COMMONALITIES IN RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

A thesis presented to the faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Military History

by

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B.A., University of Akron, Ohio, 1991

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2003

MATERS OF MILIATRY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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Thesis Title: Commonalities in Russian Urban Warfare

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ABSTRACT

COMMONALITIES IN RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS, by MAJ Dale R. Smith, 52 pages.

Despite the drastic evolution of warfare since the close of World War II fighting in urban environments has remained a constant. Despite the advances in modern warfare the tactics, techniques and procedures developed for urban combat operations remain largely unchanged. As the sole remaining superpower, The United States will likely find itself increasingly drawn into urban operations to perform stability and peacekeeping operations. In doing so it advantage in technology will be significantly reduced. By conducting a study of the Russian operations in Chechnya and comparing it to operations in Stalingrad some enduring traits began to emerge. These traits are significant for the unit wanting to understand how urban operations manifest unforeseen problems. More importantly, as many third world countries have been trained or have studied under Russian doctrine they may exhibit similar methodologies. The analysis contains more than a historical and tactical account of the actions. It attempts to identify the underlying themes that drive the history.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that cities bring out the worst in armies and armies bring out the worst in cities.[1] For Russians conducting operations in urban environments this statement could be no truer. During WWII Russia conducted urban operations in almost every major city from Moscow to Berlin. In more recent years they have been involved in operation in Afghanistan and Chechnya. In Russia's vast experiences in urban operations can it be assumed that major commonalities or an underlying culture exists that identifies the Russian military way of conducting urban operations? Based on an examination of the Battle of Stalingrad and the conflict in Chechnya, it appears that there are.

Over the past fifty years, despite the type or scale of operation, the Russian approach to urban operations has been characterized by a consistent manifestation of three things; massive use of force, massive collateral damage, and an acceptance of massive casualties. The Russian identification with mass is so strong it can be considered part of their military culture and for this paper these three terms used together represent "the culture of mass." When it comes to urban operations, they do it in a big way.

The Russian meaning of mass should not be conceptually confused with the American definition. FM 3.0 defines mass as something commanders do to "concentrate the effects of combat power at the decisive place and time." It goes on to say that "Army forces can mass effects without concentrating forces"[2] In other words, the American term for mass does not mean more equipment or personnel but rather effects. In contrast the Russian term for mass, according to the *Military Encyclopedia of the USSR,* is the

massing of men and equipment. It is a Russian military principle with the aim of achieving a high density of manpower and equipment. To the Russian commander it is an indicator of the potential success of an operation.[3] That mass in these terms is part of the Russian military lexicon, suggests it is a way of conducting war and presumably includes urban operations. Undeniably it was used to at first survive and then eventually defeat the German attacks in WWII.

Likewise specific attributes normally associated with just offensive or just defensive actions are diminished as the study consists of both offensive and defensive actions. Further, ideologically the battles take place during two very distinct and separate government systems. The Battle of Stalingrad was conducted under Stalin's oppressive communism while the Chechnya conflict was fought under Boris Yeltsin's emerging democracy. In fact, the only constant between the battles, with exception to the use of mass, is that they were conducted in urban terrain.

Many questions arise about commonalities in the Russian approach to urban operations. Assuming there are commonalities, what are the reasons they exist? If the commonalities do exist, are they specific to the Russian military culture, or are they merely reflective of the society? Assuming that the commonalities exist, have they spread through the region? Has the end of the Cold War reshaped the Russian approach to urban operations and what are the implications for the Russian military culture of mass for Russia's future and possible military to military operational engagements with the United States? These questions will be explored by using chronological snapshots and analyzing the Russian military operations across strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.

The research is broken into four chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the theme, limitations, and provides an explanation of the topic and ideas. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the Battle of Stalingrad and the Chechnya conflict respectively and consist of three sub-chapters examining each aspect of the culture of mass. Finally, chapter 4 provides analysis and draws together conclusions.

The conclusions of this study may not be definitive due to several limitations in the size of the work and level of Russian expertise in the social sciences. Due to a page limitation of seventy pages, this work will only examine the Battle of Stalingrad from June-November 1942 and the Chechnya conflict in November 1994-January 1995. However, the two battles are well known and thoroughly researched.

The second limitation is the author's lack of expertise in sovietology. As such, the use of primary sources is extremely limited and is based mainly on secondary works. Likewise similar expertise is lacking in the authors understanding of the cultural influences that have shaped Russian thought and approach to warfare. To a large degree these limitations are mitigated by two of the thesis committee members who are considered the eminent Command and General Staff College subject matter experts and their experiences span both World War II and the Chechen conflict. Both are published authors in their respective areas of expertise. Additionally, the accumulation and analysis of a wide range of materials have hopefully resulted in a somewhat balanced collection of ideas.

In 1942 the second German incursion into the heart of Russia was underway to secure the oil located in southern Russia. The Russians, reeling from losses in the 1941 campaign, were ill prepared to meet this challenge and instituted an elastic defense.

However, convinced that Moscow was the major objective, they massed their armies in central Russia. As the German intent to capture Stalingrad became apparent, the Russians quickly changed their approach in the southern city to a static defense. As the bulk of the Russian army was in the vicinity of Moscow the initial static defense of Stalingrad would fall on a battered 62nd Siberian Army and the civilian population of Stalingrad. For these Russians, the Battle of Stalingrad became a fight for national survival and pride.

What ensued was a Russian defense exhibiting a penchant for excessive. In this instance the use of excessive force is characterized by an absolute commitment and unbending resolve coupled with a willingness to sacrifice everything. Such use of force not only led to enormous casualties but the ultimately accepting destruction of the city itself.

The same elements of this culture of mass were evident fifty years later as Russian forces moved into Grozny. Clearly an offensive action, as opposed to the defense at Stalingrad, the excessive use of force was undertaken with a more traditional approach. The Russians used three armored groupings, fighter-bombers and artillery in an attempt to defeat a small rebel force. The massive use of indirect fire leveled many city blocks and, as will be seen, inflicted massive civilian casualties. The two battles were very different types of operations but are characterized by very similar approaches. This study will show that and suggest why this culture of mass as a function of massive application of force, collateral damage, and a willingness to accept massive casualties characterizes the Russian approach to urban warfare.

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[1]Roger Spiller, Sharp Corners: Urban Operations at Century's End, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2000), 38.

[2]FM 3.0. 4-11 to 4-15.

[3]N. V. Ogarkov, *Military Encyclopedia of the USSR*, Trans. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, (Moscow: Moscow Military Publishing House, 1778.)

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF STALINGRAD

Background

Nowhere in recent history is the Russian military culture of mass more apparent than in the Battle of Stalingrad, a battle characterized by huge armies, enormous casualties, and the destruction of a city. What led to the Battle of Stalingrad is a series of assumptions and mistakes on both sides that eventually became a battle of wills between two brutal dictators.

Stalingrad is on the western bank of the Volga River, which, for several hundred years had served as a major transportation route between northern and southern Russia. The heavily industrialized city spanned approximately sixteen kilometers in length and was approximately three kilometers deep at its widest point. Mamaev Hill dominated the center of the city and provided almost unlimited visibility eastward across to the Volga River. Approaches from the west of the city were relatively unrestricted and allowed for a rapid approach to the city gates (see appendix A).

Setting the stage was Germany's first incursion into Russia in 1941. In the summer of 1940 the German military was consolidating after victories in France, Denmark, Poland, and Norway. Hitler had wanted to invade Russia, but postponed the invasion until 1941 due to unfavorable weather conditions and logistic concerns. Though the Wehrmacht may have appeared invincible, the climate and austere transportation infrastructure of Russia would not support a quick and decisive victory, which Hitler desired.[1] Therefore it was not until 18 December 1940 that Hitler issued directive 21 for

Operation BARBAROSSA, which designated three army groups to attack Russia. Hitler demanded that Russia be defeated within eight to ten weeks.[2]

The offensive began on 22 June 1941 and its goal was to destroy the Russian Army along with capturing Leningrad, Moscow and the Ukraine. As they attacked, lengthening supply lines, maintenance problems and Russians resistance, soon blunted the German Army's initial success. By 5 December 1941, the day after Army Group Center reported it could no longer maintain offensive action, Russia began a vigorous and sustained counter attack.[3] Hitler, contrary to the advice of many generals, ordered his exhausted field armies to stand fast during the counter attack.[4] Hitler's army's persevered and in early 1942 not only remained well within the Russian borders but were preparing for a new offensive.

In the spring of 1942, Hitler launched Operations BLAU (or BLUE). Based on lessons learned from the 1941 offensive. Instead of the massive three-pronged approach, Hitler believed a concentrated approach into the Southern Caucasus region would cut the Russian supply line along the Volga River and secure much needed petroleum.[5] To carry out his offensive, Hitler formed Army Group B consisting of the 4th Panzer and 6th Armies.[6]

Initially Stalingrad was not considered a significant military objective. The original Operation BLUE called for Army group B to move on a broad front to the Volga River. Once in the vicinity of Stalingrad the two-armies, Sixth Army and Fourth Panzer Army, would destroy the city's infrastructure to include war production facilities and dominate the Volga River by air and artillery strikes to preclude Russian counter attacks and to cut the Russian waterway transportation link to the Caucasus. Once accomplished,

both armies would drive onto the oil rich Caucus region and secure the oil to fuel the German machines of war.

