

## **Living Under the Muzzle of a Russian Gun: A Consideration of the Generalship of Paulus and Chuikov at Stalingrad**

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*The purpose of this study is to explain the German failure at Stalingrad by comparing the opposing army commanders, Friedrich Paulus and Vasili I. Chuikov. In spite of how close Paulus came to accomplishing his mission, which was to take all of Stalingrad, in the end he failed either to take the city or save his army from destruction. A large part of the reason for this is to be found in Paulus's leadership, which was far too passive and allowed his subordinates too much discretion. Paulus ensured he was unable to influence events quickly by locating his headquarters some 100 miles from Stalingrad at Nizhne-Chirskaya. Likewise, a large part of the Soviet victory can be attributed to Vasili Chuikov, who made sure, by his hands-on approach and active command style, that the tactical battle was fought his way. It was this difference in command styles that, ultimately, spelled victory for one side and defeat for the other.*

### THE OPPOSING COMMANDERS

Friedrich Paulus assumed command of the 6th Army on 20 January 1942. Three days earlier the man who recommended his appointment, Field Marshal Walther von Reichenau, died of a heart attack. Reichenau and Paulus had a history of working well together and, no doubt, Paulus had anticipated that their cordial relationship would continue. When he took over the 6th Army, he could reflect on a military career of almost unbroken success.

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Paulus was the son of a minor civil servant in Hesse. He was born on 23 September 1890. He attended Wilhelms Gymnasium in Kassel, graduating in 1909. On graduation, his first career choice was the Imperial Navy, but he was denied admission. Although he desired a military career, Paulus believed he would have to settle for a career in law and began attending Marburg University. The 1910 expansion of the German Imperial Army put Paulus on the path to a military career. He was accepted as an officer cadet in the 111th Infantry Regiment and within two years was commissioned as a lieutenant.<sup>1</sup>

Physically Paulus was tall, slender, and handsome, and his turn-out as an officer was precise and meticulous. The years from 1912 to 1914 were busy ones for Paulus. In that time he met, courted, and married his wife, a Romanian, the former Elena Rosetti-Solescu. Paulus and his wife met through her brothers, who were serving in Paulus's regiment. A daughter, Olga, was born to the couple in 1914 and, four years later, twin sons. Paulus appears to have had a happy domestic life.<sup>2</sup> Army life suited him well, and, in 1914, he went to war with the 111th Infantry Regiment.

Paulus did not take part in the great wheeling movement that brought the Germans to the gates of Paris. He and his regiment were relegated to holding the French forces in Alsace and Lorraine. In November, 1914, Paulus fell ill and left his regiment, never to return to it.<sup>3</sup> Paulus spent the rest of the war with the Alpenkorps, an elite formation reserved for fighting in mountainous terrain and used as shock troops.<sup>4</sup> He remained with the Alpenkorps for the balance of World War I in a staff position. During this period he did not exercise command of troops in the field.

After World War I, the Allies reduced the size of the German Army to 100,000 men. Paulus was one of those selected to stay in the army, now known as the Reichswehr. Probably it was the excellence of Paulus's staff work that enabled him to remain in the military. In the 1920s Paulus's career moved steadily upward. He followed the obligatory career path for a General Staff specialist with brief, and mandatory, interruptions for service with the troops.<sup>5</sup>

There were some problems noted by his commanders, such as a lack of decisiveness.<sup>6</sup> In fact, a personal report from one of his commanding officers during this period had this to say about him:

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<sup>1</sup> W. Goerlitz, *Paulus and Stalingrad* (The Citadel Press, New York, 1963) pp. 1–6, 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> M. Middlebrook, 'Paulus', in C. Barnett (ed.), *Hitler's Generals* (Grove Wiedenfeld, New York, 1989) p. 362.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

A typical staff officer of the old school. Tall, and in outward appearance painstakingly well groomed. Modest, perhaps too modest, amiable, with extremely courteous manners, and a good comrade, anxious not to offend anyone. Exceptionally talented and interested in military matters, a meticulous desk worker, with a passion for war-games and formulating plans on the map-board or sand table. At this he displays considerable talent, considering every decision at length and with careful deliberation before giving appropriate orders.<sup>7</sup>

This report indicated that Paulus was extremely well qualified to serve as staff officer, possibly even a chief of staff to a more senior officer. In the 1930s Paulus continued to rise: In 1934 he received command of one of the new motorized battalions and the following year became chief of staff at the new Panzer Headquarters in Berlin. By 1939, he was promoted to major-general and given 'the position of Chief of Staff in the newly formed 10th Army at Leipzig on the eve of the attack on Poland'.<sup>8</sup>

It was in this position that Paulus found himself working closely with his army commander, Walther von Reichenau. Reichenau was not, at first glance, someone with whom Paulus had a great deal in common, but 'professionally, they were a near perfect combination'.<sup>9</sup>

Reichenau was untidy, blunt, forceful, and extremely ambitious. He detested routine and paperwork, preferring to be with his forward units. Essentially, Reichenau was the exact opposite of Paulus. In his chief of staff, Reichenau 'found a man whom he had only to ask, as he signed his papers, "Well Paulus, tell me-what orders am I issuing now?" He knew full well that Paulus invariably acted as he would have had him act'.<sup>10</sup> This marriage of differing personalities was pretty much standard in the German Army, beginning with Blucher and Gneisenau in the Napoleonic Wars and continuing through Hindenburg and Ludendorff in World War I. Paulus was to be with Reichenau for a year. In that time Paulus and Reichenau participated in the Polish and French campaigns. After the Polish campaign, the 10th Army was renumbered the 6th Army.

