

# The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People 1941 - 1945

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# Marshal Zhukov

# Invincible Marshal Georgy Zhukov

(1896 - 1974)



<http://milresource.ru>

- Joined the Imperial Russian Army during WW I
- Commander of the Red Army Cossack cavalry unit during the Civil war
- Soviet-Japanese military clash in Mongolia, 1939
- 1941: Chief of General Staff of the Red Army
- 1941: organized the defense of Leningrad
- 1941: directed the defense and counter offensive at Moscow
- 1942: organized defense and counter offense at Stalingrad

Igor Popov

October 2007

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(1896 – 1974) - Continue

- 1943: in charge of Soviet troops at Kursk. Became Marshal of the Soviet Union.
- 1944: organized liberation of Ukraine and Byelorussia.
- 1945: Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front, during the battle for Berlin
- May 8, 1945: represented the USSR during the ceremony of German formal surrender and signed the Act of Unconditional Surrender of Germany.
- The Soviet member of the Allied Control Council for Germany.
- Commander of the Soviet occupation force in Germany after the war.
- June 24, 1945: commanded the Victory parade in Moscow.

# Marshal Zhukov: the Fall



- Soon after the war – March 1946 - Zhukov was removed by Stalin from the center of the military scene.
- After Stalin's death (1953), Zhukov arrested Beria (the head of NKVD, later known as KGB) and saved Russia from a new wave of terror and Gulags.
- 1955-1957 Minister of Defense.
- But a new Soviet leader Khrushchev was no less suspicious of Zhukov. In 1957 Zhukov was dismissed from the highest military position in the USSR.

# Marshal Zhukov

- “Zhukov personifies leadership, valor, proficiency, grit and integrity to Russian at home and abroad” – Laurence Kelly.
- The only four-time Hero of the Soviet Union for military accomplishments.
- First recipient of the Victory Order.
- Soviet military interpreters during interrogations sometimes asked German POW, what they thought was the strength of the Red Army. And answers were:
  - ***tank T-34,***
  - ***endurance of soldiers,***
  - ***Marshal Zhukov...***

# Who Was Marshal Zhukov?

- Marshal Vasilevsky: “In the constellation of Soviet generals who so conclusively defeated the armies of Nazi Germany, **Zhukov was the most brilliant of all**”.
- Otto P. Chaney, US Army War College: “For Russians and people everywhere he remains an enduring **symbol of victory** on the battlefield.”
- Viktor Astaf’ev, Russian writer and WW II veteran:
  - Zhukov was **the butcher of the Russian peasantry.**”
  - “We filled the German trenches with our blood and breached them with our bodies.”

# Zhukov and Stalin

- Zhukov and Stalin: more similarities or differences?
- Why did Stalin value Zhukov so high during the War?
  - The result of the purges;
  - Victory in Manchurian incident (war) of 1939.
  - Personal admiration of Stalin
  - No political ambitions
- Zhukov vs. Konev: who will take Berlin?

# Zhukov's Strategy

- **Thinker vs. Commander:** Chief architect of the Red Army strategy or Principal Commanding General (Stavka representative)?
- Hanson W. Baldwin, *Battles Won and Lost*: “Marshal Georgiy Zhukov ... was perhaps Russia's greatest WW II soldier... More than any other one man he was responsible for the formulation and implementation of Soviet strategy.”
- Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror*: “Zhukov's tactics, best exemplified in the Battle of Berlin, seem **crude, wasteful, and indifferent to suffering**, which made him and Stalin kindred spirits.”

# Pillars of Zhukov' Strategy style

- Maneuver warfare advocate: tanks, speed,
- Victory at any cost. Casualties meant little to Stalin and Zhukov (and ... Russian people?)
- Frontal assaults against an entrenched enemy
- Innovations; unexpected COA
- Strategic deception
- Military prophet or Lucky fortune?

# Zhukov As a Leader

- “Zhukov was the embodiment of the uncompromising, **ironhanded success that Russians so admire in their leaders**”  
– Laurence Kelly
- Rokossovsky about Zhukov (his subordinate) in 1930: “skilled, decisive, demanding, but **authoritarian, stubborn, morbidly proud and insufficiently sensitive**”.

# Zhukov's Management Style

- Decision-making style: “I decide” vs. “We have discussed and I decide”
- Ability to take responsibility
- “Ne mogu” vs. “Nado”
- Tough, quick-tempered
- Strict discipline based on brutal force and fear
- Penal battalions and companies; blocking detachments

# Stalin's Order # 227

## 28 July 1942

- “The enemy is throwing more and more fresh forces into the fight and, regardless of his losses, he is creeping forward and breaking into the depths of the Soviet Union...”
- After the loss of the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic, the Donbass and other regions, we have a lot less territory than we had... To retreat further would mean to destroy ourselves and with us our Motherland.
- **Not one step backwards! That has to be our main slogan from now on.**
- Panic-mongers and cowards must be **destroyed on the spot.**
- The retreat mentality must be decisively eliminated.
- Army commanders who have allowed voluntary abandonment of positions must be removed and sent to Staff HQ for immediate **trial by military tribunal.**

# Stalin's Order # 227

## 28 July 1942 (Cont.)

- One to three **punitive battalions** (of 800 men each) should be formed within the limits of the Front to which middle-ranking and senior officers and political officers of corresponding rank are to be sent.
- Three to five **well-armed detachments** (up to 200 men each) should be formed within an Army and placed directly behind unreliable divisions and they must be made to shoot the panic-mongers and cowards on the spot in the event of panic and disorderly retreat.
- Depending on circumstance, from five to ten **penal companies** (of from 150 to 200 men each) should be formed within the Army and posted to difficult spots so as to give them the chance to atone with their blood for the crimes they have committed before the Motherland.”