Up to this point the STAVKA, (the Russian Command and General Staff), had been committed to an elastic defense across a broad front that was designed to give but not break. They hoped it would stress German supply lines and force them to fight through the notorious Russian winter.[7] As a result, the German attack, which began on 28 June 1942 and some 300 miles west of Stalingrad, met light resistance and made rapid progress.[8]

At this time Stalin believed the German objective was Moscow and even discounted intelligence gained from a plane crash carrying the German war plans indicating the German drive to Stalingrad. He believed it to be part of an elaborate deception plan. Stalin was so convinced about Moscow, he committed the majority of his forces in the vicinity of the city.[9] At about the same time Hitler, seeing the general lack of Russian preparation and little movement of reserve forces to the South, was confident that the last of Russian military reserves were melting away. He was convinced that the Russians would not mount a major defensive effort at Stalingrad and on 19 July provided 6th Army with a formal order to occupy Stalingrad.[10]

Opposing the German 6th Army was the Russian 62nd Siberian Army commanded by Vasili I Chuikov. The 6th Siberian Army was demoralized and depleted after a year of warfare. German tactics, particularly the envelopment, had left many Russian units fleeing in disorganized rabble or cut off from friendly lines. The ranks of deserters were growing, while faith in Russian leadership waned. Many captured Russians were actually happy because it meant they might survive the war after all.[11]

At 0310 on 21 August the German assault began. The 6th Army assaulted across the Don in 112 assault craft and 108 rafts and within two hours elements of the 516th Infantry regiment was in position on its eastern bank. The next day, the 6th Army was poised for its attack on Stalingrad.[12] As if to illustrate the inability of the Russian military to slow the German offensive, 6th Army completed the crossing of the Don River in just three days. The crossing cost 6th Army only 74 dead and 351 wounded. The seventy-four separate attacks launched by Russian forces on the 6th Army, when it was arguably most vulnerable, were completely ineffectual.[13] Despite the peril, the Russian resistance would stiffen.

The German advantages in open warfare soon dissipated as they closed on Stalingrad. The Volga River in the east served as a natural obstacle that would deter any envelopment attempts. The 62nd leveraged this by taking up defensive positions within the confines of the city. What followed reveals a culture of mass that demonstrates a pattern that would seem to be present for decades to come in Russian urban operations. Stalingrad would become a classic Russian style urban fight characterized by excessive use of force to achieve victory with utter disregard for the consequences in the form of excessive collateral damage and excessive casualties.

Excessive Force

Excessive use of force is a relative term. One might consider the idea as it relates to resources available, and what is considered prudent to use. In other words, it is the willingness to win at all costs. In this instance the Russians were defending and clearly at a disadvantage in men and machines, yet persisted in using all available means to resist German occupation of Stalingrad. Therefore, excessive use of force when defending is

characterized by a complete commitment and resolve to retain the objective regardless of cost. This total commitment was reflected in the planning, orders, and actions of the Russian soldier and his officers at Stalingrad.

The STAVKA had initially called for forcing the Germans to spend the winter in the open by using an elastic defense. When the news of the German drive to the south reached Stalin, the strategy changed significantly to what is best described as a series of strongpoints. Stalin, seeing German forces in the South claimed the elastic defense, highly regarded when it was thought Moscow was the target, was damaging morale and causing many units to be routed instead of conducting organized withdrawals. His order to immediately create strongpoints allowed no withdrawals, organized or otherwise.[14] Another reason for this act, though not explicitly cited, may have been Stalin's personal connection to the city. Regardless, Stalin's commitment to the defense of Stalingrad became total, and he used every available resource to hold it.[15]

Stalin did not have large army reserves immediately available, but he did have the civilian population. In July 1942, he ordered Stalingrad to prepare for a siege.[16] In response to Stalin's order, communist party officials desperately mobilized some 200,000 citizens of Stalingrad to serve as laborers to fortify the city while the unskilled or unneeded were placed in militia battalions. The Russian army that was to face the highly skilled and unbeaten German 6th Army would apparently be ad hoc. Stalin ordered his secret police to enforce discipline.[17] With the majority of their military forces in and around Moscow, and the civil population in Stalingrad marshaled to the cause, the Russian general staff planned for reinforcing the small military garrison.

Stalin's remarks to the front commander, Andrei Yeremenko expressed an urgent need to fortify Stalingrad to stop the German offensive and ominously advised the use of drastic measures to enforce discipline at the front.[18] Stalin believed successful urban warfare consisted of a hyperaggressiveness coupled with complete commitment of officers, and a particular ruthlessness with soldiers. He even maintained that Ivan the Terrible failed because he had not been ruthless enough.[19]

On 23 August, elements of the 16th Panzer Division took up positions north of Stalingrad. The 3rd and the 60th Motorized Divisions were twelve and twenty-two miles further north respectively. The next morning, 24 August, elements of 16th Panzer Division began an assault on the city's outlying defenses. The Germans were shocked at the volume of fire they received. Seemingly overnight the militia and factory workers, who up to this point were largely ignorant of German intentions, had established several strongpoints with interlocking fires. Even more shocking was when the 16th Panzer Division suddenly found itself under counterattack by T-34 tanks, which were often manned by the very workers who had assembled them.[20] Like a deranged man putting his arm into a wood chipper, the Russians were lashing newly assembled tanks and untrained forces into offensive combat actions piecemeal against a highly skilled armor division.[21] If this was not enough, further north, the Russian 35th Guards Division assaulted the 3rd and 60th Motorized Divisions in a vain attempt to exploit the gap between the divisions.[22] The Russian burst of activity set the tone for the remainder of the battle. The Russians in Stalingrad were not just defending; they were attacking with every available resource.

The change in strategy to strongpoint defenses implied finality for the Russians at the front. Stalin's subsequent edicts followed suit. Retreat became a criminal act.[23] Stalin committed his soldiers, civilians and resources to a battle of attrition. Large numbers would be needed to offset the lack of training and poor leadership of the civilian and militia. He had to simply outlast his opponent. He used what he had, an abundance of civilians, with little regard of its cost. This ruthlessness was no doubt sewn into the fabric of the Red Army officer corps. In one instance a division commander at Stalingrad chose to deal with low moral, low because of the hopelessness of the situation, by calling a formation and shooting every tenth man until his magazine was empty. The soldiers merely stood by hoping they would not be chosen.[24]

The manifestation of excess began early for the new recruits. The Russians, having committed the last of their available reserves continued to piecemeal untrained militia into existing units. The replacements disembarked from trains near the city and boarded boats to cross the Volga. As the ferries crossed the nearly mile wide river, German aircraft and artillery attacked them. Armed Russian escorts prevented mass desertion in the face of such carnage. In some instances when fear overpowered the new recruits they dove into the water to escape the impending slaughter only to have the armed escorts shoot them for desertion. Over a month long period, this method ferried nearly 100,000 replacements to the 62nd Army.[25]

Stalin's new willingness to fight often went to the extreme. Lieutenant Anton Dragan demonstrated the fanatical commitment and the depth to which it penetrated the officer corps. German attacks left his battalion decimated and leaderless. Dragan took charge of the remnants of the unit and established a strongpoint in a three-story complex

referred to as the nail factory. After several days and countless attacks by the Germans, Dragan and his men run out of ammunition. Still Dragan refused to leave. The Germans, growing impatient, delivered a devastating barrage of artillery and tank rounds to collapse the building. To Dragan the significance of the building was simply that the Germans wanted it. The building was not tactically significant and he could have saved his battalion to fight another day, yet he chose to stay. The Germans satisfied that the strongpoint was broken continued on their mission, leaving Dragan for dead and now behind German lines. Dragan and only six survivors of his battalion eventually infiltrated to Russian lines.[26]

The extreme use of force was not merely reserved for battle, but was interwoven in day-to-day activities of the Russian soldiers at the Battle of Stalingrad. A telling story demonstrates how one Russian chose to deal with a disagreement with his comrade. The quartermaster from the 284th Regiment found that an artillery commander was falsely reporting dead soldiers as being alive in order to get their vodka ration. When the quartermaster uncovered the ruse, he cut off the commander's vodka supply altogether. As a rebuttal the artillery commander fired three 122-millimeter rounds at the quartermaster's warehouse. Infuriated, the quartermaster called his higher headquarters, which promptly replied that the commander in question was an Order of the Red Star recipient and to restore his ration.[27] To the Russians the use of artillery against a neighboring unit seemed somehow normal and brought no punitive action. In this instance the use of force was rewarded.

Casualties

The Russian culture of mass extends to their ability to both absorb and inflict heavy casualties. The Battle of Stalingrad pitted untrained Russian militia and civilians against a highly trained German Army. Predictably the Russians experienced tremendous casualties; this was only aggravated by the extreme resolve of the Russian commanders. It would seem that the Germans would run out of bullets before the Russians ran out of bodies.

