divisions were seldom attached to the tank armies, which gained complete mobility. . . The tank army had over **600** tanks and **22** battalions of motorized infantry. The **1943** tank army usually had two tank corps, one mechanized corps, a motorcycle regiment, an AA division, a tank destroyer regiment, a howitzer regiment, and a Guards mortar regiment of rocket launchers. [**Note:** Author goes on to discuss actual composition of tank and mot. corps.] (29)

Independent tank bdes were also brought up to the new tables of organization when possible. These were more often used for infantry support along w/ the assault guns. Independent tank regiments were also formed for use w/ the infantry. . . At Kursk, half the available tanks were in tank bdes and regiments assigned to the field armies. There were **211** tank bdes and regiments available to support **462** rifle divisions and **98** rifle bdes on **1.7.43**. (29-30)

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<sup>38</sup> **Note:** These figures do not jibe w/ his following analysis – for he states below that the Red Army lost “only” **2.7** million troops in first half of **1943**.

A major change in the armored force was the reorganization of the assault gun or SU regiments in early **1943**. The SU regiments used the newly developed **SU 76** mounted on a light tank chassis, the **SU 122** mounted a **122mm** howitzer on a **T-34** chassis, and the **SU 152** mounted a **152mm** howitzer on the **KV** chassis. . . The SU regiments were designed to counter the heavy tanks being developed by the Germans. . . By **1.7.43**, **21** of the SU regiments were at the front and **3** in reserve w/ only **17** still in training. These regiments were concentrated in the Kursk area and played a vital role in the battle. (30)

Soviet factories were turning out ample supplies of all kinds of weapons to equip the new troops. After the disaster of **1941** and the hurried evacuation of many factories, Soviet industry was back in stride by mid-1942, but in **1943** production reached a point at which *available stocks exceeded demand*, and in **1944** production of some weapon either leveled off or was reduced. . . The expansion of the Red Army in early **1943** also benefited from increased deliveries of Lend Lease supplies. (For details see, 32-33)

In summary, the Red Army was rebuilt in the first half of **1943**. . . The Red Army of **Jul 43** was a far more formidable foe than the army that melted before the Nazis in the summers of **1941** and **1942**. (33)

### **Chapter 3: The Germans Rebuild:**

During the lull beginning w/ the muddy season in the spring of **1943** to **Jul 43**, Adolf Hitler engaged in a *massive program to rebuild the German Army*. . . Still by **1.7.43**, the **243** German divisions [all fronts?] were short an average of **2500** men from their table of organization. The vigorous program of rebuilding began in **Jan 43**, after the disastrous winter of **1942/43**. . . The Germans withdrew from the salients at Demyansk and Rzhev to free up divisions to halt the Soviet offensives in **Feb-Mar 43**. Twenty-two [**22**] divisions (**15** infantry, **3** motorized, **3** panzer, **1** cavalry) were released from the Rzhev salient alone. The divisions from Rzhev played an essential role in halting the Red Army advance west of Kursk. (35)

On **13 Jan 43**, Hitler announced that henceforth the German nation would devote itself to total war. . . The German High Command estimated that **800,000** men would be required to replace the losses of the winter of **1942/43** exclusive of the returning wounded. . . Hitler's orders in **Jan 43** set forth the measures to provide the **800,000** troops. The Class of **1925** (**18** years old) were to be inducted in early **1943**, producing **400,000** new soldiers. (The Russians were inducting the Class of **1926**.) An additional **200,000** would come from previously deferred men from the domestic economy, industry, and coal mining. (35-36)

Still more men were needed to make up the total need of **800,000**. Therefore, another **200,000** older men had to be inducted, half from the age group **21-37**, and half from the **38-42** age group. The number was still short so additional men were taken from the **43-46** age group. Two months later, **112,000** men were sought from the **50+** group to replace younger men in anti-aircraft service, and occupation units. All of these measures produced a total of **800,000** trained men by **1.7.43**. (36)

During **1943**, the Wehrmacht reached its highest point, **9.5** million men on **30 May 43**. Of these, **4,250,000** were in the army, **450,000** in the SS, **1,700,000** in the air force, **810,000** in the navy, and **2,300,000** in the replacement system, plus **100,000** in foreign units. (36)

Hiwis: The German POW camps, containing millions of Soviet prisoners, were a potential source of manpower. . . Russian volunteers – working for the Germans in exchange for better food and conditions –

were called *hiwis*, a contraction of the German term for volunteer helper. They were widely used in the Replacement Army and railroad construction units for service duties to free men for the front. On **6 Feb 43**, the Luftwaffe had **100,000** *Hiwis* in construction and AA units, replacing Germans. *Hiwis* became part of the official table of organization in army units. The infantry division was assigned more than **1000** to perform supply duties, or for horses, and other noncombatant roles. . . In **Jan 43**, the German **9. Army** of Army Group Center included **39,400** Russians, either volunteers or conscripted. (36-37)

Ost battalions: The Soviet POWs were also formed into *Ost Battalions*, equipped w/ captured Russian weapons and used to fight the partisans. In early **1943**, the Germans had **176** Ost Battalions, mainly formed by anti-Communist ethnic minorities from the Caucasus. . . By **Jun 43**, there were **320,000** Ost troops. (37)

Volksdeutsch: Another source of manpower were individuals in the occupied territories who had some German ancestry. These quasi-foreigners were categorized in four [4] classes of Volksdeutsch. (See, pp 37-38)

Foreigners were also used to man the large number of AA guns defending Germany from Allied air attacks. . . The use of teenagers to perform military tasks in Germany had begun even earlier. On **20 Sep 42**, Hitler had ordered the formation of the Anti-Aircraft Militia to replace men in AA batteries. In **Jan 43**, the age limit was dropped to include **15-year-old** boys and girls who were to be excused from school to man the guns. (38-39)

All of the above extraordinary measures had the central objective of releasing combat-fit Germans to serve on the eastern front. However, the most important source of new combat soldiers was the annual class of young recruits that passed through the replacement system. The ordinary **18-year-old** entering the Army passed through a system based on a prewar organization linking divisions, not only to military districts, but to geographical subdivisions within the district. For each regiment in the peacetime army, a replacement battalion was created at the beginning of the war, located in the home station of the regiment. The purpose of the battalion was to induct, train, and send new recruits to the parent division, thereby preserving the geographical identity of the division. The replacement battalion also held recuperating wounded until they were ready to rejoin the division. . . During the last two [2] years of the war, divisions were created that combined men from two or more military districts. Despite many alterations, the basic system continued of relating the home of the recruit to the division in which he would serve. (39)

The numerous German returning wounded served as the major source of replacements. From **1 Jul 42 – 30 Jun 43**, the Germans lost **1,985,000** men in the East. During the same period, **850,000** wounded returned, a little less than half. (39)

The newly trained recruits were sent to the front in march battalions, while the wounded returned in coys at more frequent intervals, another indication that the returning wounded exceeded the number of new recruits. (40)

Even w/ all these measures to provide manpower, the enormous losses of the winter of **1942/43** were only partially replaced. . . In the first half of **1943**, **823,433** men were lost and **720,100** replacements arrived – a net loss on the eastern front of **103,333** men, despite determined German efforts to find manpower. While the Germans lost over **100,000** men, the Red Army field armies gained over **1,000,000** men in the same period. [!] (40-41)

At the core of the German problem in the east was the need to *match the growth* of the number of Red Army divisions. [Note: Here, author begins a discussion of how Germans formed new divisions in “waves.”] (41)