In September 1940 Paulus was reassigned to the General Staff as Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of the Operations Section at OKH (*Oberkommando des Heeres* or Army Supreme Command), having as his responsibility direction of all operations of the German Army.<sup>11</sup>

Paulus was involved in the planning for *Barbarossa*, which occupied his whole attention prior to June 1941, with one exception. The exception was a trip to North Africa, in April 1941, undertaken at the request of Franz Halder, the Army's chief of staff, to try to curb the offensive proclivities of

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363. See also Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>10</sup> W. Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> M. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 363–364; W. Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–28.

the commander on the scene, Erwin Rommel. Paulus failed to get Rommel to either agree to stand on the defensive or obey a direct order to do so. Paulus, having been unable to secure Rommel's obedience, with the invasion of Russia looming, returned to his post on the General Staff.<sup>12</sup>

*Barbarossa* began on 22 June 1941. In August 1941, Paulus was sent on a tour of 'various headquarters in Russia, to assess on behalf of OKH the competing claims for resources by the commanders'.<sup>13</sup> Paulus was considering a request for active command when Reichenau requested his services as commander of the 6th Army. On 20 January 1942, Paulus got his field command and was named commander of the 6th Army. Reichenau was named commander of Army Group South to replace Gerd von Rundstedt, in whom Hitler had lost confidence. When Reichenau suffered his fatal heart attack, he was replaced by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock. Paulus was retained in his command.<sup>14</sup>

The man who would be Paulus's opponent at Stalingrad was Vasily Ivanovitch Chuikov. He was a curious choice for command of the 62nd Army, considering his past record as a combat commander. His military career in the Soviet Army began, as many did, in the Russian Civil War. In November 1917 Chuikov served in a sapper training section of the Red Guards. In early 1918 he transferred to a junior instructor's course, graduating in April; in time to put down a counter-revolutionary revolt in Moscow. Chuikov then served in the Ukraine, first as an assistant commander of the 1st Ukrainian Brigade fighting the Don Cossacks, and then as an assistant commander of the 40th Rifle Regiment. Later, as commander of the 43rd Rifle Regiment of the 5th Rifle Division, Chuikov took part in the Soviet conquest of the Urals and Siberia and then was transferred east to take part the campaign against Poland.<sup>15</sup>

Following the Civil War, Chuikov remained in the Red Army, continuing in command of the 43rd Rifle Regiment. In 1923 he entered the Frunze Military Academy graduating in 1925. After graduating he served briefly in China as a diplomatic courier, returning to the Frunze for a course 'in the Eastern Faculty, established in the early 1920s to train "specialists" and "advisors" for service in Mongolia and China'.<sup>16</sup> Chuikov served in China from 1927–1929.

He was subsequently attached to the staff of the Special Far East Army, under Blyukher, and took part in the punitive expedition to reestablish

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<sup>12</sup> W. Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> M. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

<sup>14</sup> W. Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–48.

<sup>15</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *To The Gates of Stalingrad* (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2009) pp. 536–537. R. Hoff, 'Chuikov', in H. Shukman (ed.), *Stalin's Generals*, Grove Press, New York, 1993, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> R. Hoff, *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Soviet control over the Far Eastern [China] Railway in 1929. Chuikov remained a further two years on Blyukher's staff, returning to Moscow to command a senior officer's course 1932–5. There followed a senior command course at the Academy of Mechanization and Motorization, command of a mechanized brigade in late 1936, and 5th Rifle Corps in April 1938.<sup>17</sup>

Chuikov was fortunate to have survived this period during which Stalin, in an outburst of paranoia, purged his officer corps and either killed or sent many talented officers into the Gulags.

As a mark of favor, Chuikov was appointed to the command of the 9th Army in preparation for Stalin's invasion of Finland. Of all the Soviet commanders involved in the invasion of Finland, many turned in miserable performances in the opening stages of the war. Few, however, turned in a worse performance than Chuikov. During the battle of Suomussalmi, Chuikov's forces were chopped to pieces by Finnish mobile groups. In a textbook example of how to use mobility to offset numbers, the Finns virtually destroyed the Soviet 9th Army.<sup>18</sup>

Considering that he served a state that did not suffer failure, Chuikov was lucky to escape from the Finnish debacle with his life. As it was, he was promoted to Lieutenant General in June 1940.<sup>19</sup> There has never been an adequate explanation for this, but one can only surmise that Chuikov must have had powerful friends at court. Even so 'Chuikov's chances of ever holding a responsible command again appeared remote, and in December 1940 he was dispatched to China as Soviet Military Attache, replacing Pavel Rybalko'.<sup>20</sup> It took 14 months of repeated requests to be assigned a combat command for Chuikov to be summoned back to the Soviet Union in March 1942. In May 1942 he was appointed Deputy Commander of a reserve army located near Tula responsible for training. On taking up his appointment Chuikov suffered some bad luck when he was seriously injured in a car accident. It was over a year before he regained full use of his legs, although he was retained in command.

## PAULUS TAKES COMMAND

Paulus did not take over the 6th Army at a quiet time; there were Soviet attacks to be dealt with, and the death of Reichenau forced the naming of a replacement to command Army Group South posthaste. As commander of the 6th Army, General Paulus was new to his post and had rarely

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> J. Erickson, *Road to Stalingrad* (Westview Press, London, 1984) pp. 13–14.

<sup>19</sup> R. Woff, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

commanded troops (and never troops in combat) before his appointment to field command. Since Reichenau had such a high opinion of Paulus, it was probably Reichenau's idea to break Paulus in with an apprenticeship under his close observation. If so, fate intervened to prevent it. Instead of a well-known and respected superior, he would be answering to Fedor von Bock, an Army Group Commander he did not know well. Nevertheless, for the rest of the winter, Paulus and the 6th Army held on against repeated Soviet attacks, giving as little ground as possible. During this period there was a problem between Paulus and his new commander, Field Marshal von Bock. Von Bock was dissatisfied with Paulus's conduct, believing that he was acting in an overly cautious manner during his counter-attacks on the Soviet Army. 'Paulus kept his command with the support of his protector, General Halder; however his chief of staff, Colonel Ferdinand Heim, was removed'.<sup>21</sup> Heim was replaced by Arthur Schmidt, an officer more to the liking of von Bock, if not Paulus.

## SECOND KHARKOV

In March the Soviets began planning two offensives against Army Group South, one directed at Kharkov and the other in the Crimea.