The Russians were not just required to defend, they were ordered to attack. While they had supported the elastic defense, Russians officers believed in attrition warfare and were not adverse to counter attacking, even when the situation warranted a more traditional approach. Chuikov believed that the active defense was essential to his success and coined the phrase, "constant, close, and combined operation" to describe his tactic in the defense of Stalingrad.[28] Chuikov's "hyperactive" defense was a constant series of attacks so as to prevent the Germans from consolidating gains.[29] While successful, this method led to abhorrent causalities, as the Russians often did not have the requisite superiority in firepower to gain an advantage in an attack. And as most soldiers were new their performance would certainly be questionable. Chuikov proposed by constantly attacking they could wear down the enemy and destroy him.[30]

While Chuikov braced for the German ground assault, the German air raids shattered the city. In the first few days, an estimated 40,000 Russian civilians died as a result of German aerial bombardment. The air warnings leading to the assault produced no sense of urgency in the people, as many thought the alarms were being tested. The Russian authorities had done nothing to prepare the population for the attack. In this

instance no delineation was made between test, practice, and reality. The Russians were allowed to grow complacent.

As inmates of a local mental institution aimlessly walked the streets, the healthy survivors spent hours collecting the dead and treating the wounded. Overnight hundreds of children were orphaned. The losses were apparently deemed acceptable, as the Russian resolve had not been shaken.[31]

Rather than waning, Russian resistance continued to stiffen as Stalingrad defenders diligently fulfilled Stalin's intent of defending to the last. On 16 October a division of German Infantry with tanks in support broke through Russian defenses North of Stalingrad. The eight thousand defenders of the 37th Guard's Division countered the attackers headlong and met each German thrust. Over the next forty-eight hours the 37th fought relentlessly and lost over five thousand men.[32] MAJ Gen Zholudyev reported the failure of the 37th to retain the tractor works, and he added that the division did its job honorably without retreating an inch.[33]

The sacrifice of the 37th Guard's Division was not enough. Defeat was simply not an option for Stalin, the police or the people. A point demonstrated by the disgust Yeremenko displayed when he learned of MAJ Gen Zholudyev of the 37th Guards failure to hold the tractor factory.

Despite the mounting losses, Chuikov would not yield instead he ordered his remaining units, growing more isolated by the hour, to hold fast. The losses, though tactically significant did not seem otherwise disconcerting. By 17 October, the 62nd Army had lost thirteen thousand troops or nearly 25 percent of its combat power defending Stalingrad. [34]

The casualties were not limited to combat soldiers alone, some 200,000 under coercion of 2,000 party members (Stalin's Secret Police) were enlisted to aid in the defense of the city and to fight in the militias.[35] The Soviet Government demonstrated little concern over the civilian and support personnel killed. Russians viewed the carnage as a crusade; a cleansing that is required to rid their country of Germans.[36] The Russians, despite being at a disadvantage, continued to press the attack, regardless of the lagging readiness of the troops.

While the Russian 37th Guard Division and factory workers fought to defend the tractor works in the North, a newly formed reserve division, the 284th, held a line just East of Mamaev Hill. This hill, now occupied by German forces, offered them a key panoramic view of the city and a majority of Russian troop movements.[37] The 284th Siberian Division's mission was to hold their line and if possible take the hill from the Germans. The division attacked several times up hill with at best parity in artillery but virtually no air support. In one day of fighting the 284th lost over three hundred soldiers. The division's soldiers like most defenders of Stalingrad, had little formalized training. New recruit's primary means of training was during battle and the losses should not have been surprising.[38] The Russians seemed willing to accept massive loss of life itself to retain a city that was initially of little concern to either army.

Fighting in Stalingrad was house-to-house and block-by-block. As the Germans entered houses or buildings from the lower floors, Russian defenders retained the floors above. The Russians used satchel charges, grenades, and automatic weapons to retain rooms but were often short on supplies. Often, while under attack, desperate Russian defenders would risk picking up explosives delivered by the attacking Germans and risk

throwing it back before the fuse detonated.[39] The exact number of Russian casualties may never be known. Axis losses are estimated to be 250,000-300,000 troops along with 1,000 tanks and 1,800 guns. While estimates for the Russians losses are four to eight times this number.[40]

Collateral Damage

The use of excessive force and willingness to accept casualties naturally led to the destruction of the city. Collateral damage was not a major concern to the Russian people or the Russian army. The first priority was victory and every weapon at its disposal would be used to that end with little regard for collateral damage. Large caliber guns normally associated with indirect fire were often used to destroy German positions and in the counter attack to destroy the very buildings they were trying to retain. No sacrifice in casualties or infrastructure seemed too great. The Russians would rather accept a leveled Stalingrad than defeat.

Yeremenko, the front commander, confessed to Stalin early in the battle, that the situation was grim. He further iterated that some city officials wanted to transfer the remaining equipment and workers to the East. Stalin was outraged at the request and refused because he believed it would signal to the enemy that the Russians were surrendering Stalingrad. In keeping with Stalin's order, the factories and workers remained and under near constant fire, continued its war production.[41]

It is possible Stalin believed that keeping the city would be a moral victory, or by stroke of genius he had the vision to see the potential of encircling the 6th Army. Without question his insistence on holding the city at all cost needlessly put skilled laborers and machinery at risk. His order suggest the Russian acceptance collateral damage, where

everything expendable in the pursuit of mission accomplishment. This theme seems to be constant and was clearly shared by his subordinate commanders.

As a general rule the civilian population was not spared. Most citizens were not informed of the German threat. Though air raids and warnings were common, the city's mayor, days prior to the attack on the city, failed to mention that the German tanks were across the Don River and heading to Stalingrad. In a perverse way the Russian occupation of the city contributed to the level of destructive force used by the Germans. While the Germans were under orders to destroy the industrial complex, they were also to occupy the city. It is not likely they would have resorted to mass bombardment were it not necessary to eject the Russian military. Russian reports described the city as leveled with a hundred city blocks on fire (see appendix B). The Russians treated the rubble created by the aerial bombardment as an advantage. The labyrinth of obstacles and battle positions inadvertently created by the assault proved to be completely random, just, as they would have wanted them had they the resources.

Conclusion

The Russian culture of mass is exemplified in the Battle of Stalingrad. The excessive use of force, acceptance of casualties, and the resulting collateral damage are clearly linked and tied to the Russian way of conducting urban operations. No sacrifice was too great in pursuit of the mission. Whatever resource was at hand was willingly used. The vast casualties the Russians were willing to sustain further evidenced the total commitment. It's clear that the Russian army leveraged an extensive reserve of manpower to offset their lack of equipment, training, and, tactics. Likewise, destruction

of the city infrastructure must have seemed the smaller price to pay for victory. In fact the collateral damage was not of concern, rather was used to their advantage.

The excessively high Russian losses are attributable to the level of soldier motivation, readiness and the command's insistent on offensive operations. Two outside factors also undoubtedly contributed to the Russian poor performance at Stalingrad and ultimately the extreme number of casualties sustained there.

The first is attrition of competent leaders and soldiers. Stalin's purge of the officer corps in the mid-to-late 1930s removed many of his most competent operational thinkers and leaders, those who most likely understood how the next war would be fought. Stalin predicted another European war but predicted it would last much longer, giving him time to rebuild his officer corps.[42] The Russian's sustained another loss of valued leaders and resources in Germanys initial invasion of Russia in 1941. Stalin, paranoid of losing any ground to the advancing German armies, had stationed many of his most fit units forward. As a result, the Germans, by means of then "lightening tactics" encircled large static defenses ultimately capturing over 320,000 of Russia's best soldiers.[43]

Subsequently, in meeting the personnel demands after the debacle of 1941 the Russian army haphazardly drew upon Russian manpower reserves. This led to the use of hastily assembled and untrained divisions to defend in the 1942 campaign. The Germans not only knew this but also knew the Russians would accept high casualties. On 11 August 1942, General Halder, German Chief of the Army General Staff, commented, "the Russian divisions are admittedly not armed and equipped in our sense, and tactically they are badly led. But they are; and when we destroy a dozen the Russians simply

establish another dozen."[44] He was right, Chuikov ferried over the Volga the equivalent of nine rifle divisions and two tank brigades.[45]

Amazingly, at a distinct disadvantage in training and equipment, the Russians won at Stalingrad. Not because of superior tactics, but because they accepted massive casualties. The officers who had survived Stalin's purge and the first German assault likely believed in the sacrifice of the patriot to the motherland regardless of the numbers. This fervent commitment led to the belief that the ends justified the means regardless of cost. What the Russians lacked in leadership, training, and equipment they made up for with a fanatical resistance to defeat.

Eventually Stalin was victorious at Stalingrad and ultimately destroyed the German 6th Army. The Russian way of conducting urban operations does not end there however. Despite movements to reform the military, the Russian military culture as seen in Stalingrad persists even after fifty years and will be evident in their operations in Chechnya.

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[1]Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: German Defeat in the East* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 1984), 6.

[2]Ibid., 7.

[3]Ibid., 12-13.

[4]Geoffrey Jukes, *Hitler's Stalingrad Decision* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1985), 23.

[5] Heinz Schroter, *Stalingrad*, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1958), 20-23.

[6] William Craig, *Enemy at The Gate* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1973), 8.

[7]Jukes, *Hitler's Stalingrad Decision*, 44-48.

[8]Ibid., 31-33.

[9]Ibid., 33-33.

[10]Schroter, *Stalingrad*, 27.

[11]Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: German Defeat in the East*, 6.

[12]Schroter, *Stalingrad*, 31.

[13]Schroter, *Stalingrad*, 31-32.

[14]Jukes, *Hitler's Stalingrad Decision*, 47.

[15]Craig, *Enemy at The Gate*, 25-27.

[16]Ibid., 24.

[17]Lewis, *The Battle of Stalingrad*, 4.