To form new divisions, over **1,000,000** men were diverted from the replacement stream in the period from **Jun 41 – Jul 43**. New German divisions were formed in “waves.” All the divisions in a wave usually had similar characteristics. The **15<sup>th</sup>** Wave of **9** divisions began forming in **Apr 41** and remained the core of the defensive force in France until **Jun 44**. . . The German **13<sup>th</sup>** Wave w/ **8** divisions and the **14<sup>th</sup>** Wave w/ **6** divisions, were created in **Nov 40** for occupation duties in anticipation of the transfer in **1941** of all combat-fit divisions to the east for the attack on the Soviet Union. The divisions had three [**3**] infantry regiments, but only three battalions of Czech or obsolete German artillery. The infantry had captured Czech or French weapons and equipment. In **1942**, these divisions were reequipped w/ modern German weapons and sent to the eastern front. . . Most of the divisions of the **13<sup>th</sup>** and **14<sup>th</sup>** Waves were sent to Russia between **Jun 42 – Mar 43**:

**Jun 42:** Four [**4**] German divisions left the west to participate in the summer campaign;

**Nov 42:** More German divisions were sent from the west in response to the Soviet offensive that surrounded Stalingrad;

**Jan 43:** The mass transfer of both waves begins w/ three [**3**] divisions;

**Feb 43:** Three [**3**] more German divisions go to the east;

**Mar 43:** The final three [**3**] of the **14** divisions of both waves left France for the eastern front.

Crux: Four [**4**] divisions of the **13<sup>th</sup>** and **14<sup>th</sup>** Waves reinforced the summer '42 drive on Stalingrad, and the remaining **10** formed the bulk of the divisions that stopped the Soviet offensives in the spring of **1943**. (41-42)<sup>39</sup>

Twenty [**20**] divisions had been withdrawn from Russia to France in **1942** for rehabilitation. Nine [**9**] of these divisions were sent back to Russia between **Dec 42 – Mar 43** and helped reverse the Russian advance in the spring of **1943**; seven [**7**] more were sent to Russia between **Apr – Jun 43**, as part of the buildup for Kursk. (42)

In the second quarter of **1943**, Hitler continued to draw on France for the buildup at Kursk. From **Apr – Jun 43**, eight [**8**] more divisions were withdrawn: **1. PD** went to the Balkans while [**7** infantry divisions] went to Russia. . . Of the **34 divisions** taken from the forces defending Western Europe in mid-**1942**, **30** were sent to Russia and most to the crucial southern front where their presence made a major contribution. (43)

The transfer of divisions from France to Russia between **Dec 42 – Jun 43** was based on a decision by Hitler that there would be *no second front in France in 1943*. Whether this was a gamble on his part, or based on information gleaned from intelligence sources including *transcripts of trans-Atlantic telephone calls between Roosevelt and Churchill*, cannot be definitely established. However, the decision of the leaders at Casablanca in **Jan 43** to forego an invasion of France in **1943** was made known to Hitler. In **Jul 43**, the Germans had only a *single combat ready division* left in France. (43)

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<sup>39</sup> **Note:** See text for actual designations for these units; all appear to be **3xx**-level divisions.

To replace the divisions in France, the Germans created **36** new divisions in **1943**. . . [See text for details, 44 ff.]

New weapons: Author discusses new weapons introduced by Germans, as well as production increases in **1943**. He notes that, during **1943**, Albert Speer was redirecting German industry to war production.<sup>40</sup> The resulting flow of weapons beginning in early **1943** eventually provided the German divisions in the east w/ an adequate, though not plentiful supply. . . While the totals were less than Russian production, the German Army had sufficient high quality weapons to arm most of the troops on the eastern front by the middle of **1943**. However, divisions not slated for a part in the Kursk battle continued to use substandard weapons [particularly the infantry divisions]. New weapons by **1943** included the **MG 42**; new, heavier AT guns; better, heavier tanks [Tiger, Panther], etc. . . The rebuilding of the German Army was a stupendous undertaking. . . However, as shown above, the constantly expanding Red Army *could not be matched by the Germans*, even though Hitler *stripped the west of all but one combat ready division by Aug [43]*. (48-49)

Hitler's next challenge, the threat of an Allied invasion of Sicily and Italy in the summer of **1943**, *did not divert divisions from the Battle of Kursk*. No divisions were sent from the eastern front to defend the "soft underbelly" of Europe. Instead, sorely needed replacements were used to re-create the Stalingrad divisions and to refit others that would make up the armies to defend Italy. The *only troops* from the Russian front sent to Italy were a single SS division and the HQ of the **II SS PzK** that was stationed in northern Italy in **Aug 43**. (49)

All of the measures taken in the first half of **1943** resulted in a very powerful German Army in Russia by **Jul 43**. However, the expansion was not sufficient to match the Soviet rebuilding program. (49)

#### **Chapter 4: The German Order of Battle:**

On **5 Jul 43**, the Germans had assembled their most awesome armored force of the war concentrated for a single campaign. The invasion of **1941** had been spread over the entire length of the front and included three separate operations. The Kursk forces exceeded those gathered for the offensive in the south in **1942**. The Kursk battle had drawn the cream of the German Army from all over Europe. Many of the divisions had been transferred from France or from the Rzhev salient in early **1943**. All of the divisions had been reinforced during the preceding three months. (50)

**Note:** What follows is detailed breakdown – organization, number of battalions, tanks, assault guns, etc. – of all German corps/divisions participating in Citadel. (50 ff)

Summary: Of the total of **50** German divisions which took part in the Battle of Kursk, at least **9** had come from the Rzhev salient, **13** had been transferred from France in the previous six [**6**] months, and **10** were panzer divisions that had been siphoned off from the reserves of Army Groups South and Center, leaving those army groups exposed to Soviet attack. Of the other **18** divisions, **7** were weak, combat weary units that held the **2. Army** sector. (60)

The impact of the Western threat in the Mediterranean was manifested in the shortage of replacements that were used to rebuild the **20 Stalingrad divisions** in the summer of **1943**. Most of those divisions

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<sup>40</sup> **Note:** Writes Dunn: "Speer improved the quality as well as quantity of weapons, which offset the Russian superiority in numbers." (49)

would eventually be used to defend Italy, but the process of rebuilding drained a major portion of the available replacements. As a result, **13** of the infantry divisions at Kursk had only **6** rifle battalions, and one had only three [**3**] battalions. The missing 45 battalions would have a *serious impact on the battle*. (60-61)

The **4. PzArmy** was *chronically short of infantry* to secure its flanks, and panzer divisions were diverted from the spearheads to hold the east and west [flanks]. When Manstein asked the **2. Army** commander for more infantry, the commander pleaded that his weak divisions were already stretched too thin, and no divisions were sent. The eastward drive of **3. PzK**, that could have created a crisis for Soviet **7. Gds Army**, was aborted and the panzer corps turned north to clean up the gap that had developed between **4. PzArmy** and **Army Dtch Kempf** which should have been taken care of by infantry. (61)

### **Chapter 5: The Soviet Order of Battle:**

Similar discussion as in the previous chapter of Soviet armies/corps/divisions/independent units at Kursk. (64 ff.)