In the first instance, [Marshal Semeon] Timoshenko planned a pincer movement against the German positions around Khar'kov, with the Southwestern Front's right wing attacking from bridgeheads across the Northern Donets River northeast of Khar'kov and the Front's left wing attacking Khar'kov from the larger Barvenkovo bridgehead across the Northern Donets, which the Soviets had secured during the winter offensive. Southern Front would support the advance. These pincers would encircle most of the German Fourth Panzer Army and Sixth Army, then push westward to the Dnepr River.<sup>22</sup>

Timoshenko's assault was being undertaken as a spoiling attack to disrupt what the Soviets believed were German plans to attack Moscow. The Germans were planning a general offensive in Southern Russia (Case Blue) that was intended to drive to the Volga and then to the oil fields of the Caucasus.

The main [German] offensive would then proceed in three phases. First, Army Group South would penetrate the Soviet defenses south of Kursk,

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<sup>21</sup> A. Beevor, *Stalingrad* (Penguin Books, New York, 1998) p. 62. Also see M. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

<sup>22</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *When Titans Clashed* (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 1995) p. 106.

conducting local encirclements to prevent the escape of any Soviet units. Next, Army Group South redesignated Army Group B would advance eastward into the bend in the Don River while establishing a strong flank defense towards the north. Again, a large encirclement was planned. Meanwhile, the newly created Army Group A, consisting of von Kleist's First Panzer Army, General Richard Ruoff's Seventeenth Army, and [under Ruoff's direction] the Don near Rostov and then turning to link up with the other spearheads in a large encirclement in the region of Stalingrad. Once this encirclement was achieved, Army Group A would continue its exploitation to the southern oil region.<sup>23</sup>

While the Germans planned, Timoshenko launched his offensive, which became known as the Second Battle of Kharkov, on 12 May 1942. The Soviet spoiling attack was well planned and well timed in that the Germans were caught off balance and somewhat unprepared by the Soviet offensive. Timoshenko's attack, launched in the early morning hours of 12 May 1942, rolled forward, initially creating something akin to panic in the German forces.<sup>24</sup> The main focus (or *schwerpunkt*) of the Soviet attack was the German 6th Army.<sup>25</sup> Initially the Soviets experienced success all along the line, but soon the Germans managed to get the situation under control. The Germans held firm at the shoulders of the Soviet penetration, and the Soviets were unable to widen the breach their initial penetration made. The 6th Army under Paulus was to the north of the breakthrough and managed to hold on, not without difficulty. By 17 May, the Soviet 6th, 57th, 9th, and Bobkin armies along with the 21st and 23rd Tank Corps and 6th Cavalry Corps were deep into the Izyum Salient with nowhere to go. On 17 May the First Panzer Army attacked the base of the salient driving north. Two days later, Timoshenko received permission to withdraw, but it was too late to save the Soviet troops inside the Izyum salient. Paulus ordered the 51st Corps of the 6th Army to attack the base of the salient heading south with the object of lining up with the First Panzer Army. When the two spearheads met, the encirclement was complete.<sup>26</sup> Timoshenko's forces were trapped. More than a quarter of a million men were taken prisoner and enormous amounts of equipment were lost in the ensuing encirclement, which became known as the Second Battle of Kharkov.<sup>27</sup> Having inflicted a massive defeat on the Soviet Southwestern Front, Paulus was rewarded with the Knight's Cross and an appreciative message from Hitler praising 'the success of the Sixth Army against an enemy overwhelmingly superior in numbers'.<sup>28</sup> A more successful debut for Paulus and the 6th Army could scarcely be imagined.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> R. M. Citino, *Death of the Wehrmacht* (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2007) pp. 95–97.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>26</sup> A. Beevor, *op. cit.*, pp. 65–67.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65–67. See also R. M. Citino, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–104, D. Glantz and J. House, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

## THE GERMAN DRIVE TO THE VOLGA

Having decisively defeated the Soviets at the Second Battle of Kharkov, it was time now for Army Group South to consider the implementation of their own plan, Case Blue. Case Blue was to begin with an assault on Voronezh by the 2nd, 6th, and 4th Panzer Armies on 28 June 1942. The initial stages of Case Blue were quite successful. On 7 July, the 4th Panzer Army linked up with the 6th Army at Voronezh. On 9 July von Bock's Army Group South was renamed Army Group B, while Field Marshal List's forces, newly designated Army Group A, began its own offensive operations further to the south. These operations all followed the basic outlines of the German plan. Even though von Bock conducted a rapid advance during this phase and advanced more than 100 miles to Voronezh, Hitler did not believe von Bock was advancing quickly enough and told the Chief of the General Staff Franz Halder of his dissatisfaction with von Bock's actions. As a result of Hitler's criticisms, Field Marshal von Bock resigned his command on 17 July and was replaced by General Weichs.<sup>29</sup> Also, by 17 July it was apparent that some things were not going according to plan. First, there were no large hauls of prisoners being brought in. The Soviets were avoiding the German encirclements by withdrawing to the east and escaping the traps being set for them by the Germans, most notably at Millerovo.<sup>30</sup> From the beginning of the operation to the end of July, when phase two of Case Blue ended, the Germans had acquired a great deal of territory but had not succeeded in encircling and destroying the bulk of Soviet forces in the south. Paulus's 6th Army was supporting the 4th Panzer Army, but the 4th and 1st Panzer Armies were

concentrated into a dense mass around Millerovo, while weaker and far less mobile infantry armies stood off to the flanks. The original intent of the operation had been to firm up a defensive position to screen the rear of a German drive into the Caucasus. It was only to proceed, however, after the destruction of the mass of the Red Army west of the Don bend, and that was no longer a possibility.<sup>31</sup>

Since the bulk of the Soviet forces escaped the Germans at Millerovo, they were forced to make a new plan.

But first the Wehrmacht would have to pause for resupply. The distances in southern Russia were so great and the transportation net was so

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<sup>29</sup> R. M. Citino, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–176. See also D. Glantz and J. House, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>30</sup> There is a controversy as to just what was going on with the Russians. R. M. Citino, in *Death of the Wehrmacht*, believes that the Soviet actions were a combination of strategic withdraw and panic. D. Glantz and J. House, on the other hand, in *When Titans Clashed*, state flatly that Stavka conducted a strategic retreat. On balance, one must say there were elements of both calculation and panic in the Soviet's actions.