[18]Craig, *Enemy at The Gate*, 26.

[19]Ibid., 22.

[20]Ibid., 62.

[21]Ibid., 53.

[22]Ibid., 62.

[23]A. M. Vasilevsky, *Two Hundred Days of Fire* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970) 27.

[24]Ibid., 72.

[25]Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 124-127.

[26]Vasili I. Chuikov, trans. Harold Silver, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1964), 125-128.

[27]Ibid., 169.

[28]Ibid,. 295-300

[29]Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad,* 292.

[30]Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad,* 292-293.

[31]Craig, *Enemy at The Gate,* 66.

[32]Ibid., 135.

[33]Vasilevsky, *Two Hundred Days of Fire,* 109.

[34]Craig, *Enemy at The Gate,* 134-136.

[35]Vasilevsky, *Two Hundred Days of Fire,* 26.

[36]Ibid., 143.

[37]Craig, *Enemy at The Gate,* 37-38.

[38]Ibid.,121-122.

[39]Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad,* 299-301.

[40]S. J. Lewis, *The Battle of Stalingrad.*

[41]Craig, *Enemy at The Gate,* 61.

[42]Williamson, Murray and Allan R. Millet, *A War to be Won* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2000), 112.

[43]Ibid., 123.

[44]Ibid., 125.

[45]S. J. Lewis, *The Battle of Stalingrad.*

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF CHECHNYA

Background

Some fifty-two years after the battle of Stalingrad the Russian Army was once again embroiled in heated urban warfare in Grozny the capital of Chechnya. Even with the passing of time the Russian culture of mass showed no signs of abating. Where in Stalingrad the Russians accepted massive destruction, in Chechnya they would be inflicting it. In this battle the Russians were the larger offensive force and stormed the city believing it to be lightly defended. They could not have been more wrong. In the fighting that followed the Russians forces unleashed a massive amount of force using large mechanized units with heavy artillery and ground attack aircraft against a small resistance group armed with rifles, a few tanks, and armored personnel carriers. The willingness to inflict as well as absorb casualties and the seeming disregard for the cities infrastructure is reminiscent of the fight for Stalingrad. The stiff resistance felt by the Russians should have come as no surprise. Vigorous resistance is a Chechen trademark dating back 300 years.

The inclination of the Chechen people to resist external control dates back to the mid 17th century when Russia had established itself and aspired to further expand the empire. The Tsar proudly sent troops to annex new territories like Chechnya in 1663. Eventually the Tsar gained the upper hand but resistance then, as now, was fierce and protracted. In 1818 Russian soldiers erected the “Fortress Grozny” now the city Grozny to cut-off the Chechen lines of communication from the mountains to the flatlands.[1] Innumerable problems with the Chechens continued for the Russians.

For instance, in 1865 in an attempt to bring the Chechen people to heel, the Tsar ordered the resettlement of 700,000 Chechens to break up their organized resistance. As a result resistance activities across Chechnya dropped sharply, but never completely ceased.[2]

In 1917 new hope for Chechen independence arose during the Russian revolution. But the Bolsheviks proved no better than the Tsar, and crushed all organized Chechen resistance. As a result, the defiant Chechens sided with the German invaders during World War II. At the conclusion of World War II, Stalin deported 60 percent of the inhabitants of the territory for revolting during a time of war. Then after the death of Stalin, the inhabitants returned to Chechnya after General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev declared a general amnesty in 1956.[3] Subsequent Chechen leadership viewed the independence movement of former Soviet satellite countries in 1991 as an opportunity to gain independence.

By 1994 “Fortress Grozny” had become an urban city consisting of nearly 500,000 inhabitants. The residents were mostly a mixture of ethnic Chechens and Russians. The city was separated into four sections by two key terrain features: the River Sunzha, running from the northeast to the southwest, and a railroad line running from the southwest to the center of the city and then departing the city due east. The landscape consisted of a typical mix of structures ranging in height from one to fifteen stories (see appendix C).[4]

The latest chapter of war in Chechnya and Grozny in particular can be traced back to November 1991. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Republic and serving under the Soviet Union's General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, stated in 1991 that the

republics should “chew off all the sovereignty they can swallow.” The Russian Republic's President soon came to wish he had never uttered that phrase. Chechnya, a component part of the Russian Republic, took Yeltsin at his word. A small, localized revolution began on 21 August 1991 in Chechnya. Chechnya than declared its independence from Russia on 6 September 1991, citing Yeltsin’s proclamation concerning sovereignty. The Amalgamated Congress of the Chechen People invited former Soviet Air Force General, Dzhokhar Dudayev, living in Estonia, to be President. Later he won popular election. Many Russians in the current regime considered the elections illegal and therefore characterized Dudayev's presidency as illegitimate. Russia's Fifth Congress of People's Deputies decreed the elections illegal. In an attempt to legitimize Russian opposition to an independent Chechnya, Yeltsin referenced the Russian constitution, which declared that all territories in the Russian Federation were Russian and that if one is a citizen of Russia Federation then one is a Russian and are subject to Russian rule.[5] Many Chechens did not agree.

So despite Russian objections, Dudajev remained President and declared Chechnya independence. While heated exchanges took place between Chechnya and the Russian Federation, both sides avoided overt use of military force for the next several years.

Multiple opposition groups existed within Chechnya that favored the Russian view but were too weak politically and militarily to challenge Dudajev directly. With covert Russian support the groups began to organize and formed a loose coalition.[6] In 1994 the Russian backed group challenged Dudajev militarily and suffered a humiliating defeat. Dudjev paraded the Russian soldiers who fought covertly for the group and the

Russian black operation was exposed. The defeat ended any hope of averting direct action by the Russian military.[7]

In response the Russian High Command placed a hasty plan together to oust Dudajev and end the Chechen independence movement. The plan, centered on Grozny allocated just fifteen days for its capture. Russian Intelligence estimates established that the Chechen command had created three defensive rings to defend Grozny: an inner circle around the Presidential Palace; a middle circle up to five kilometers from the Palace and an outer circle that passed mainly through the city outskirts. The middle and outer defense rings were fortified strongpoints, while the inner line consisted of prepared positions from which to deliver direct artillery and tank fire. In reality the Chechens prepared temporary positions in buildings with the intent of staying either above or below the maximum elevation of the Russian tank main gun.[8]

The Chechens plan to counter the advancing Russian forces centered on the ambush. The ambush was based on the twenty-five-man group, composed of three mobile squads of two heavy machine gunners, two RPG gunners, one sniper, and three riflemen. Three of the eight man squads would serve as a team and set up in three positions along the ambush route. They would occupy the lower level of buildings in the ambush zone to prevent being struck by incoming artillery and beyond the minimum elevation of the tank main gun. The remaining fifty men would occupy blocking positions to ensure the entrapped Russians could not escape and to prevent reinforcements from entering the ambush area.

The Russians gave little consideration to the tactical movement to Grozny. Fixated on the city capital, Russian planners tended to ignore the outlying regions that

needed to be crossed in order to get to the gates of the capital. The plan called for the commitment of Russian forces in three phases.[9]

Phase one was planned to last from 29 November to 6 December 1994. During this time the Russians would set the conditions for entry into the city by maintaining air superiority and allowing ground forces freedom of maneuver. Ground forces were to plan, move into, and secure a forward operating base on the outskirts of Grozny from which to launch the eventual ground campaign. Phase two was to take three days, 7-9 December, during which Russian troops were to attack the city from three separate directions in order to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance. Phase three, the actual assault into Grozny, was planned to last from the 10-14 December. The Russian end state was to capture the radio stations, the presidential palace, and other key government buildings within Grozny.[10] Though aware of the opposition group debacle and their shortage of manpower, training, and equipment the Russian high command insisted that Russian army regulars do the job (see appendix D).

The Russians entered Chechnya confident of a quick victory but some two weeks behind their original schedule. They stormed the city from multiple directions. The desired effect was to terrify and sober the inhabitants about the dire consequences of opposing Russia. While the Russian and Chechen civilians in the city grew alarmed, the rebels did not.

Failure to intimidate the rebels left Russia little choice but to revert to the most overt display of the culture of mass. The Russians readily wielded massive firepower to dislodge a small Chechen force. As in Stalingrad, the consequences of such excessive

force in terms of excessive casualties and collateral were predictable. The culture of mass had prevailed after fifty years in the Russian approach to urban warfare.

Excessive Force

Tactically the Russian army seemed bent on using overwhelming force in its engagements in Grozny.[11] The idea seemed to be, if a few tanks and armored vehicles are sufficient then more is better. Their application of mass seems to preclude learning and applying new tactics and techniques for new situations. The equation was simple, the greater the resistance the greater the force to overcome it. The Russians also relied heavily on sheer numbers to intimidate the rebels.

Failing to intimidate the rebel army with a smaller force, the Russians decided to use three major armored groups to destroy them. This massive attack was to have inflicted maximum rebel casualties and bring a quick end to the war. Lower impact military operations based on special purpose forces and physiological warfare teams do not seem to have been given serious consideration. To the Russians, the simple solution and most expedient means to end the Chechen resistance was the massive application of military force through maneuver forces and firepower.