While the Germans put most of their goods in the “shop window,” and had few reserves, the Red Army had an entire front in reserve w/ four [**4**] field armies, a tank army, three Guards cavalry corps, and four armored corps. The Steppe Front was established to serve as a reserve in the event of a German breakthrough and also to provide fresh forces for a counteroffensive to begin as soon as the German attack was halted. (75)

The Steppe Front had a total of **1700** tanks in four [**4**] tank corps, four [**4**] mechanized corps, and three cavalry corps, including those assigned to armies. . . The Voronezh, Central, and Steppe Fronts had nearly **4900** tanks and **400** SUs. (79)

However, this was not the sum total of reserves of the Red Army. The Stavka reserve units, few of which were needed in the defeat of the Germans at Kursk, included a tank army, four [**4**] field armies, two tank corps, a mech. corps, **20** parachute bdes, and two cavalry corps. . . The armored forces in the Stavka reserve were especially strong. (79)

Although the Russians had concentrated their tank resources for the Kursk battle and the subsequent counteroffensive, there were substantial tank forces available elsewhere if needed. . . Any suggestion that the Russians had exhausted their tank reserves by the end of the Battle of Kursk is not supported by the facts. Less than **5000** Soviet tanks were involved in the battle of the 20,000 tanks on hand in mid-1943. (80)

Crux: The Red Army had ample reserves of all types of units and weapons on eve of Battle of Kursk – a luxury the Germans did not enjoy. Previously published totals of tanks at Kursk referred to the organization strength of the units in the immediate area and ignored the thousands available in reserve units and replacement depots. In addition to the tanks and SUs in the organized units, the Russian tank depots had large stocks of replacements and *hundreds of new tanks were coming off the assembly lines each week*. (81)

Second, the Russians, fearing the impact of the new German tank designs, had taken steps to cope. New AT battalions w/ **85mm** AA guns were assigned to the armored corps. The number of AT regiments assigned to the assault areas increased dramatically. . . There were more AT guns awaiting than there were German tanks. The guns at Kursk *destroyed more than half the total German tanks lost*.

## Chapter 6: Soviet & German Armor:

Both the Germans and the Russians *rebuilt their tank forces* during the spring of **1943**. . . (83)

The ability of an AT gun to penetrate the armor of an opposing tank resulted from the energy per square inch when the projectile contacted the surface of the opposing tank, not from the total weight or diameter of the round. A larger projectile, such as that fired from the low-velocity 75mm howitzers on the early German **Pz IV**, was *useless against armor* because the little energy the projectile had was dispersed by the larger area. Later in the war, shaped charge projectiles were developed that gave low-velocity weapons effective AT capabilities, but the guns usually lacked the range and accuracy of the special purpose AT gun. . . Larger guns, for example, the Soviet **122mm** howitzer used on one of their SUs, would simply *blow off the turret of a German tank*, even if it could not penetrate the armor, because of the tremendous energy of the round. (83-84)

The Germans realized the dichotomy of the two roles of the tank before **1939** and placed the **37mm** AT gun on the **Pz III** to fight other tanks and the low-velocity **75mm** howitzer on the **Pz IV** to assist the infantry. (84)

German industry produced **2816** tanks and SP guns in **Apr – Jun 43**, **484** were Panthers, most of which were not ready on **5 Jul 43**, and **156** Tigers, bringing the total [of Tigers] to **240**, but only **178** were used at Kursk. Delaying the attack worked against Hitler, because the Germans were *losing the tank and guns production battle*, and the Red Army received over **6000** tanks and assault guns in the three [3] months before Kursk. (84-85)

Of **6291** modern German tanks, assault guns, and SP guns available on **1.7.43**, nearly **3000** were at Kursk. The German forces employed at Kursk had **1865** modern tanks, **384** obsolete tanks, **533** assault guns, and about **200** SP guns – vastly outnumbered not only by the **5300** Soviet tanks and SUs in units of the Voronezh, Central and Steppe Fronts, but also by the thousands in units in the Stavka reserve and the Moscow Military District, and more in tank depots, complete w/ crews, waiting to replace losses as they occurred. (85)

The Germans also produced over **1000** assault guns – eg., Hetzer, Stug III – in the three [3] months prior to Kursk. (87)

The Russians began **1943** w/ a stock of **20,600 tanks** on **1.1.43** (including Lend-Lease tanks). The Germans started the year w/ only **7927 tanks**. In **1943**, the Red Army received per quarter an average of **6825** tanks [all types] and SUs versus **2804** German tanks and SP guns in the second quarter of **1943**. (88)

In **Jul 43**, the only Soviet medium tank was the superb **T-34**. . .<sup>41</sup> The Soviets had **7600** medium tanks in **Jan 43**, received **16,300** during the year, lost **14,700** during **1943**, and ended the year w/ **9200**. In an average month during **1943**, the Soviets lost **1200** medium tanks, including **T-34** and Lend Lease tanks, but *more than replaced them* w/ new tanks. (89)

British and American tanks played a significant role in the Battle of Kursk. About **6000** Lend Lease tanks had been delivered to the Russians by **Jul 43** (**4500** in **1942** and **3650** in all of **1943**), and a total of **14,430** during the entire war. In **Jun 43**, German intelligence estimated that of the **256** Soviet tank bdes identified, **61** were either fully or partially equipped w/ British and American tanks.(91)

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<sup>41</sup> **Note:** Apparently, they also had some medium tanks via Lend Lease.

The German shortage of tanks was the major reason for Hitler's delay of the Kursk offensive, and this shortage would plague the German Army for the rest of the war. Hitler believed that significant numbers of higher quality Tigers and Panthers and additional **Pz IVs** would alter the balance on the eastern front. Despite the opposition of the generals, Hitler delayed the offensive to give the German tank factories time to produce more tanks. There was *solid reasoning behind the delay*. The Germans produced **2804** tanks and SP guns in the three [3] months preceding **Jul 43**, about equal to the total number of German tanks involved in the battle. . . The total deliveries to the eastern front from **1.3.-22.6.43** were: **699** tanks, **318** assault guns, **90** Hornets, **45** Ferdinands, **45** 150mm howitzer Sturmpanzers, **637** 75mm AT guns, and **162** 88mm AT guns. Without these weapons, the Germans would have been unable to launch a major offensive. (92-93)

The balance of tank numbers *shifted decisively against the Germans during 1943*, even though total losses of German tanks and SUs [i.e., assault guns?] in **1943** was **8992**, compared to the much higher Soviet losses of **22,400**. Soviet production of **27,300** tanks exceeded losses by nearly **5000** and made up the losses, while the Germans produced only **10,747** tanks in **1943**, for a net gain of less than **2000** tanks. (93)

### **Chapter 7: The Soviet Defensive System:**

The Soviet defenses at the Battle of Kursk were based on the concept of elastic defense developed by the Germans in the latter part of World War I. (103)

A major factor in the Soviet success was the depth of the defensive system that was constructed in the months prior to the battle. The defenses were more elaborate than any constructed before or after in World War II by the Red Army. (105)

With the memories of German ability to penetrate Soviet defensive lines at will in **1941/42**, the Red Army indulged in what could be considered overkill. To an extent never seen before on the eastern front, the Red Army built multiple defensive lines around the Kursk salient. On much of the front there existed three [3] "army" level defense lines, manned by units of a given army. Three [3] "front" lines, manned by front reserves; and two [2] reserve lines manned by the Steppe Front – a total of **8 lines**. . . In the Central Front sector the works included **5000** km of trenches and **400,000** mines. In the threatened sector of the **13** and **48 Armies**, **112** km of barbed wire was installed w/ **10.7** km electrified. A typical defensive position for a rifle corps at Kursk in **1943** had a depth of **20** km and a width of **15-30** km. (106)