<sup>31</sup> R. M. Citino, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

rudimentary that pauses in mid-lunge, as it were, were almost an ordinary happening.<sup>32</sup> At one point the 6th Army was immobilized on the Steppe for 10 days. It was about this time (28 July 1942) that Stalin issued his famous, or infamous, Stavka Order No 227, Not One Step Backward! In this order, ‘Stalin cited the economic and manpower losses of the previous year, explaining why further retreat was impossible. The order mandated that any officer or political officer who retreated would be assigned to a punishment battalion’.<sup>33</sup>

From their position at Millerovo, the Germans would once more try to destroy the mass of the Soviet Army west of the Don. The 1st Panzer Army was detailed to take Rostov and to trap large Soviet forces west of the Don. This operation was supported by the 4th Panzer Army under General Hermann Hoth. According to General von Kleist, who commanded the 1st Panzer Army, the 4th Panzer Army was support he neither needed nor wanted. The Soviets had already escaped across the Don, and the addition of Hoth’s Panzer Army to Kleist’s forces only created an enormous traffic jam. The Germans, once again, locked the barn door after the horses had left.

Hoth closed an almost empty bag and arrived at the Don crossings to find them almost undefended and the approach roads crowded with Kleist’s traffic with which his own tanks then proceeded to entangle themselves, impeding Kleist’s move into the Caucasus. After the war Kleist claimed that if IV Panzer had not been diverted in this way, it could have taken Stalingrad without a fight at the end of July. This is debatable, for Panzer divisions are not ideally suited to the taking of large cities, and substantial forces from Stavka reserve—notably 62nd and 64th Armies already deploying in the area—would presumably have been switched to defend the city had it been under threat from a Panzer Army instead of the overburdened infantry of VI Army.

But whatever the merits of Kleist’s assertion, there is no doubt whatsoever that IV Panzer was not needed in Kleist’s area . . .<sup>34</sup>

Having failed to destroy the Soviet Army west of the Don, Case Blue was modified one final time. ‘Army Group A would drive into the Caucasus in *Operation Edelweiss*, while Army Group B would head for Stalingrad (*Operation Fischreiber* or “Heron”)’.<sup>35</sup> The Germans would now be attacking in three directions, east to Stalingrad, south to the Caucasus, and southwest to the oil fields. The only overall control and coordination of these operations would come from OKH and Hitler, thousands of miles to the rear.

<sup>32</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–121.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> G. Jukes, *Stalingrad: The Turning Point* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1968) pp. 28–30.

<sup>35</sup> R. M. Citino, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

Paulus and the 6th Army were tasked with clearing out the Don bend and striking east to take Stalingrad. Clearing out the Don bend was more time consuming and expensive in terms of casualties than the Germans expected. Once again, Soviet forces inside the Don Bend managed to live to fight another day. Both the 64th and 62nd Soviet Armies retreated across the Don and continued their retreat until reaching the Volga. 'The combination of tenacious defense against German forces at the Great Bend, incessant [though unsuccessful] Soviet counterattacks and continuing and increasingly vexing supply problems—particularly in regard to fuel and ammunition—brought Paulus's army to an abrupt halt by 28 July'.<sup>36</sup> Resuming its advance on 1 August, the 6th Army continued toward Stalingrad. For the next 11 days the 6th Army concentrated on enveloping Soviet forces in the Kalach area and eradicating them. By 11 August, the Kalach pocket was completely eliminated, although at a considerable cost: The armored strength of Paulus's forces 'decreased roughly 20 per cent during the operation to destroy 62nd Army. For example 24th Panzer Division began the operation with 116 tanks and ended it with 82 tanks'.<sup>37</sup> In addition to periodic supply problems, the 6th Army had problems replacing both men and equipment. The 6th Army was in the line from May through 11 August and had suffered heavy casualties among its infantry and Panzer Grenadiers. In spite of its losses, the 6th Army still had its primary objective of Stalingrad to capture. The losses suffered by the 6th Army up to this point and the absence of replacements would make Paulus's task far more difficult.

## ON TO STALINGRAD

The 4th Panzer Army and 6th Army linked up west of Stalingrad and began preparations for the final assault. This 'junction [of German forces] stranded the 62nd and 64th Armies on a narrow belt of land stretching southward along the western bank of the Volga River'.<sup>38</sup> The 62nd and 64th Armies were attempting to defend the approaches to Stalingrad and 'managing to save the remnants of their forces to fight another day. [Soviet General] Eremenko and Stalingrad's civilian Defense Committee worked feverishly to shore up defenses'.<sup>39</sup> As the Soviet 62nd and 64th Armies fell back toward the Volga, a pattern began to take shape. The 62nd Army commanded by General Anton I. Lopatin fell back to defend the city of Stalingrad itself and the suburbs to the west of the city, while the 64th Army took positions to the left of the 62nd Army stretching south. Both armies remained east of the

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<sup>36</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *To The Gates of Stalingrad* (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2009) p. 266.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

Volga. In preparation for the 6th Army's assault on Stalingrad, the Luftwaffe pounded the city, turning buildings into piles of rubble.<sup>40</sup> Intended to make the upcoming assault a walk over, the bombardment had the opposite effect, turning what were buildings into easily defensible piles of masonry and concrete. What the civilian Defense Committee could not do, von Richthofen's bombers accomplished in short order.<sup>41</sup>

The Front commander in charge of operations in the Stalingrad area was General Andrey Ivanovich Eremenko. Eremenko was 'one of Stalin's favorite trouble-shooters and had already received some difficult assignments not all of which had been successfully carried out'.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Eremenko was bold, resolute, and strategically gifted. The situation on the Southeast Front 'was not one for the faint-hearted, and no one had ever accused him of being that'.<sup>43</sup> Eremenko was an excellent choice for the Stalingrad Front: In this position he would coordinate efforts between the armies on his front and allocate the placement of reinforcements and reserves. He would not be responsible for the tactical conduct of the battle on the ground. That responsibility fell to Lopatin. There was a problem here in that Lopatin was very demoralized by the situation of the 62nd Army and did not believe Stalingrad could be held. Even worse, he made this opinion plain to Eremenko.