On 29 November, days before the introduction of ground forces, Phase one, the air bombardment began. Russian intelligence conducted targeting based on templates, which assumed the Chechens would conduct a static defense. This template later proved to be completely wrong. The bombs that were dropped did not fall on Chechen strongpoints but in the civilian population centers. Regardless of how ineffective the air campaign was the ground action, phase two, was set to begin.

The three Russian armored groups advanced on Grozny from multiple directions. The Mozdok grouping under the command of General Lieutenant V. M. Chilindin, moving from the Northwest, consisted of the 131st Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade (MRB), the 106th Paratroop Division, and the 56th Independent Paratroop Brigade. The western Vladikavkaz axis under the command of General Lieutenant Chindarov contained the 693rd MRB of the 19th Motorized Rifle Division, a regiment from the 76th Paratrooper Division, and a paratrooper battalion from the 21st Independent Paratrooper Brigade. The East grouping from Kizlyar under the command of General Lieutenant Lev Roklin contained the 20th Motorized Rifle Division.

The plan immediately went astray. The command and staff simply did not conduct the required coordination and the units failed to achieve mutual support.[12] As the groupings advanced through Chechnya on their way to the city, only the forces from Mozdok and Kizlyar kept to their initial schedules. Several units failed to reach their initial positions on time. The intent of the Russians to isolate the city did not materialize. The South remained open to escaping refugees and to Chechen resupply.[13] It is conceivable that in the short term, the Russian military believed a blockade was not required simply because they felt the Chechens could not replace fallen rebels as fast as the Russians could kill them. It's also conceivable that the Russians believed the Chechens would in fact simply go home. But both beliefs would be wrong.

The initial failure of the operation and the haste in which the plan was put together left the Russian army planner's limited branches or sequels. This would have significant tactical consequences. Local inhabitants immediately blocked the 76th Paratroop Division and 21st Paratroop Brigade as they approached Grozny from the

South West. Lacking any other plans, the units turned back. Other Russian units faced similar circumstances in that the civilian population, armed and unarmed, impeded forward progress from as far away as 100 kilometers from the capitol. Chechen inhabitants blocked streets; beat on armored vehicles with sticks, threw rocks and in some instances used flammable liquids in an attempt to burn armored crews. To break the stalemate, the Russians deemed the civilian gatherings as Chechen Organized Resistance and purportedly liquidated them by helicopter fire.[14] Lacking an understanding of the impact of military operations on the public and under pressure from Russian high command, the Russian forces had resorted to an excessively heavy-handed use of force on the local populace that continued through the battle.

Having yet to meet Dudajev forces, the advancing Russian assault groups accomplished very little in the first day. By 17 December the Russian assault forces had only advanced to within 10 kilometers of Grozny. Failing in their use of massive force against the rebels and frustrated with their slow progress, the Russians reportedly lashed out, declaring the village Pervomaisk as hostile and destroying it. Such a use of force, with a win at all cost mentality continued to permeate the Russian hierarchy.

The overall lack of success so infuriated Defense Minister Pavel Grachev that he subsequently fired the campaign commander and his entire staff.[15] Meanwhile, fighting on the outskirts of Grozny continued as the Russian leadership began to gain an appreciation for the Chechens. By 25 December the Russian ground assault groups were in their final positions prior to transitioning to Stage 3, the assault on the city.[16]

In preparing through phases one and two, the Russians had resorted to heavier uses of firepower after each tactical setback. To remedy planning and training failures, the Russians resorted to heavy and indiscriminate bombardment during battle. Similarities to Stalingrad began to emerge as to how the Russian military chose to solve complex problems. In Stalingrad people were massed against a tactical problem. In Chechnya the Russians massed artillery against people. In one battle it was reported that as many as 4,000 artillery rounds an hour were loosed on the city.[17]

In preparing for the final assault on Grozny, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, was concerned with world perceptions that the Russian military was not a premier force. Truly to date the Russian army had not done well. He believed a massive strike using all available means, a further escalation, was necessary to restore Russian credibility in their eyes and those of the world. Grachev ordered an immediate assault on the palace complex. He conceived that a quick and unsuspecting strike would catch the Chechens off guard and prove to be the decisive operation in the campaign. On 28 December Russian aircraft began to bomb local communities and suspected Chechen strong points. During this operation nearly seventy hamlets and villages were struck by Russian ordinance. The sheer amount of ordnance and the resulting destruction led Grachev to believe the Chechens were at their breaking point. He wanted Grozny taken no later than 1 January and issued the order for it to happen.[18]

Early January was punctuated with the heaviest fighting to date.[19] Even the Russian soldier and civilians were not immune to excessive application of force. Some Russian soldiers, having sustained heavy causalities began to balk at the orders to attack. Some reports provide evidence that the Russians had special troops stand behind the

soldiers when they went into battle and threaten to shoot them if they retreated or tried to give up. The soldiers also reported that they were ordered to kill women, old people, and children in the course of combat.[20] These statements were reminiscent of the actions of the old People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and demonstrate a particular ruthlessness in the application of force.

The Russian excessive use of force is plainly visible in Grozny. The recklessness in which the mission was undertaken and the hyper aggressiveness displayed at the operational level is strikingly similar to the approach used at Stalingrad. Nowhere was this aggressiveness more evident than in Yeltsin's decision to grant Grachev the right to use almost unlimited force, a right he plainly pursued in using fire support systems indiscriminately against the cities infrastructure. This Hyper aggressiveness ultimately turned many Chechen and Russian civilians in the city into sympathizers if not direct supporters of the Chechens.

Casualties

As we saw in Stalingrad, so in Grozny it seems that Russians warfare is characterized by the excessive infliction of heavy casualties on the enemy. It almost becomes an end in and of itself; it is the most expedient means to solve a tactical problem. Heavy civilian casualties often seem to be the price of conflict in Russian urban operations. Estimates of civilian deaths vary from 5,000 to 50,000. The most realistic estimate stands at 20,000.[21] Russians readily absorb or accept massive friendly casualties in pursuit of victory. Like Stalingrad the measure of Russian success is not a function of casualties suffered or inflicted, but rather mission accomplishment at any cost to the enemy or themselves. The culture has its roots in Russian history.

The military operation in Grozny was a fiasco for the Russian soldiers who attacked Dudajev. Moscow had mistakenly expected that the Chechen fighters would simply go home with a regular army show of force. Given the history of the Chechen fight for independence, this expectation was wholly unwarranted. The planning effort disregarded history and embraced the culture of mass with regard to a willingness to accept large numbers of casualties. This lack of planning would needlessly jeopardize Russian soldiers given the readiness levels of the troops. They were allocated weeks to assault a city of nearly 500,000, where it would actually take months. Dudajev's forces exploited the Russian staff miscalculations by making them pay in casualties, unfortunately the Russians were all too willing to oblige in accepting the losses.

Russian combat experience prior to entering Grozny was based on fifty years of legacy Soviet Cold War mentality. Planning, and training for conflict in Europe against a technologically and tactically skilled adversary was the basis for their understanding of operations.[22] This approach was in stark contrast to the kind of tactics required in a tight urban environment like Chechnya. To make matters worse, the Russian military in 1994 was hardly ready for combat. According to secret documents from Pavel Grachev, the Russian Minister of Defense, Russian military training in 1994 was at a Cold War low and many of the army's best officers and soldiers had already left the military due to lack of pay, poor living conditions and the new promise of capitalism that came with the fall of communism.[23] As a result, when they fought the first battles in Chechnya in 1994, the Russian military forces were severely lacking in training, leadership, and unit cohesiveness.

The width of the city streets in Grozny severely limited the armor and its infantry ability to maneuver. The Chechens allowed armored formations to enter the city. Then at predetermined sites they would use anti-tank missile systems to destroy the first and last vehicles in the column, trapping the remaining vehicles and soldiers on the interior of the column with no room to maneuver. Chechen forces (comprised mostly of small assault units) used the nearby buildings as cover and they used sewer systems and back roads as lines of communication to gain the most advantageous assault positions. Anti-armor teams fired from basements as well as high-rise windows, effectively staying beyond the maximum and minimum elevation of the tank main gun. The Russian soldiers, misled by superiors and unprepared for combat, scattered, leaving the heavy armor with no infantry support and vulnerable to further ambush.[24] In the melee the unorganized soldiers and equipment would become easy targets for the rebels.

The lack of planning preparations consistently led to loss of life. According to Russian staff estimates a successful offensive operations requires a minimum of six to one ratio of men and equipment.[25] Despite this knowledge, the Russians most likely did not achieve this ratio in infantry. In fact some estimates indicate that at best they achieved an inverse ratio of 1 to 2.5.[26] Obviously the Russians employed tactics that seemed to ignore the hard won lessons learned from WWII.

A more in-depth look at one unit's experience reflects the willingness to accept excessive casualties. On 31 December the 1/131st Motorized Rifle Regiment had the mission of capturing and securing the railhead south of the city palace, which they accomplished with little resistance or enemy fire. Meanwhile, the 81st Motorized Rifle Regiment advanced from the north in order to secure the palace. Unfortunately, the 81st

overly confident infantry rode on top of the armored vehicles and were decimated by a Chechen ambush. The armored vehicles of the 81st, without the infantry support to clear and suppress nearby buildings, became easy targets for the Chechens.