### **Chapter 8: Breaking Through in the South:**

The impact of a barrage on the eastern front is *difficult to imagine*. The testimony of Guy Sajer, a member of the *Gross Deutschland* Division, was striking, but the real terror of seemingly endless crashing explosions, even on those in comparatively safe shelter, cannot be expressed. Daylight turned to darkness and was interrupted by brilliant flashes of nearby explosions. The earth trembled and *bushes and trees exploded in flame by spontaneous combustion from the intense heat*. The German troops [or Russian, for that matter] were frozen w/ fear, unable to move or even scream at times and at other times *driven to howling like animals* while desperately trying to bury themselves deeper to escape the terror, while *clutching one another like children*. Those who peered out were thrown back into the shelter in pieces. A close hit would flood the darkness w/ blinding light for a brief second followed by even blacker closeness as dust and dirt poured into the shelter thru every crevice. The barrage would go on for seemingly an

eternity until all hope for survival had vanished and then would suddenly stop. The eerie silence that followed was soon interrupted by individual sounds of motors and automatic weapons signaling that the even more dangerous war in the open was to resume. (113-14; see also, *Guy Sajer, The Forgotten Soldier*, 234-35)

Recording tank losses: A note of caution is necessary regarding claims of tanks destroyed. Both Russians and Germans made extravagant claims of enemy tanks destroyed during the battle. At the same time, German records indicate that *few German tanks were total losses*. Gunners and tank commanders on both sides claimed a tank if they fired and it stopped, effectively putting it out of action. However, both Germans and Russians had extremely efficient salvage and repair organizations for damaged tanks. For every tank written off as a total loss, three [3] were repaired and returned to battle in a few days. On **13 Jul 43**, the number of operational Panthers had dropped to **38** of the original **200**, while **31** had been declared total losses and **131** were still being repaired. (120)

### **Chapter 9: Cracking the Second Defense Line:**

Although **4 PzArmy** had broken thru the first defense line at two points on **5 Jul 43**, the Soviet divisions withdrew as functional units according to the philosophy of elastic defense, rather than fighting in untenable positions to the last man. . . (126)

Despite the advances of **4 PzArmy** and **Army Dtch Kempf**, the Germans had moved only **10-15** km in two [2] days from their start line of **5 Jul 43**, and the distance to Kursk was still over **110** km. German success depended on closing the gap between 4 Pz Army and 9 Army at Kursk before the Soviet reserves arrived. The delays encountered by the fierce Russian resistance on the first day had already jeopardized the German chances of success, and the rapid movement of reserves on the night of **5-6 Jul 43** reduced the German chances enormously. (132)

By evening **8 Jul 43**, the **48 PzK** had gained more than **10** km, still far short of the objective set by Manstein for the day. During the rest of the offensive the [panzer] corps would gain little more than **5** km, as it faced the strongly entrenched Soviet **1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army** and the rifle divisions of the **6. Gds Army**. (138)

**6.-8.7.43:** In the three [3] days from **6-8 Jul 43**, the **4 PzArmy** and **Army Dtch Kempf** had broken thru the first and second defense lines and were fighting in the **10** km wide zone between the second and third lines. Progress on **8 Jul 43** was better than in the previous days, but the two German armies were still only about **20** km from their start line, and it was another **100** km to Kursk. In the four [4] days since the initial attack, the Russians had brought sizeable reserves to block the panzers. . . In four days of hard fighting, the two German armies had advanced only **20** km, a day's march for a rifle coy.

Although the Germans had broken thru two [2] defense lines, there were six [6] more to break before they could enter Kursk. In order to encircle a large group of Russians in the Kursk bulge, the Germans had to close the pocket in no more than six [6] days. Any longer and the Russians would have time to draw reserves, not only from the Steppe Front, but also from the Stavka Reserve. The Germans had to advance about **20** km per day, destroying a defense line every day, and preventing the survivors from reinforcing the next line. Instead in the first four [4] days, the Germans had destroyed only two [2] lines and advanced a total of only **20** km. The Soviet reserves were pouring in, and by the evening of **8 Jul 43**, they outnumbered the Germans in every category, w/ more reserves on the way. Manstein was *not aware of the magnitude of the Russian reserves* and clung to the hope that the next day would bring a major breakthrough. . . (143-44)

## Chapter 10: Fighting for the Third Defense Line:

The four [4] days from **9-12 Jul 43** culminated in a wide-ranging battle on a **20 km** arc southwest of Prokorovka that marked the high point of the German offensive. In a series of engagements over the next four days, the advance of the three [3] panzer divisions of **2. SS PzK** ground to a halt – blocked by the Soviet **5. Gds Tank Army**, ending any hope of surrounding Russian armies at Kursk. (144)

The Germans made very modest gains on **10 Jul 43** and Soviet reserves continued to build up. . . (154)

Although the Germans had made small gains all along the front on the south shoulder of the Kursk bulge, the table was about to turn. . . The major battle was fought on **12 Jul 43**, SW of the town of Prokorovka. It was not a battle w/ tanks charging on one huge field, but rather a series of attacks and counterattacks across a stretch of countryside ranging in an arc about 20 km wide S and W of Prokorovka. . . The weather was cloudy w/ some heavy rain (so much for the clouds of dust mentioned in several accounts). [!] (158)

**12.7.43:** At the end [of the day], Manstein, *unaware of the reserves available to Russian commanders*, still thought there was a chance of success. At **9:10** in the evening he ordered the **24. PzK**, including the **SS Viking** and **23. PD**, both weak divisions w/ fewer than **100** tanks each, to move from Kharkov to Belgorod on an overnight march. However, Hitler refused to release them, and the Battle of Kursk was over. (163)

## Chapter 11: Stalemate in the South:

**12.-13.7.43:** Although Manstein still had hopes for the offensive on the morning of **13 Jul 43**, the issue was dead. The Soviets launched a major offensive on the north face of the Orel salient on **12 Jul 43**, and Army Group Center had to pull its panzer divisions from the attack on the Kursk bulge to shore up the defense in the north. There was no possibility of any further advance south by **9. Army**. (164)

The Germans were faced w/ a *serious shortage of infantry* as well. They had thinned out their quiet sectors beyond reason to provide troops for the initial attack. In the German **2. Army** sector at the west end of the Kursk bulge, *one weak infantry division was holding a sector 60 km wide*, compared to the **50 km** held by the entire **4. PzArmy** at the beginning of the offensive. [!] (164)

The Russians probably lost about **1000** tanks during the Kursk battle and more in the two weeks that followed. However, many of these losses were replaced w/ tanks arriving from the depots. (169)<sup>42</sup>

Summary: In conclusion, the Germans were able to breach the Russian MLR on **5 Jul 43**, but many of the Russians withdrew to reinforce the second line. The **4. PzArmy** took three [3] days to break thru the second line and close up to the third line. By **10 Jul 43**, the Soviets had gathered reserves at the threatened points and outnumbered the attackers. . . The constant pressure of Soviet tank units on the east and west flank of the **4. PzArmy** penetration continually threatened the **4. PzArmy** and weakened its spearheads. There were *insufficient German infantry divisions* to create a firm shoulder on either side. . . As a result, about half of the panzer divisions were held back from the spearhead to bolster the flanks. . .

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<sup>42</sup> **Note:** Glantz and House have much more precise statistics on both German and Soviet losses during the Battle of Kursk.