Clearly, Lopatin would have to go. Eremenko recommended this to Stalin, who concurred. While this command shake-up was going on, the Germans were not idle. The Germans attacked the western suburbs of the city on 3 September 1942 and by 12 September held most of them. Meanwhile, a replacement for Lopatin had to be found. Eremenko's choice fell on General Vasili Ivanovich Chuikov. Stalin was somewhat dubious of this choice and insisted Eremenko personally vouch for Chuikov's reliability before confirming his choice.<sup>44</sup> It was one of the best decisions Eremenko ever made. In the fighting during the summer Chuikov proved himself to be dogged and determined and, in spite of his medical problems, an energetic and capable leader.

Chuikov's reserve Army was renumbered the 64th Army and put under his temporary command on the Southern Front as the army withdrew toward Stalingrad. 'There may still have been lingering doubts regarding his aptitude for high command, and lack of experience, and in early August he was replaced by Major General Mikhail Shumilov and given command of a "special operational group"'.<sup>45</sup> This special operational group was created by Shumilov to strengthen his left flank and block the German advance on the

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<sup>40</sup> J. Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

<sup>41</sup> J. S. A. Hayward, *Stopped At Stalingrad* (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 1998) pp. 188–192, has an excellent account of von Richthofen's air assault on Stalingrad.

<sup>42</sup> G. Jukes, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

southwestern approach to Stalingrad. Chuikov acquitted himself well in command of the special operational group, and his appointment to command the 62nd Army, replacing Lopatin, followed.

The city Chuikov was ordered to defend was a 15-mile strip along the west bank of the Volga. There was no access to the east bank across the Volga other than by boat or ferry. This meant that all replacements, reinforcements, ammunition, in fact, everything needed by the 62nd Army would have to be ferried across a river some 1,000 meters wide. In this case the terrain worked in favor of the Soviets in that the Germans, on the high ground west of the Volga, were unable to depress their artillery sufficiently to bring direct fire against the lower ground along the land below the heights. Resupply would, therefore, be difficult but hardly impossible.<sup>46</sup>

By Soviet standards, Stalingrad was a model city, with many modern white apartment buildings as well as extensive gardens and parks. A series of landmarks, both man-made and natural, dominated the skyline. Inevitably, these landmarks became military objectives, the goals of both attackers and defenders. In the northern half of the city, four huge factories—from north to south, the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory, the Barrikady [Red Barricade] Gun Factory, the Krasnyi Ok'tiabr [Red October] Iron Works and the Lazur Chemical Factory—would become veritable fortresses and the focal point of intense combat.<sup>47</sup>

There were workers' villages to the north and northwest of the factories. The factories themselves were not single buildings but rather a factory complex comprising a number of buildings. Stalingrad's airport, Gumrak, was northeast of the city, while two small towns, Orlovka and Gorodische, were on high ground to the west. Orlovka was close enough to the city to be included in the city's defensive perimeter. In the approximate center of the city stood a Tartar burial mound, Mamaev Kurgan, which was about 102 meters high.

Further to the south, the city was divided by the Tsaritsa River, flowing through a deep gorge to the Volga. In the southern part of the city there was a huge grain elevator near the railroad station. The grain elevator dominated the skyline of the southern half of the city. 'Between the elevator and the railroad was a large collection of factory buildings and warehouses belonging to the city's food combine'.<sup>48</sup> At the southern end of the city were the suburbs of Minina and Kuporsosnoe. The population of Stalingrad at this time was about 600,000, and they were living in the ruins of what had been their homes. This was the city that Chuikov and the 62nd Army were to defend.

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<sup>46</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *Armageddon in Stalingrad* (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2009) p. 25.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

## HOUSE-TO-HOUSE FIGHTING IN FORTRESS STALINGRAD

The Germans began their attack on 13 September with the object of taking the city. The attack would be basically frontal in nature and initially would go in from Mamaev Kurgan to the southern suburbs of Minina and Kuporsosnoe. The Germans were committing some 80,000 men in four infantry, one motorized, and two panzer divisions.<sup>49</sup> The Soviet 62nd Army numbered 54,000 men in five independent brigades of both tanks and infantry, two infantry groups named for their commanders, each less than a corps and more than a division, and five infantry divisions.<sup>50</sup> Chuikov held command of the 62nd for less than a day when the German attack struck. 'Chuikov, based on his previous experiences, was already formulating new tactical concepts to defeat the German war machine, but at least initially he struggled to hold together his defenses against the first major German onslaught at Stalingrad'.<sup>51</sup> Paulus's 51st Infantry Corps were to strike on a front from Mamaev Kurgan to the main railway station and the ferry landing to the southeast. The 48th Panzer Corps was to strike east and northeast toward the grain elevator. Whatever Chuikov had in mind for a modification of Soviet tactics, he had no time to implement the change and had to meet the German assault as best he could. He had already made a modification to artillery placement, insisting that the Soviet guns be placed on the east bank of the Volga. This allowed fire support for the troops in the city and solved the supply problem of how to get large amounts of artillery ammunition across the Volga.<sup>52</sup> It also gave the artillery greater mobility. While the German attack in the center rolled toward Mamaev Kurgan, it began to seem as though the Germans would take the city in a rush, as they hoped to do. In the center of Stalingrad the situation was becoming desperate. In an attempt to remedy the situation, at least temporarily, Chuikov 'decided to counter-attack. In order to forestall the enemy, the counter-attack was scheduled to start early on the morning of September 14'.<sup>53</sup> At first, the sheer audacity of Chuikov's counter-attack threw the Germans off balance. However, once the Luftwaffe was able to get into the air, they, along with the German artillery, brought the Soviet attacks to a halt.<sup>54</sup> From that point on, the Soviets were driven steadily back. It should be noted that the initial Soviet counter-attack was launched using large formations, as prescribed by pre-war Soviet regulations. This tactic was just what Chuikov wanted to change. If the Soviets held on, things would change radically in the coming days, but now, only reinforcements could stabilize the situation in central Stalingrad. Fortunately, they were at hand.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 105–106.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>52</sup> V. I. Chuikov, *The Battle For Stalingrad* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1964) pp. 116–117.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>54</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *Armageddon*, p. 117.