Then 1/131st, which had remarkable success initially, reportedly advanced as if on parade. After triumphantly entering the train station they suddenly came under withering fire from newly arriving Chechen fighter's that were believed to have triggered the ambush on the 81st. The commander of the 1/131st, isolated and desperate, attempted to break out. The Chechens struck the lead command vehicle and killed the commander. Without the commander the soldiers became confused and chaos prevailed.[27] Over the course of this action, the Russians had lost approximately 800 to 1000 men, 20 of 26 tanks and 102 of 120 armored vehicles.

The 74th Brigade was to have advanced at nearly the same time as the 131st, which would have offered some reinforcements, but they stopped to celebrate New Years Eve. The 503rd Regiment was supposed to be sent into Grozny to support the movement as well, but they refused to move, citing lack of preparation. The commander of the 503rd said he had fulfilled his order already, and saw no reason to put everyone at risk that way at night in a city.[28] The forces that could have prevented this catastrophe were available but failed to respond. There was no apparent concern with the extreme losses. As a whole the Russians seemed to take it in stride.

Examining the Russian timetable and obvious lack of readiness and preparations it is not difficult to see that the Russian High Command had little regard for soldier welfare. It is not that the Russians did not care; rather they were willing to accept losses in men and equipment to accomplish the mission. The units, which the Russians sent to

Chechnya, were simply not equipped or trained to adequately deal with urban combat. Russian units were not drawn into sophisticated ambushes; they drove into them willingly believing the Chechens would flee. After all, the outer defensive positions were not manned. An example of this lies in a story of a lost tanker in the vicinity of the Chechen presidential palace. The tanker was killed when he unknowingly dismounted his tank to ask a Chechen were he could buy cigarettes.[29]

The lack of troop experience is partly due the Russian rotation policy. December is the month when new recruits, fresh from basic training, join their units and seasoned troops complete their contracts.[30] The untrained troops shot wildly at anything that moved inflicting in one estimate 60 percent of the friendly casualties for this early period of battle.[31] In one instance a regiment whose primary role up to the 14 of December was snow removal, was hurried to the front. Their first engagement took place on the December 30th and was an intense firefight that lasted forty minutes. Unfortunately, they came to discover that they had engaged a sister regiment.[32] The haphazard throwing together of units, lack of communications and poor leadership all contributed to unnecessary loss of life. According to one report of the 81st Motorized Regiment forty-nine out of fifty-six platoon commanders were new and more than 50 percent of the regiment had never fired live rounds from their tanks, nor did they know how.[33] Like the defenders of Stalingrad the soldiers rushed into the most intense kind of warfare with little training or preparation.

In general these incidents, can be attributed to the general atmosphere permeating the Russian military since the days of Stalin in which sacrifice is to be expected and a grinding unrelenting effort would eventually win the day. As with the Battle for

Stalingrad the overriding concern was the mission accomplishment despite growing casualties.

Russian soldiers in Chechnya, like those in Stalingrad learned the lessons of urban warfare, on the job. New plans, heavily weighted in fire support, eventually led to the capture of the presidential palace on 20 January but most of the Chechens would escape the palace area to fight another day.[34] The unsealed southern routes into the city allowed Chechen units to move freely through the southern sections of town, striking and escaping before the Russians could react.[35] The Chechen fighters would continue their struggle and the Russian soldiers fared poorly because if it.

Collateral Damage

In Chechnya collateral damage was a function of excessive force. The Russian hammer blows at the city infrastructure, though marginally effective, caused massive damage to the city. Ground attack aircraft used erroneous enemy templates to guide their targeting with obvious results. To ensure freedom of maneuver, Russian forces prepared routes with indiscriminate indirect fire in an attempt to clear perceived threats. Frustration continued to grow and the Russians became more callus, entire villages would be destroyed if they were suspected of harboring Chechen fighters.

Undoubtedly many of the “hardened” targets were chosen based on Russian intelligence assessment of the three-ring defense, a defensive network the Chechens never actually established. Many of the intended targets were in fact not enemy fortifications at all but rather typical civilian infrastructure.

The targeting process was also hamstrung by a lack of training. Even when a target was confirmed, pilots had a difficult time hitting them. Naturally, the targets were

often attacked several times escalating the damage done in the immediate area. In this way substantial amounts of ordinance fell in civilian neighborhoods. While the aircraft bombed unknown targets within the city, the ground forces devised methods to deal with Chechen ambushes.[36]

The Russians increasingly dealt with possible ambushes with indiscriminate use indirect fire systems. Prior to movement the Russians would conduct extensive artillery fire along the axis of advance in the hopes of dissuading potential adversaries. In effect the buildings along the route were reduced to rubble. This method though effective, proved to be extremely destructive and demonstrates a lack of concern for the city infrastructure. Like Stalingrad, the Russians were permitting the destruction of the city in an attempt to save it. Though the method was somewhat successful, it provided rubble from which Chechen marksman could take shots at unsuspecting Russian patrols[37] (see appendix E).

By 7 January it was evident that the Russian military was not succeeding. Independent and Russian journalist's reported that the fighting was the fiercest since the 31st of December-1st of January battles.[38] But the Russian willingness to use massive bombardment began to have an effect on the Chechens and by 10 January Russian forces had fought to within 400 meters of the palace. Pockets of Dudajev Chechens remained intact. Fighting remained intense as Russian soldiers fought to gain the upper hand.[39]

Russian Defense Minister Grachev unrealistically felt the scattered resistance to be insignificant, and noted that there were no population centers in Chechnya where bandit formations could mount serious opposition to federal forces. Regardless, fierce fighting continued until 23 February when the last of Dudayev forces remaining in the

palace were surrounded.[40] Even then, rebel forces remained scattered in the city and scattered among refugees. Even the methods used root out these scattered units among the refugee and civilian population went to excess.

A general description of such an operation would occur after a village was surrounded. A peace ultimatum is given in addition to the cost associated with opening a humanitarian aid corridor. Once the demands were met the civilians would be allowed to leave. Sometimes the corridor would close prematurely leaving the civilian in a very dangerous situation with Russian and Chechen forces trading shots within their midst. After the village evacuation valuables were loaded on trucks, often they reduced the village to ruble. Males over twelve were given special consideration and sent to filtration centers were the interment was open ended and torture common.[41]

After the initial defeats, the Russian military quickly escalated the amount of firepower that was applied in the city streets. The Russian tactics began to reflect the lessons learned from World War II, particularly in the Battle of Berlin and Stalingrad. Small task organized groups would clear one or two buildings at a time.[42] General Lev Rokhlin reported he adapted tactics used in the Battle for Berlin in World War II.[43] Larger and more capable reserves were available and intelligence gathering began to take priority. The weapon of choice for clearing buildings reverted to what was used in World War II, the grenade, and a relatively new flame weapon called a thermobaric. A thermobaric is a flame weapon that when ignited creates massive overpressure causing buildings and people to implode. The Russians appropriately called the weapon “pocket artillery” because of the amount of damage it could inflict. In general, the Russian forces would first use heavy artillery and aircraft as prepatory fires followed by infantry

delivered thermobarics and lastly an infantry company supported by tanks would conduct the final clearing of the building. Obviously the buildings did not fare well with these tactics.

Some Russians learned quickly and adapted to the tactics of the day. They recognized clearing buildings required infantry. More importantly was the necessity to occupy the building to prevent it from falling back into rebel hand.

Unfortunately, the lessons learned were not retained or ignored. Seasoned veterans rotated home and, in absents of training, new recruits were left to relearn the hard lessons of urban combat.

As the conflict wore on it seems that the destruction of the buildings was an economical way of preserving the infantry force as evidenced by the August 1996 campaign. The massing of area weapons in the city became a common technique. The heavy use of aerial bombardment, heavy artillery, grenades, and flame weapons signify the Russian attitude to collateral damage. It is acceptable if it serves the mission. The level of damage willingly inflicted in pursuit of the enemy is enormous and ties directly to their use of massive firepower to achieve results.

Conclusion

The Russians at best fought this conflict to a draw. Ultimately Russia could not achieve success because it failed to understand the tactical problem. That is the methods used in the Cold War era are no longer feasible. The ability to crush a rebellion by any means necessary is no longer acceptable to world opinion. One can only guess at the level of destruction the Russians could have been capable of if this conflict had taken place only ten years before. That the Russians had to some degree restrained themselves is

probably a significant reason they settled for an uneasy peace. The massive force used in the Chechnya campaign was still significant and is evidenced by the large armor forces and indiscriminate and escalating use of indirect fires.

The Russian also seemed accepting of the abnormally high casualty rates. The Russians who planned, trained, and fought at Chechnya clearly identified and accepted the risk of enormous casualties. It was clearly known by the Russian high command that the majority of units sent into Grozny were not ready for combat operations. The decayed state of training was compounded by the arrival of new recruits fresh from basic training and the results are all too predictable. Yet the Russians sent these troops into battle, the casualties were simply an expected outcome of the operation. It is simply not possible to ignore the dangers associated with the haste to act.

Likewise the acceptance of destruction is striking. Attempts to limit collateral damage were not readily apparent and based on the escalating use of indirect systems didn't seem to be a major concern. In all the Russian military culture of mass as exposed in Chechnya seems reflective of the battle fought in Stalingrad.

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[1]Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 9-13.

[2]Ibid., 10-14.

[3]Ibid., 15.

[4]Timothy L. Thomas, "The 31 December 1948 February 1994 Battle for Grozny" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2001) 3.

[5]Ibid., 4-6.

[6]Ibid., 24.