The weakening of the spearhead and the delays caused by the counterattacks gave the Russians ample time to assemble their reserves. (171)

### **Chapter 12: The North Shoulder:**

**Note:** This was German **9. Army** sector (Army Group Center).

The **9. Army** had great difficulty on **5 Jul 43**. Even though the Germans were able to break thru the first line of defense everywhere except on the east flank of the attack, the Germans were able to advance only halfway to the second line in most sectors. Nevertheless, this short advance of about **10 km** was the *most ground taken in any day* by **9. Army** and was half the distance covered by **9. Army** during the remaining week of the battle. (174)

Despite the heroic efforts on the part of the divisions of **9. Army**, their progress was measured in meters. They could not penetrate the second line of defense in the face of the dogged Russian defenders backed by immense artillery formations. . . The intensity of the fighting was indicated by a request from **9. Army** for 100,000 rounds of tank gun ammunition on **7 Jul 43** as the three days of attack had reduced the army's stock. With fewer than **500** operational tanks, the request was for **200** rounds for each tank! (178)

**5.-12.7.43:** The German **9. Army** had advanced less than 20 km in the eight [**8**] days from **5-12 Jul 43**. . . Only at Teplioie did the Germans make a dent in the Soviet second defense line. (183)

### **Chapter 13: Conclusion:**

The evidence available does support the main thesis that the Battle of Kursk demonstrated the *Red Army could defeat the Germans alone*. The significance of the battle was that after nearly four [**4**] years of war beginning in **Sep 39**, a staged German offensive was *defeated in less than two weeks!* (185)

The Germans lost the Battle of Kursk by the third day when they failed to break thru the Soviet second defense line. German success depended on their speedy penetration of at least eight [**8**] successive Soviet defense lines before the Red Army troops in the front line could withdraw to reinforce the next line in the rear, or the Stavka could shift reserves to the threatened points. Rather than cracking the second line on **6 Jul 43**, the Germans were not only stopped in the north but advanced painfully [slow] in the south. . . To win, the Germans had to close the trap at Kursk in **4-5** days at the most, and given the mobility of the Red Army units provided by American four-wheel drive trucks, even five [**5**] days may have been too slow. . . The Soviet reserves were the determinant factor. . . (186-87)

Although the Germans broke thru one of the defensive lines in the north, and two in the south, there were still six [**6**] to go. (187-88)

Although German tank losses were minimal considering the intensity of the battle, the cost in infantry was high. The three [**3**] SS divisions lost **20,000** killed, wounded and missing, mainly in the panzer grenadier coys. There were **120** panzer grenadier coys w/ about **200** men each in the three divisions for a total strength of about **24,000** men. Given the number of losses, these coys were likely mere shadows by the battle's end on **12 Jul 43**. (189)

The Kursk battle is interpreted differently by the Russians and the Germans. In the eyes of most Russian historians, the battle was of extreme importance as it *marked the point at which the **initiative on the eastern front** passed from the Germans to the Soviet Union.* . . The German version is quite different. On **13 Jul 43**, Manstein believed that the battle was not lost and that **24. PzK** was the winning trump card. (189-90)

The only rational purpose in launching the German offensive was the possibility of cutting off six [6] or more Soviet armies in a pocket that would have equaled the German victories of **1941/42**. The pocket had to be closed quickly, and a **200 km** gap opened in the Soviet line before the Russians could bring up their reserves. (190)

The interpretation of Manstein's discussion of **13 Jul 43** w/ Hitler indicating that Hitler called off the battle because of Sicily is questionable. Although Hitler mentioned Sicily as one reason for the termination of the offensive, Manstein also noted other reasons were given including the threat to the Mius River front and the Soviet attack north of Orel that began on **12 Jul 43**. Hitler *did not cancel the offensive at Kursk primarily because of the invasion of Sicily*. Only one [1] German division, the **1<sup>st</sup> Para Div** from France, was sent to Sicily after the invasion to reinforce the four [4] German divisions being reconstructed from fragments of divisions that had not been able to reach their parent formations in Tunisia and some replacement battalions. Other divisions in France continued to flow to Russia in **Jul-Aug 43**. (191)

“Stalingrad divisions to Italy (not to eastern front): Although the Allied invasion of Sicily had *little impact on the Battle of Kursk in Jul 43*, the Allied invasion of Italy in **Sep 43** did have a major impact on the fighting in Russia. The German “Stalingrad” divisions refitting in France in **Jul 43** were sent to Italy beginning in **Aug 43**, rather than forming a strategic reserve of **20** divisions that would have been of significance in restoring the situation when the Russians broke thru in **Aug 43**. (191)

**CruX:** More than any other event, the Battle of Kursk *hastened the end of World War II*. The battle was the wake-up call that shook the American policymakers into action and made them realize that it was an American responsibility to end the long and bloody war as quickly as possible. The flow of Lend Lease turned into a flood, and Allied plans to invade Europe were finalized and carried through in **Jun 44**. (192)<sup>43</sup>

**10.7: A Soldier's Duty.** K. Rokossovsky. Marshal of the Soviet Union. 1970.

### **The Kursk Bulge**

**ca. Mar 43:** The Nazi command . . . had been able, at a price, to hold on to two important salients, one east and SE of Orel and the other east and NE of Kharkov. These two stubbornly defended salients formed the shoulders of the huge Kursk bulge which jutted out from our line nearly **200** kilometers to the west, and was defended by the Central<sup>44</sup> and Voronezh Fronts. (181)

The Front Command, Staff and Political Department got down to their new tasks. It was necessary to organize a defense system which the enemy would be incapable of piercing, that is, it had to be deeply echeloned and especially strong in tanks. Made wise by the *bitter experience of past battles*, we knew

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<sup>43</sup> **Note:** Dunn's final words here strike me as rather odd. It was only after Kursk that American policy-makers came to such conclusions?

<sup>44</sup> **Note:** Rokossovsky was w/ Central Front. (185)

that in mounting an offensive the enemy would throw in large numbers of tanks, and we had to be ready to repel them. (181-82)

In the past months the enemy had often succeeded in breaching our defenses all too easily. This was how we had lost Kharkov and Belgorod. In my view, this was due to our *failure to create the necessary reserves*, so that, when attacking, we stretched our forces to the very limit, drawing the front out into a thin thread and losing contact w/ the rear bases. Our tactical and strategic intelligence provided us w/ inadequate information, and the enemy, by retreating, succeeded in creating powerful striking forces w/ which he counterattacked suddenly, while we had nothing to parry his blows with. The *absence of tactical reserves in depth* made it possible for the enemy, once he had penetrated the front on a narrow sector, to envelop our troops practically w/ impunity. (182)

#### Rokossovsky's Memorandum:

In **Apr 43** a group of high-ranking officials arrived from Moscow to review the situation and determine the Front's needs. . . The group spent some time w/ us, investigating the state of the troops, the Front and Army logistical services (many of which had still not reached the deployment areas), and tactical and strategic problems. I set forth my ideas concerning the organization of the defense of the Kursk Bulge. The comrades suggested that I should outline them in a memorandum addressed to the Supreme Commander, which I did. The memorandum presented a brief review of the situation on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front as a result of the winter campaign of **1942/43** and certain suggestions for the summer. The most likely sector where the enemy might attempt to mount his decisive summer offensive was the Kursk Bulge. Here he would try, w/ greater forces, to achieve the objectives he had failed to achieve in winter. That the enemy was continuing to move troops to the Orel and Belgorod areas revealed his intention to exploit his position outflanking the troops we had inside the salient. The memo stressed the *vital necessity of building up powerful GHQ Reserves* to the east of the Kursk Bulge: they would help us to resist any enemy blow on this sector. . . (182-83)