General Alexander I. Rodimtsev's 13th Guards Rifle Division arrived at the banks of the Volga on 14 September. They were due to begin crossing that night, but, in view of the critical situation in Stalingrad, Rodimtsev decided not to wait. The 13th Guards began crossing in twilight and went into combat immediately on reaching the far bank.<sup>55</sup> The 13th Guards reclaimed the railway station and pushed the Germans back from Mamaev Kurgan. The casualties suffered by the Guards were severe. In the first few days they lost 30 percent of their numbers. This figure rose to 80 percent by the end of September.

At the cost of a crack Soviet division, fighting in pieces, as it came across the Volga, and with the final expenditure of Chuikov's small but resolute reserves, the German onslaught against the centre of the city was choked off and the 62nd Army won a few more precious hours.<sup>56</sup>

Unfortunately, the situation south of the city continued to deteriorate.

On Chuikov's left flank, in the southern part of the city where 14th and 24th Panzer Division with 29th Motorized and 94th Infantry Division were operating, two Soviet brigades fought cut off from 62nd Army: Chuikov's left was in danger of being pushed in, although the German advance there was slowed by continued resistance, notably in the grain elevator.<sup>57</sup>

During this period another division arrived to support the defense. These were Siberians, the 284th division under General Nikolai Batyuk. Chuikov ordered Batyuk to secure the central ferry landing and briefed him on the new tactics for street fighting that were being implemented.<sup>58</sup> Chuikov, in consultation with Rodimtsev, made a number of observations about German methods.<sup>59</sup> According to Chuikov, German tactics became somewhat stereotyped.

The enemy stuck to the same pattern in his tactics. His infantry went into an attack whole-heartedly only when tanks had already reached the target. The tanks, however, normally went into an attack only when the Luftwaffe was already over the heads of our troops. One only had to break this sequence for an enemy attack to stop and his units to turn back.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> A. Beevor, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–135.

<sup>56</sup> J. Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>58</sup> V. I. Chuikov, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>59</sup> G. Jukes, *Stalingrad to Kursk* (Pen & Sword Military, Barnsley, UK, 2011) p. 89.

<sup>60</sup> V. I. Chuikov, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Chuikov developed a counter-measure he called 'hugging' the enemy. The idea was to get the lines so close that the Germans would not be able to use their air power of artillery for fear of hitting their own men.<sup>61</sup> In addition to this, the Soviets formed assault squads of six to eight men capable of operating independently. These squads, usually heavily armed and possessing automatic weapons, became skilled at hit-and-run tactics, making it difficult to destroy them. One never knew when or where Soviet fire or close quarters, hand-to-hand assaults would happen. Essentially Chuikov

... encouraged his troops to operate in small combat groups, attacking and defending more like gangs of urban guerillas than like organized battalions and regiments. These gangs would ambush individual German tanks and small infantry units, then retreat and move through the sewers to take up defensive positions elsewhere. If the Germans captured a fortified house at a corner, they were likely to discover the Soviets were taking up positions *behind* the German spearheads rather than falling back into the confined spaces of the city. Attackers and defenders—often separated only by a single wall within a building—snatched only a few moments of fitful sleep each night.<sup>62</sup>

The Germans hated house-to-house fighting. It deprived the Wehrmacht of their priceless asset of operational mobility and tied the Germans to a series of frontal assaults often resulting in hand-to-hand encounters. The Germans found this type of close quarters combat unsettling. Even more unsettling was the cult of 'sniperism' that developed around this time. Germans never knew when or where the sniper would strike; they could only be certain that the snipers were out there, hunting their prey.<sup>63</sup> The overall effect was exactly what Chuikov wanted: to make every German feel as though he is living under the muzzle of a Soviet gun.

In Stalingrad itself, fighting raged with unabated intensity. The central railway station changed hands 15 times during the fighting, finally ending in German hands.<sup>64</sup> The Soviets hung on to the eastern slope of Mamev Kurgan, but the southern part of the city, except for the ferry landing, was in German hands. The Soviets managed to hang on to the rest of the city. 'By nightfall on September 26, Paulus concluded that the battle in central and southern Stalingrad was just about over'.<sup>65</sup>

Paulus was correct. Other than continuing the assaults to physically occupy the rest of the city, there was really little for the 6th Army to do.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *Armageddon*, p. 167.

<sup>63</sup> A. Beevor, *op. cit.*, pp. 203–204.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>65</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *Armageddon*, p. 233.

Strategically, Sixth Army had accomplished its mission by the end of September. The Volga was closed. Half of Stalingrad was in German hands and the rest could be brought under fire. Prudence would have recommended that Sixth Army stop, consolidate its front, and wear down the Russians gradually.<sup>66</sup>

Unfortunately, Hitler did not see things that way. He would be satisfied with nothing less than physical occupation of the entire city. In spite of this, Paulus had good reason to be pleased with the progress of the 6th Army thus far. He had secured the south and central areas of Stalingrad and was preparing for the final assault that would completely conquer the city.