[7]Ibid., 5

[8]Ibid., 7.

[9]Oliker, *Russian Chechen Wars 1994-2000*, 9.

[10]Ibid., 10.

[11]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 67.

[12]Thomas, Timothy L. 2000, ed. Rusell W. Glenn, *The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat*, (In the City's Many Faces: Proceedings of the RAND Arroyo-MCWL-J8 UWG Urban Operations Conference held in Bolling Air Force Base, Washington D.C April 13-14 1999, Santa Monica, California: RAND), 606.

[13]Thomas, "The 31 December 1994-8 February 1995 Battle for Grozny," 8.

[14]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 72.

[15]Ibid., 74.

[16]Ibid., 86, 90, and 93.

[17]Thomas, *The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat*, 601.

[19]Thomas, "The 31 December 1994-8 February 1995 Battle for Grozny" 17.

[20]Ibid., 22.

[21]Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 107-108.

[22]Olga, Oliker, *Russian Chechen Wars 1994-2000* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2001), 2.

[24]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 47-49.

[25]Oliker, *Russian Chechen Wars 1994-2000*, 6.

[26]Thomas, *The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat*, 602.

[27]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 100.

[28]Timothy L. Thomas, "The 31 December 1994-8 February 1995 Battle for Grozny), 11.

[29]Knezys and Sedlickas, 105.

[30]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 68.

[31]Oliker, *Russian Chechen Wars 1994-2000*, 16.

[32]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 104.

[33]Thomas, *The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat*, 607.

[34]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 110-112.

[35]Oliker, *Russian Chechen Wars 1994-2000*, 28.

[36]Thomas, "The 31 December 1994-8 February 1995 Battle for Grozny" 13.

[37]Ibid,. 13.

[38]Ibid,. 17.

[39]Ibid., 23.

[40]Ibid., 27-29.

[41]Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 133.

[42]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 109.

[43]Oliker, *Russian Chechen Wars 1994-2000, 25-27.*

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Based on this research of the Battle of Stalingrad and the conflict in Chechnya it is readily apparent that the Russian approach to urban operations is characterized by a consistent manifestation of three things; massive use of force, massive collateral damage, and an acceptance of massive casualties. The appearances of these characteristics suggest that they are part of the Russian military culture in urban environments and exist regardless of the type of operation being conducted, ideology of the day, or the time in which they occurred. Our examination of the battles warrants further analysis.

Up until the early 1990s western Cold War biases may have led one to believe that the Russian actions in Stalingrad were reflective of Russian actions anywhere. That is, nothing succeeds like excess. One might further think that with the fall of communism that this philosophy of excess may have subsided. As evidenced by the Russian actions in Chechnya this idea was wholly false. Under two very different Russian political systems, the Russian military persisted in the use of excessive force, which led to massive collateral damage and casualties. As such, it is clear that the Russian approach to urban operations is independent of the political ideology of the time.

Similarly, the culture exists regardless of the type of operations. Stalingrad was a defensive struggle against a superior enemy force and Chechnya was an offensive action against a lightly armed rebellion. One could expect and understand the desperate defender's total commitment in Stalingrad, but the same cannot be said for an offensive

action where the attacker is clearly an overwhelming power. In the case of Chechnya, the Russian's could have exercised a modicum of restraint, but they apparently did not.

This Russian approach to urban operations is consistent with other military actions in Russia. In 2002 a group of approximately forty Chechens stormed a Russian opera house taking nearly 700 hostages. As negotiations broke down Russian special purpose forces and local police pumped gas onto the vent system to put the Chechens in a coma like state, they then followed with special purpose soldiers to seize the hostage takers. Predictably, all forty Chechen rebels died from either the effects of the gas or by gunshot. Of the nearly 700 hostages, 130 died as a result of the Russian rescue attempt.

The Russian approach to urban operations is independent of the type of operation, ideology, and is consistent through time. The commonalities in the culture do however have universal traits. It is a function of the Russian command and staff, planning, training, and historical conditioning.

The Russian command system or leadership is directive and top down in nature. If the commander makes a decision, the staff is to work to that end, regardless of the merit of the plan. Russian staffs appear to function as doers more than participants. The commander drives the plan and once underway, the staff as a whole is seemingly committed to its completion. Accordingly, the commander's plan, lacking meaningful input from the staff, is overly simplistic.

A rush to act characterizes the planning process. Striving to fulfill the commander's guidance, the staff planning was hurried and emphasized immediate action. The haste simply did not allow for the precision planning required for urban operations. The strategic leap to a static defense in the Battle of Stalingrad was so sudden, adequate

military forces were not available; hence the civilian population was enlisted. Likewise, planning for the military operation in Grozny was allocated just weeks, when months when would have been appropriate. Because the plans lacked detail the staffs seem to have a difficult time in proportioning forces. Even with the civilians marshaled to the cause, the Russians barely escaped Stalingrad with a victory. It seemed to be assumed that because Stalin ordered it than it would be done. In Chechnya, the proportion of firepower and troops took an inverse relationship to the enemy. As the staff hurried to fulfill Yeltsin's orders they likely overestimated the amount of force required. As they lacked analysis, these forces were probably used simply because they were planned for.

As a result of over reliance on the commander, Russian staffs did not appear to develop alternate ideas or plans in depth. The staffs acted as conduits, simply applying resources as directed by the command. In the examination of Stalingrad and Chechnya, the Russian staffs showed no evidence of branch or sequel planning. In Stalingrad Chuikov apparently had one plan, defend Stalingrad. His staff had little influence on how the city was to be defended. They simply strove to get the materials the commander desired. One could almost make the statement that under Stalin any branch plan not consistent with dying in place would have been treasonous. Likewise, when the Russian assault on the capital city Grozny was stymied by local villagers, the 76th Paratroop Division and 21st Paratroop Brigade having no contingency plan turned back. As a result the initial Russian attack on the city was an uncoordinated failure.

Another aspect of these operations in urban environments is the lack of training. In both battles recruits were piecemealed into the fight. Units in contact bore the brunt of training new soldiers and as manpower was always short, the training method was on the

job. Similarly in Grozny, units who were conducting snow removal, and not expecting combat, found themselves committed to battle with only weeks to prepare. The new units, lacking training, engaged haphazardly. The result was an estimated 60 percent casualty rate from fratricide.

Similarly the Russian air force suffered a training deficit. Already hamstrung by lack of training hours they were further hindered by the lack of training and targeting in the rain and fog covered Chechen winter. Naturally the pilots unable to either see or identify the intended targets dropped their bombs indiscriminately or not at all.

Further compounding the pilot's inability to identify intended targets was the targeting effort itself. Intelligence, relying on templated positions did little to verify enemy positions. Reconnaissance was limited to what a unit could see. Yet ordnance was recklessly dropped on these perceived enemy strongpoints, strongpoints we now know never existed, resulting in predictably high civilian casualty rate.

The research suggests that perceived perceptions by the outside world also played a role in the Russian rush to action. Stalin, who initially supported an elastic defense, radically shifted tactics only when he learned that the city bearing his name was a German target. Stalin, perhaps overly sensitive to the implications of German forces occupying the city, believed this would signal a collapse of Russia, much like capturing a countries capital. Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev also evidenced this sensitivity to outside perception. Stinging from defeat at the hand of the Chechen rebels after phase one of his plan, hastily ordered a massive assault on the city, presumably to restore the Russian military esteem. In both instances the concern of leaders about outside perception was, at least in part, the catalyst for tactical actions.

Finally, a contributing factor to the Russian approach to urban operations is found in Russian history. Russians have been conditioned to the culture of mass. The tsars believed that the Russian people, predominantly uneducated, contributed little to civilization and were not considered coequals. For nearly 900 years the Russian peasant class was conditioned to do as they were told and pressed into action for the tsar.

After the Bolshevik revolution, Stalin leveraged this conditioning but with an interesting twist. The people would now serve the motherland instead of a tsar. The Russian motherland belonged not to a ruler but to the massive population of Russia. The fate of the homeland was now tied directly to the fate of the people. The incentive to fight and die probably increased with this new sense of ownership.

The psychological thread underlying the modern Russian military culture and intertwined in the concepts of force, casualties and collateral damage probably began with V. I. Lenin who contended that the side that enjoys the support of the people would win the battle.[1] Though the statement itself implies mass, it also entails a way of thinking that has permeated the Russian military. Accordingly, *Military Psychology: A Soviet View* alarmingly warns that doubts and apprehension can lead to death and that the commander must prevent such faint heartedness.[2] The reference is made relative not only to the soldier's duty, but his ideas that may be out of the norm.

The probable intent of this groupthink is that people should act and behave in a manner that benefits the whole. The greater good, not the individual is paramount. This way of thinking and acting is as normal to Russians as individual liberties are to most Americans. With this in mind the basic task of the leader is to indoctrinate the soldier into the collective. Obedience to this groupthink overrides the soldier's and officer's need for

individualism and explains the sometime irrational behavior illustrated by the seemingly excessive use of force, collateral damage, and casualties. It is a powerful force and is self-sustaining as everyone cultivates, supports, and shapes everyone else ideas. As the whole is greater than the individual parts then it follows that civilian casualties and collateral damage are just the price to be paid for society. As the Russians see it, the greater and most immediate good is being served by the most expedient means to end the problem. Clearly the Russians have demonstrated a military culture steeped in the application of mass. While this approach to urban warfare may seem abnormal and overly simplistic to most western observers, it is seemingly considered a sound application of tactics to the Russian.