I do not claim that my memorandum had any effect; perhaps the overall situation on the fronts itself called for special attention to the Kursk Bulge. Be that as it may, but in **May-Jun 43** a new army group, the Reserve Front,<sup>45</sup> was organized in the rear of the Central and Voronezh Fronts. Apparently our suggestion concerning the *creation of reliable reserves* behind the Kursk Bulge was, after all, taken into account. (183)

#### The End of the "Citadel"

From the character of the enemy's activities, supplemented by intelligence data, we surmised that, if the Nazi armies were at all capable of launching an offensive w/ decisive objectives in the near future, it would be undertaken on the Kursk Bulge. The configuration of the frontline was conducive to the employment of the *German Command's favorite stratagem* of striking in converging directions at the base of a salient (towards Kursk in the present case). In the event of success, the enemy would envelop the Central and Voronezh Fronts, surrounding the seven [7] armies defending the salient. The continued flow of enemy troops, especially armor and artillery, from depth into the Orel salient confirmed us in our assumptions. (184)

The Soviet Command had managed correctly to surmise the enemy's plans, the likely directions of his main efforts, and even the deadlines of the offensive. **GHQ** decided on holding operations w/ the objective of sapping the strength of the enemy's striking force and then counterattacking along the whole southern sector of the front from Smolensk to Taganrog. (185)

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<sup>45</sup> **Note:** The Reserve Front had soon be renamed as the Steppe Front? (202)

**Note:** Rokossovsky goes on to discuss his preparations to meet the attack of the German Orel group. See, pp 186 ff. Some key points of his account:

Planned preparations for the defense of the Kursk Bulge began in **Apr 43** and continued right up to the enemy offensive. The troops built the fortified positions of the main line themselves. The second and third lines of the defense, as well as the Army and Front rear echelons, were built by the local population alongside the troops. (187)

In organizing this work we made full use of accumulated experience. All the orders and directives of the Front Command called for the creation of a *strong, deeply echeloned field defense* w/ many lines and maximum development of the *system of fortifications* throughout the *tactical depth*. At first the intention was to build five lines of defense to a total depth of **120-130 km**, but subsequently on some of the most important sectors and directions the depth was increased to **150-190 km**. Within three [3] months the Front organized six main defense lines plus intermediary lines and switch positions covering hundreds of kilometers. Communications trenches were built to serve as switch positions if the need arose. Battalion centers of resistance were as a rule prepared for all-round defense. (187)

In the period from **Apr – Jun 43**, the troops of the Front dug a total of **5000** kilometers of trenches and planted **400,000** mines and ground bombs. In the zone of the **13** and **70 Armies** alone, **112** kilometers of barbed-wire entanglements were set up, **10.7** kilometers of them electrified, and more than **170,000** mines were planted. (187)

We were aware that in preparing for the summer offensive the German Command placed special hopes on mass panzer strikes, and we accordingly organized the defense of the Kursk Bulge primarily as an anti-tank system equipped to repel concentrated armor attacks. We also took into account the enemy's intention to throw his new, heavy Tiger panzers and Ferdinand SP-guns into the fighting and prepared AT lines w/ powerful strong points on the most dangerous sectors and saturated them w/ artillery. It was decided that all of the Front artillery, including anti-aircraft, would be mobilized against the enemy armor . . . (188)

For better co-ordination and control, the strong points were merged into AT areas. By **Jul 43**, the AT defenses reached **30-35** km in depth on the Front's right wing [i.e., where main German attack was anticipated to come]. . . Much attention was given to AT obstacles of all kinds. Continuous zones of such obstacles were created on tank threatened directions both in front of the forward line and in the depth of the defense. They included minefields, AT ditches, dragon's teeth, dams for flooding the terrain, and abatisses in wooded areas. (188)

Although regulations did not provide for rocket launchers ["Stalin Organs?"<sup>46</sup>] being used against tanks, it was decided that they should be. Launcher crews carried out target practices w/ dummy tanks designed to determine the most effective means of combating mass armor attacks. (188)

Special attention was given to organizing the system of fire. Fire means were echeloned throughout the depth of each army, w/ provisions for fire manoeuvre and concentration on threatened sectors. . . In organizing the battle formations of the coy defense areas we were guided mainly by the need to set up an impenetrable curtain of fire. . . We deployed powerful artillery groups on all of the enemy's probably lines of advance. Our overall artillery density amounted to **35 tubes**, including more than **10** AT guns, per kilometer of frontage, and in the **13 Army's** zone the density was substantially higher. (189)

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<sup>46</sup> **Note:** Several pages later, Rokossovsky refers to "**M-13**" rocket launchers. (195)

Along w/ the defense works, the troops engaged in extensive combat training, at least 1/3 of all training time being in night conditions. (189)

We also received much help from the partisans of Bryansk area and Byelorussia. . . We kept in constant contact w/ their HQ, from which we received information on enemy troop movements. Our air reconnaissance observations were double-checked and augmented by the partisans, and our aircraft bombed targets which they located. For our part, we helped the partisans as best we could w/ arms, ammunition and medical supplies and evacuated the wounded to the rear. (192)

In **May-Jun 43**, the German Air Force stepped up activities considerably, striking at railway junctions, stations and bridges to prevent us from bringing up troops, materiel, ammunition and fuel to the front. . . The enemy persistently attempted to disrupt our supplies, which greatly complicated the already difficult tasks of the Front logistical services. (192-93)

By summer **1943**, we succeeded in building up our infantry divisions to a strength of **4,500-5000** effectives each, and three or four had as many as **6,000-7,000** men. (193)

**Note:** Rokossovsky discusses the German offensive, beginning on p. 195.

**5.7.43:** Although the enemy had struck w/ tremendous force, on the first day he succeeded in penetrating no more than **6-8** kilometers inside our defenses. (197)

By the end of the third day, almost all the Front reserve had been committed to action, yet the enemy continued to bring in new forces on the main line of attack. . . What could we do to hold out against him? I decided on a calculated risk and sent my last reserve – General S.I. Bogdanov's 9 Tank Corps which was protecting Kursk from the south – against the main attack. This was a fully manned formation, our pride and hope. I fully realized what dire consequences could result from this manoeuvre in the event of failure. For cracks had begun to appear in our neighbor's front, and we could always expect an enemy strike front them, from the south. . . On the night of **7 Jul 43**, the **9 Tank Corps** was deployed on the main sector. (200-01)

**11.7.43:** The enemy had been active along the whole of our right wing . . . but here, too, he failed to achieve any success. The enemy onslaught began to weaken perceptibly. By **11 Jul 43**, his troops, having suffered heavy losses and achieved none of their objectives, discontinued their attacks. In six [6] days of continuous fighting, they had succeeded in penetrating our defenses by only **6-12** kilometers. The troops of the Central Front had fulfilled their task. . . The northern Nazi group<sup>47</sup> attacking from the Orel salient . . . had been unable to break through towards the group battering at the southern shoulder of the Kursk Bulge. (201-02)

Our neighbor on the left, the Voronezh Front, had also halted the enemy, who managed to advance there up to **35** kilometers. Vatutin had been greatly assisted by the GHQ Reserve. His troops had been continuously reinforced w/ units from the Reserve Front and subsequently this Reserve Front (by then renamed the Steppe Front) attacked and threw the enemy back to his initial positions. We had got along w/o the GHQ Reserve, managing w/ our own forces. (202)

**Note:** Rokossovsky provides no figures on the losses of his Central Front, nor on the losses suffered by the Germans.

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<sup>47</sup> **Note:** According to Rokossovsky, this northern German group [i.e., Model's forces] comprised **8** infantry, **6** panzer and **1** motorized division, supported by **3500** guns and more than **1000** acft. (202)

## **10.8: Reasons for Failure of the 1941 Campaign in Russia:**<sup>48</sup>

### **Background:**

Ongoing controversy among historians over causes of failure of Operation “Barbarossa.” For many years, conventional wisdom was that Stalingrad debacle (1942/43) was the turning point of the war on the eastern front, and, in fact, of WWII as a whole. More recently, some historians have argued that Operation Citadel at Kursk in 1943 led to German defeat. More recently, as well, many historians have given another look at Operation “Taifun,” the assault on Moscow (Oct 41), perceiving its failure as the pivotal event. Finally, a new interpretation opines that the stalling of the German blitzkrieg at Smolensk in Aug 41 was in fact the turning point.