The contrast between the two army commanders at this time is interesting. While Chuikov was developing his new urban tactics, Paulus was busy designing a victory badge for the 6th Army's coming triumph. Chuikov was a hands-on commander; he had a grip on operations at the front. In Order No. 166 Chuikov made sure his concepts were understood by the 62nd Army. For example:

I again warn the commanders of all units and formations not to carry out operations in battle by whole units like companies and battalions. The offensive should be organized chiefly on the basis of small groups, with tommy-guns, hand grenades, bottles of incendiary mixture and anti-tank rifles. Regimental and battalion artillery should be used to support attacking groups by firing point-blank into windows, embrasures and garrets.<sup>67</sup>

From the time the 6th Army advanced to Stalingrad to the end of September, Paulus's operations were characterized by a lack of grip. Paulus seems to have thought it was enough to provide general guidance and avoided issuing categorical orders. Further, instead of being on the scene of the fighting, Paulus remained at his headquarters at Nizhne Chirskaya, some 100 miles to the rear of Stalingrad. Anatoly Grigorevich Mereshko, at the time of Stalingrad a lieutenant, who rose to the rank of Colonel General, summed up Paulus quite well: 'Paulus was professionally very competent: he was an intellectual and his forte was in planning broad strategic deployments. But he was also pedantic and hesitant'.<sup>68</sup> He is critical of Paulus for placing his headquarters some 100 kilometers behind the Stalingrad front lines. Mereshko noted that

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<sup>66</sup> E. F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin* (Dorset Press, Washington, DC, 1968) p. 44.

<sup>67</sup> V. I. Chuikov, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>68</sup> M. K. Jones, *Stalingrad, How The Red Army Triumphed* (Pen & Sword Military, Barnsley, UK, 2007) p. 94.

Paulus lacked an instinctive understanding of the fighting. I genuinely think that the German commander was unable to comprehend Chuikov's tactics—so he persisted with his own approach, regardless. We used to joke about it: “Paulus is used to strategic thinking—well you don't need any strategic thinking here, you just have to grasp the tactics of street fighting”.<sup>69</sup>

Apparently Paulus never did grasp what Chuikov was doing to him, and he continued to use the same straight-ahead frontal assault-style tactics.

Having, as he thought, brought the struggle for central and southern Stalingrad to a close, Paulus now turned his attention to the workers' villages and Orlovka salient. Again, the attack in the north would resemble a steam-roller, making up in raw power what it lacked in finesse. ‘Paulus’ plan for crushing the Orlovka salient required multiple company and battalion size *kampfgruppen* from 16th Panzer and 60th Motorized Divisions of Hube's XIV Panzer Corps to attack toward Orlovka from the east and north’.<sup>70</sup> The attack on the workers' villages, located west of the factory district, was conducted by the 51st Corps. Both of these attacks, though costly, succeeded in gaining ground. By mid-October there was a lull in the action so the Germans could prepare for a fresh assault. The target now was the factory district. The fighting for the factories was perhaps the most gruesome in a particularly gruesome battle. All the Germans could do was grind forward. This is not to say that they did not have successes. The Tractor Factory was in German hands, along with part of the Barrikady Factory, and the Orlovka salient was eliminated.

By November 1, in the wake of its ferocious assaults on Chuikov's defenses in Stalingrad's factory district controlled more than 90 percent of its front and was within sight of the Volga at virtually every point along its front but had yet to achieve the objective assigned by Hitler. . . . Chuikov's undermanned and undersupplied army clung stubbornly to multiple elongated bridgeheads along the river's western bank.<sup>71</sup>

The 6th Army was gathering itself for the final assault when Hitler's headquarters decided to order the 6th Army's draught animals and motor transport sent over 100 miles to the rear.<sup>72</sup> This could prove a problem if the 6th Army needed to move operationally, as the vast majority of the 6th Army's ‘artillery and medical units depended almost entirely on horses for their mobility’.<sup>73</sup> On 11 November, the final German assault began. The

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>70</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *Armageddon*, p. 292.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 608.

<sup>72</sup> A. Beevor, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

8th Air Corps prepared the way with a preliminary air assault. Once again, considerable masonry and building materials were knocked around, but the Luftwaffe 'failed to crush the 62nd Army in its trenches, bunkers and cellars'.<sup>74</sup>

One noted authority, Professor John Erickson, has opined that, at this point, the Germans were 400 yards from victory.<sup>75</sup> In fact, Chuikov had already run the clock out on Paulus. The Soviets planned a massive offensive to encircle the 6th Army involving more than a million men. The Soviets were going to strike the Romanians guarding the flanks of the 6th Army, break through them, and trap Paulus. This counter-offensive was due to be launched on 19 November 1942. Even if the German attacks threw all the Russians in the 62nd Army in the Volga, the Soviet counter-offensive would proceed as planned, and the 6th Army wouldn't hold Stalingrad for long. In the event, using battle groups from the 71st, 79th, 100th, 295th, 305th, and 398th Infantry Divisions reinforced by four pioneer battalions, the Germans attacked the enclaves still holding out.<sup>76</sup> Repeated attacks by the 51st Corps were repulsed. Continuous frontal attacks made little progress, and by 18 November Paulus was forced to call off his offensive. He intended to resume his offensive on 20 November.<sup>77</sup> He was one day too late.

On 19 November the Soviets launched *Operation Uranus*. This precluded Paulus resuming his offensive on 20 November. The Soviet counter-offensive came just in time for the 62nd Army. Chuikov learned of *Operation Uranus* at midnight on 18 November, 'just at a time when 62nd Army's strength was fast failing and his [Chuikov's] request for reinforcements had not been met'.<sup>78</sup> Now, it became apparent why Stavka appeared to starve the 62nd Army of replacements and reinforcements. By giving Chuikov only enough to continue the battle, the Soviets ensured Paulus's 6th Army would continue to suffer casualties but were unable to land a knockout punch on Chuikov's army and push it over the Volga. Soviet forces committed to *Operation Uranus* 'numbered 1,000,500 men, 13,541 guns (exclusive if AA guns and 50-mm mortars), 894 tanks and 1,115 aircraft'.<sup>79</sup> *Uranus* unfolded in two parts, first, on 19 November, was an attack by the Soviet 5th Tank Army and 21st and 65th Armies, who attacked the Romanian 3rd Army to the north and west of the Germans in Stalingrad and, tearing an immense hole in Romanian lines, thrust southeast to the Don River. The second part, an attack on the Romanian 4th Army by the Soviet 51st and 57th Armies, was equally successful, and soon these armies were driving northwest to link up

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>75</sup> *The Road To Stalingrad*. 2007. CD-ROM. Allegro Corporation.

<sup>76</sup> A. Beevor, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>77</sup> D. Glantz and J. House, *Armageddon*, p. 689.