### **Jul 40 – Jun 41:**

I believe it is Williamson Murray who concluded that Germany lost the world war thru its failure to fully mobilize following victory over France and before the attack on Soviet Russia. Production of weapons and equipment relatively anemic during this period; for example, little more than 200 tanks per month. Fewer acft available for Barbarossa than for the campaign in the West in 1940. Lack of (or false) production priorities. Result was that Germany was ill-equipped for anything more than a short blitzkrieg campaign of 3-4 months (virtually no reserves). Eastern army a “rag-tag” of all kinds of vehicles, weapons and equipment (some museum pieces!), much of which rapidly broke down or failed. German hubris following campaign in west and the Balkans played a role in this fatal lack of preparation; as well as Hitler’s failure to abandon his blitzkrieg approach,<sup>49</sup> which affected both military production and the nature of the impending campaign in the east.

### **Smolensk/1941:**

Most recently, David Stahel has argued in favor of the fighting in **Jul-Aug 41** – culminating in fierce Soviet counter-attacks and the stalling of the German offensive at Smolensk – as the actual turning point in Barbarossa. Failure to “knock out” the Soviet Union in a single devastating, surprise blow meant that Germany became embroiled in a war of attrition, an alarming situation given Russia’s massive numerical superiorities. The disruption of the German offensive at Smolensk may also have contributed to Japan’s decision not to take part in attack on Soviet Union. Certainly, by **Aug 41**, Hitler and his High Command became much more nervous about outcome of campaign, realizing they had greatly underestimated the resilience, size and fighting ability of the Red Army, as well as the political resiliency of the Soviet state in general). (See comments of Halder, Capt Thilo, etc.)

Perhaps Smolensk can be evaluated as an incipient turning point, if not recognized as such by most contemporaries.<sup>50</sup> At Smolensk the Germans obtained their first operational objective, yet they had failed to destroy the bulk of the Red Army west of the Dvina-Dnieper river lines. The Red Army, despite grievous losses, had survived the initial blows and was fighting back furiously (Timoshenko offensive,

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<sup>48</sup> **Note:** My ideas as of **Nov 09** – taken for most part “off the top of my head.”

<sup>49</sup> **Note:** “Blitzkrieg” was not only a tactical/operational concept, it was as well an overarching diplomatic and economic strategy.

<sup>50</sup> **Note:** Yet, as diaries of some **OKH** staff officers indicate (Capt Thilo, for example), some were beginning to have their doubts by this time if war ultimately winnable.

etc.). The Soviet state had not crumbled under the pressure. Was Smolensk then the turning point? Not sure, but the thesis is an intriguing one.

### **Moscow/1941:**

Many historians – both old and new – view Hitler’s failure to capture Moscow in fall of **1941** as the key failure of the campaign. They thus attribute decisive importance to the capture of the Soviet capital. Moscow was, *inter alia*, a key industrial center, and *the* key communications hub of European Russia; its capture would have greatly complicated the shuttling of forces between fronts, and, in fact, have forced the Russians to pull back hundreds of miles to the Volga. Its loss would also have had a major (devastating?) psychological impact on the Russian people. Heinz Magenheimer is one historian who has recently emphasized the devastating impact Moscow’s loss would have had on the Soviet war effort. Yet the potential psychological impact cannot be quantified; moreover, Stalin and the Soviet leadership had no intention of “throwing in the towel” simply because of the loss of their capital.<sup>51</sup> And east of Moscow the Soviets still possessed daunting resources – industrial, material, human – w/ which to continue the struggle. Also, if the Soviets had been able to survive all the earlier devastating blows and setbacks, why would they have suddenly “cracked” if Moscow were lost?

In any case, while the capture of Moscow might very well have not ended the war in Germany’s favor,<sup>52</sup> the eventual defeat of the *Wehrmacht* outside the Soviet capital did prove devastating to the Germany war effort. If not the turning point of the war in the east – and of WWII in the European theater in general – it was certainly a turning point. The failure to smash the Soviet Union in a single blow (the goal of blitzkrieg) meant that Germany was now caught in a war of attrition (“*Abnutzungskrieg*”) for which it was utterly unprepared (not to mention, ill-suited). As well, in **Dec 41**, the European war widened into a world war, w/ Germany now facing a global enemy coalition possessing ca. **75%** of the world’s resources (a point Dr H.A. Jacobsen likes to emphasize). After **1941**, a strategic military victory for Germany was out of the question; that said, a “draw” resulting from a separate piece w/ Stalin may still have been attainable?

### **Stalingrad & Aftermath/1942-43:**

Along with Battle of El Alamein, the failure of Germany’s offensive in southern Russian in **1942** has for years been seen as the turning point of the European war. Reasons for this assessment are well known. Yet as catastrophic as the outcome of the Stalingrad campaign was for Germany, the operations from **Jun 42 – Mar 43** basically ended in a stalemate of sorts, w/ the German front line in the south roughly the same in the spring of **1943** as it was at the start of the summer campaign of **1942**. During this period, the German southern offensive had failed, and its **6 Army** and other elements surrounded and annihilated at Stalingrad. At same time, however, the massive Soviet effort at Rzhev had been defeated w/ devastating losses (**Nov-Dec 42**),<sup>53</sup> while in the south – after Stalingrad – the Red Army had become overextended and eventually rolled up and defeated in detail by Manstein’s “miracle.”

As David Glantz has pointed out, the “conventional wisdom” among the German generals in Russia was that the fighting during this period had actually ended w/ a slight advantage going to the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> **Note:** How could they have, for defeat would have signified their personal annihilation! They had no choice but to go on resisting. Would the Russian people still have supported them?

<sup>52</sup> **Note:** In fact, unlike Stolfi, for example, I’m quite skeptical that it would have done so.

<sup>53</sup> **Note:** See David Glantz’s account of Zhukov’s “Operation Mars.”

<sup>54</sup> **Note:** See also, Manstein’s memoirs: Verlorene Siege.

What they failed to know, however, was that the *correlation of forces* in the east had, by early **1943**, turned dramatically (decisively?) against the *Ostheer* – a vital point of fact recently illuminated by the German semi-official history of WWII (DRZW, Vol. 8) Moreover, the Germans had also lost more of a key resource they could not get back – that is, time (particularly w/ America pursuing a “Germany first” policy in its war effort). An additional summer, winter and spring had passed w/o a decision; moreover, during this period the Russians had conducted their first successful operational-level offensive (Stalingrad), and, by spring of **1943**, had acquired a superiority in numbers which made their eventual victory simply a matter of mathematics. That said, some indication that Stalin might still have accepted a separate piece in early **1943**?