<sup>78</sup> J. Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 462.

with the Soviet forces driving south. On 23 November, the two pincers of the Soviet encirclement met near Kalach.

Now the 6th Army was trapped, and Paulus, along with Army Group B, had a new problem. What was to be done? Should the 6th Army attempt to break out, or should it wait for rescue? Although Paulus requested he be allowed freedom of action, Hitler refused, ordering the 6th Army to stand fast.<sup>80</sup> It is doubtful that the 6th Army could have broken out to the south or east. There are a number of reasons for this: First, the 6th Army's transport had been sent to the rear; second, the combat power of the army had been progressively eroded in the fighting for Stalingrad; and finally, logistically, the 6th Army was in no shape to break out unaided.

This left only two options, either keep the army supplied by airlift or have forces on the outside conduct a successful relief operation. In order to keep the 6th Army supplied by air, some 500 to 700 tons of supplies were needed on a daily basis. The Luftwaffe never got anywhere near meeting these requirements: 'the maximum [delivered] in one day was 289 tons and the average, under 100 tons a day'.<sup>81</sup> Clearly the attempt at airlifting supplies did not work.

In order to break through to the 6th Army, a new Army Group was created, Army Group Don, under the command of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein. Manstein began preparing the relief operation on 1 December. It was scheduled to begin on 8 December, but actually didn't get underway until 12 December. By that time, the 6th Army, which began the siege in a precarious logistical condition, had been encircled for about a month. Worse, the size of the relieving force was reduced from three divisions to two.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the operation went forward and by 19 December reached Mishkova, some 35 miles from the 6th Army. It would get no further. Hitler would not allow the 6th Army to break out to the south to meet Manstein (even if Paulus's army were capable of breaking out) so the question of whether the 6th Army could break out was moot. Paulus would not disobey Hitler, and without a direct order to break out, the 6th Army remained where it was.<sup>83</sup> On 31 January 1943, Paulus and what was left of the 6th Army surrendered to the Soviets.

## CONCLUSION

By the slimmest of margins, Chuikov held Stalingrad and emerged victorious. While the Stalingrad garrison was holding the city at considerable cost,

<sup>80</sup> G. Jukes *Hitler's Stalingrad Decisions* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985) p. 107.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>82</sup> E. F. Ziemke, *Moscow to Stalingrad: Decision in the East* (Center of Military History, Washington, DC, 1987) pp. 479–480.

<sup>83</sup> M. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 370–371.

the Soviet riposte was being planned to the north and south of Paulus's army. When the Soviets attacked, the 6th Army, immobile and with its ranks severely depleted, more resembled a goat staked out for a tiger than the powerful force that had begun the summer campaign. While Paulus was not responsible for entrusting his flanks to unreliable allies or the failure to anticipate the Soviet attack that led to the encirclement of his army, he was responsible for the unimaginative and clumsy tactics used by the 6th Army in the fighting for the city. The fighting in Stalingrad 'was reminiscent of the trench warfare of World War I [and] Paulus, although a competent commander' was out of his depth in the fighting for Stalingrad.<sup>84</sup> Chuikov, on the other hand, took a direct part in developing the squad-type attacks and the sniping that so unnerved the Germans. 'Hugging the enemy' to negate his air power and firepower, using sewers to travel to unexpected points and attack, and keeping a constant pressure both day and night are tactics Chuikov either developed or adopted. It was this imaginative approach that allowed the Soviet Army to hold Stalingrad and ultimately, to outfight their enemy.

In comparing the Soviet and German leadership at the top, little needs to be said. Paulus, until *Operation Uranus* was launched, stayed at his headquarters about 100 miles to the rear and designed a victory badge for his army. Chuikov, by contrast, was in or near the city of Stalingrad throughout the battle. His Order No. 166 leaves no doubt about the type of tactics he wanted employed and shows both the clarity and imagination Chuikov showed in his command at Stalingrad. If the 6th Army was outfought by the Soviets, it is equally clear that Paulus was decisively out-generalled by Chuikov in the fighting for the city.

Finally, many commentators have been sharply critical of Paulus for not attempting to break out or attempting to withdraw from the pocket before the Soviets closed the ring. His biographer, Martin Middlebrook, insists that:

Decisive action could have saved the situation. If Paulus had acted boldly, sending some units north and south to hold the Russians while withdrawing the bulk of his forces from the ruins of Stalingrad, then much of his army would have been saved.<sup>85</sup>

This is, at best, doubtful. With most of his transport 100 miles to the rear and a precarious fuel situation, the 6th Army was simply not capable of that kind of rapid movement. It seems that, once the security of the 6th Army's flanks was entrusted to the Romanians, some sort of problem was almost inevitable. The responsibility for failing to anticipate the Soviet offensive

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<sup>84</sup> S. G. Fritz, *Ostkrieg* (The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 2011) p. 293. For Fritz's take on the fighting for Stalingrad and the part played by Paulus see pp. 293–301. See particularly, p. 295.

<sup>85</sup> M. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

cannot be laid at Paulus's door. 'On the eve of the offensive, General Zietzler [chief of the General Staff since late September] stated categorically, "the Russians no longer have any resources worth mentioning and are not capable of launching a large scale offensive".<sup>86</sup> Given that the 6th Army was without reserves or replacements, lacked adequate logistic support, and had to deal with Hitler demanding that all of Stalingrad be taken, it is hard to see any good options for Paulus once *Operation Uranus* began.

As Paulus went off into captivity, he must have known his military reputation was in ruins. In truth, there was much to criticize in his conduct. Pedantic and unimaginative, he was thrown up against a Soviet general who was bold and imaginative. The result was a decisive defeat for the Germans. Chuikov continued in command of the 62nd Army, which Stalin renamed the 8th Guards Army in honor of its stand at Stalingrad. He capped off his military career by leading the 8th Guards Army into Berlin and taking the city. Fittingly, Vasily I. Chuikov is buried on the Mamaev Kurgan, the site of his first command post.

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<sup>86</sup> S. G. Fritz, *op. cit.*, p. 305.