### **Operation Citadel / Kursk 1943:**

To this day, the Battle of Kursk is shrouded in myth and half-truth. However, relatively new contributions like those of David Glantz and Walter Dunn, based in part on newly available Soviet sources, have begun to bring the true nature of the battle to light. This was Germany’s third summer offensive in Russia; hitherto, Germany had “owned” the summers, if the Red Army had dominated the cold-weather fighting. What strikes one initially is the modest nature of Citadel, compared to Germany’s earlier summer offensives. Here, the *Wehrmacht* would concentrate well over half of its armored and mechanized forces on a very narrow sector, w/ the objective of surrounding and annihilating some six [6] Soviet armies – two Soviet fronts – and destroying Soviet reserves before they could launch their summer offensive.

Yet, by **Jul 43**, the Germans had no chance for success at Kursk. The Russians were ready; their front-line forces (and reserves!) much stronger than anticipated;<sup>55</sup> and their level of tactical and operational skill – while still not equal to that of the *Wehrmacht* – greatly improved over the campaigns **1941/42**. The Russians, in effect, had learned to fight on an almost equal level. The Battle of Kursk was not the – and perhaps not even a – turning point of the war in the east. The outcome was preordained, because the war had already turned inexorably in the Soviet Union’s favor. The very most the Germans could have won would have been a “draw” of some sorts, resulting in a separate peace (but was this even still achievable?).

Just how much the struggle had turned against Hitler’s Germany was evident in the almost total lack of German success at Kursk: Along the northern shoulder of the attack (GFM v. Kluge’s **9. Army**), little beyond the first Soviet defensive belt was penetrated (a depth of ca. **20 km**) and the attack was rapidly stopped; in the south (**4 PzArmy**, etc.), Manstein had slightly better results, yet even here only the second Russian defensive belt was captured, leaving six [6] more to go! In other words, for the first time in a major offensive since **Sep 39**, the *Wehrmacht* had utterly failed to penetrate into the operational depths of the enemy.

That duly noted, Kursk did not signify – as some authors have maintained – the “death ride” of the German tank force.<sup>56</sup> German losses in Citadel – both personnel and armor – were relatively light, certainly when compared to Moscow and Stalingrad. However, in the massive Soviet blows which followed from **Jul-Sep 43** (some six separate major offensives), the *Ostheer* suffered an attrition from which it never fully recovered. As David Glantz has indicated, Kursk was the end of the blitzkrieg on all levels – tactical, operational, strategic. And yet, in the final analysis, Kursk and the subsequent Soviet

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<sup>55</sup> **Note:** Manstein’s relative optimism even late in the battle was due (in part at least) to his ignorance of the true strength of enemy forces he was facing, particularly their reserves.

<sup>56</sup> **Note:** Indeed, by **Dec 43**, the German tank inventory in the east was actually larger than it had been in **Jul 43**. (See my notes from, DRZW above..)

offensives up and down the front only amplified the incontestable dominance the Red Army had already achieved by the middle of 1943.<sup>57</sup> Kursk was, perforce, no turning point, for the turning point had already been reached before the battle was fought.

### **Summary:**

The thesis of Williamson Murray is compelling, as is that advanced most recently by David Stahel concerning Smolensk. Many authors – such as Heinz Magenheimer – make a strong case for Moscow as the “Wendepunkt.” Stalingrad is – was? – the “conventional wisdom,” but the campaign begun in the summer of 1942 had ended in stalemate. Kursk was not the turning point, the “worm” had already turned by the beginning of 1943 (correlation of forces, enhanced Soviet tactical and operational skill, etc.). Even the technological advantage achieved by the Germans w/ their tank forces in 1943 was unable to alter the new realities on the ground.

“Barbarossa” was a breathtaking gamble on Hitler’s part. To be victorious, he had to smash his opponent quickly – before the Soviets could mobilize their millions of reserves, evacuate and return their factories to operation, etc. For Germany had few reserves of men and weapons to throw into the balance if her initial first blows failed to decide the issue. In **Nov 41**, the *Wehrmacht* had reached what Clausewitz called the “culmination point” of its offensive. With that – and the subsequent Soviet counteroffensive in **Dec 41** – Barbarossa had clearly failed. So if Smolensk can be seen as an incipient turning point, the failure at Moscow – coupled with the expansion of the European war into a world war – sealed Germany’s fate. With Russian undefeated, and now **75%** of the world’s resources arrayed against the Reich, defeat had become merely a matter of the mathematics.

### **10.8.1: Hitler’s Ostkriegskonzeption (“Weltblitzkrieg”):**<sup>58</sup>

Die Ausschaltung der Roten Armee innerhalb von laengstens vier [4] Monaten nach Feldzugeroeffnung war nur der Kern eines – so koennte man ihn nennen – „Weltblitzkriegs“-Plans mit dem Ziel, innerhalb eines halben Jahres die gesamt „oestliche Hemisphaere“ Europa-Asien-Afrika, jedenfalls alle strategisch wesentlichen Raeume, von den „Dreierpaktmaechten“ in Besitz nehmen zu lassen, um die USA auf dem amerikanischen Doppelkontinent zu isolieren. (**Note:** See text for more details of Hitler’s strategic plan for a world blitzkrieg, pp 48 ff.)

Vier [4] Ziele verschlingen sich in Hitlers Ostkriegskonzeption ineinander:

- a. Die Ausrottung der „juedisch-bolschewistischen“ Fuehrungsschicht der Sowjetunion einschliesslich ihrer angeblichen biologischen Wurzel, der Millionen Juden in Ostmitteleuropa;
- b. Die Gewinnung von Kolonialraum fuer deutsche Siedler in der vermeintlich besten Teilen Russlands;

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<sup>57</sup> **Note:** As Walter Dunn pointed out, this dominance had grown inexorably, at least in a quantitative sense. For example, from ca. **Jul 42** – **Jul 43** (see above, under #10.5), overall German manpower in the east – despite desperate efforts to the contrary – had declined by about **100,000**, while the Soviets over the same period had added over **1 million** men to their armed forces. In fact, a major cause of the German failure in Citadel was the German Army’s desperate shortage of infantry in the east.

<sup>58</sup> **Note:** Gleaned from: Andreas Hillgruber, Der Zweite Weltkrieg 1939-45. Kriegsziele u. Strategie der grossen Maechte. 1982.

c. Die Dezimierung der slawischen Massen u. ihre Unterwerfung unter die deutsche Herrschaft in vier „Reichskommissariaten“ Ostland (Weissruthenien, Litauen, Lettland, Estland), Ukraine, Moskowien u. Kaukasien. . . unter der Leitung deutscher „Vizekoenige“ – wie sich Hitler in Anlehnung an sein „Ideal“ einer Kolonialherrschaft, an die Rolle Grossbritanniens in Indien, ausdrueckte;

d. Schliesslich sollte die Autarkie eines blockadefesten „Grossraums“ in Kontinentaleuropa unter deutscher Herrschaft vollendet werden, fuer den die eroberten Ostgebiete das vermeintlich unerschöpfliche Reservoir an Rohstoffen u. Nahrungsmitteln darbieten sollten. Dies schien die entscheidende Voraussetzung dafuer, dass sich Hitlers Reich im Kriege gegen die anglo-amerikanischen Seemaechte behauptete u. in Zukunft jedem denkbaren neuen „Weltkrieg“ gewachsen sein wuerde. Dass allein die Absicht, die deutsche Wehrmacht ausschliesslich aus Russland zu versorgen, dazu fuehren wuerde, dass „*zig Millionen Menschen verhungern*“ muessten, wurde in den Richtlinien fuer den „Wirtschaftsstab Ost“ schon am **2 Mai 41** vorausgesetzt. (65)

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