Undoubtedly, Russian leadership, planning, training and historical conditioning contribute to the Russian approach of urban operations and is characterized by massive use force, willing acceptance of casualties, and tremendous collateral damage. Implications of the study include the future direction of Russian military culture, its influence within the region, and the implications to the United States military.

In closing, the implications for the United States vary. First, it can be assumed that the Russian model does not work in urban environments. Accordingly, a new way of conducting operations must be explored. The applications of the principles of war are no doubt still valid but are complicated within the confines of a city. The urban environment must not be treated as merely a complex obstacle. Operations in urban environments require finesse to be successful over the long term. Application of mass while seeming to offer a quick end to operations will only serve to lengthen them, as evidenced by the ongoing Chechen conflict. Additionally, as the United States becomes more heavily

engaged in the region, and in the vicinity of Russia, we must be cognizant of the culture of mass. Joint exercises and operations will undoubtedly be approached from two very different perspectives. Naturally this can lead to unwanted fog, friction, and ultimately both military and political failure. Should we find ourselves conducting operations in urban environments with forces heavily influenced by Russian military culture then it is an indicator of the fight ahead.

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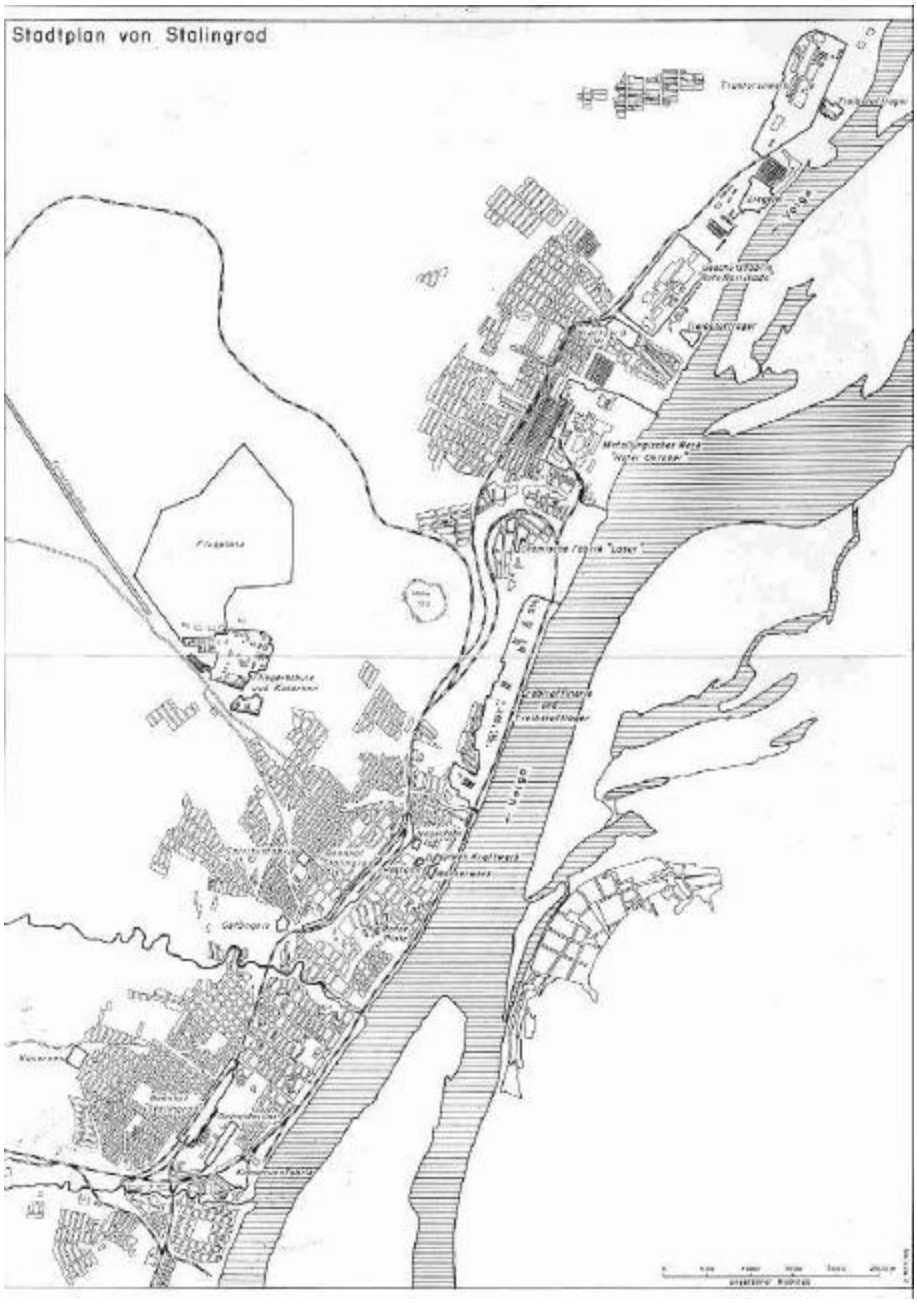
[1]Shelyag, V. V., A. D. Glotochkin,and K. K. Platonov, ed., *Military Psychology: A Soviet View* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 65.

[2]Ibid., 179.

APPENDIX A

SKETCH OF STALINGRAD



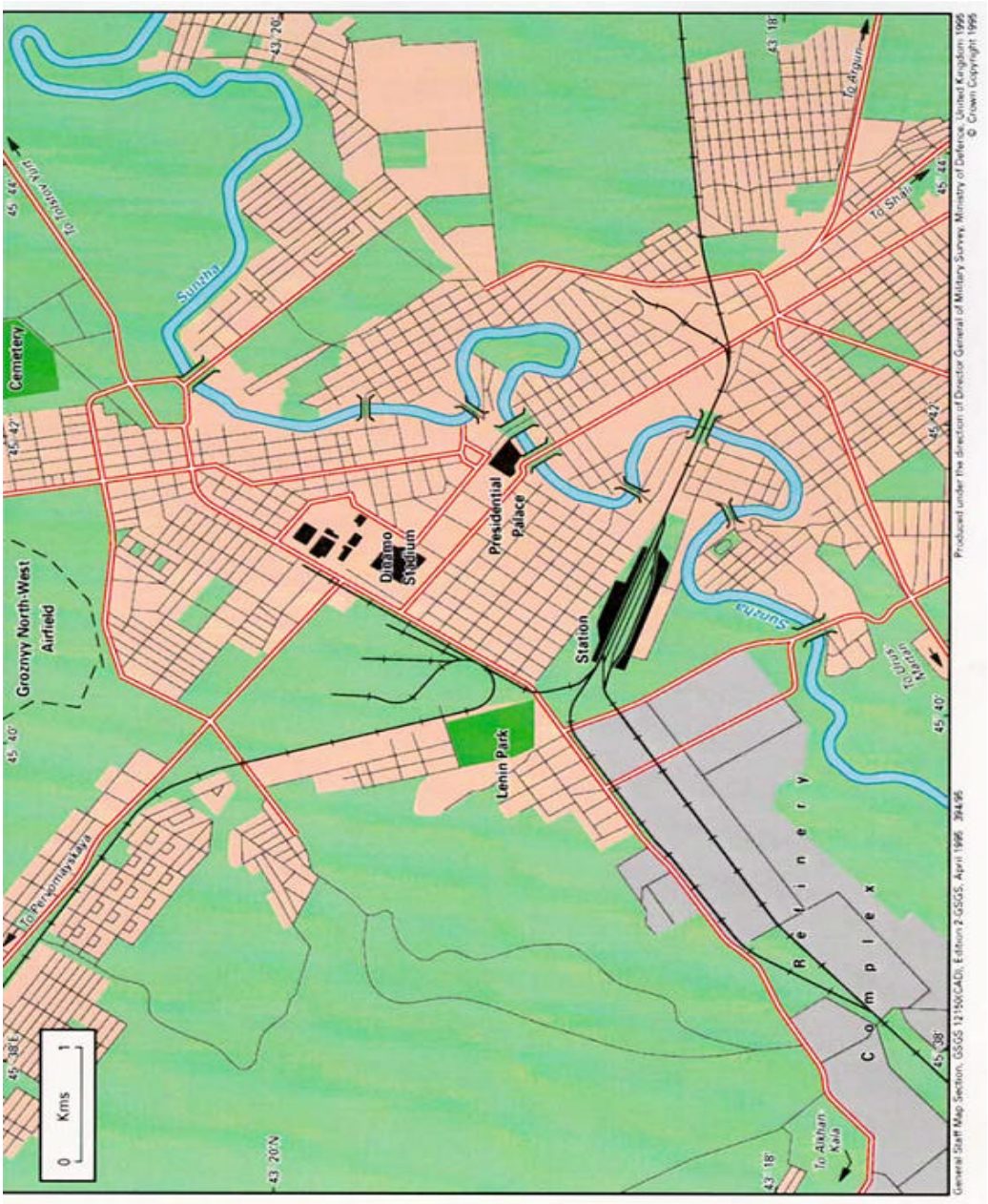
APPENDIX B

STALINGRAD FROM THE EASTERN SHORES OF THE VOLGA RIVER

Source: http://www.stalingrad-info.com/

APPENDIX C

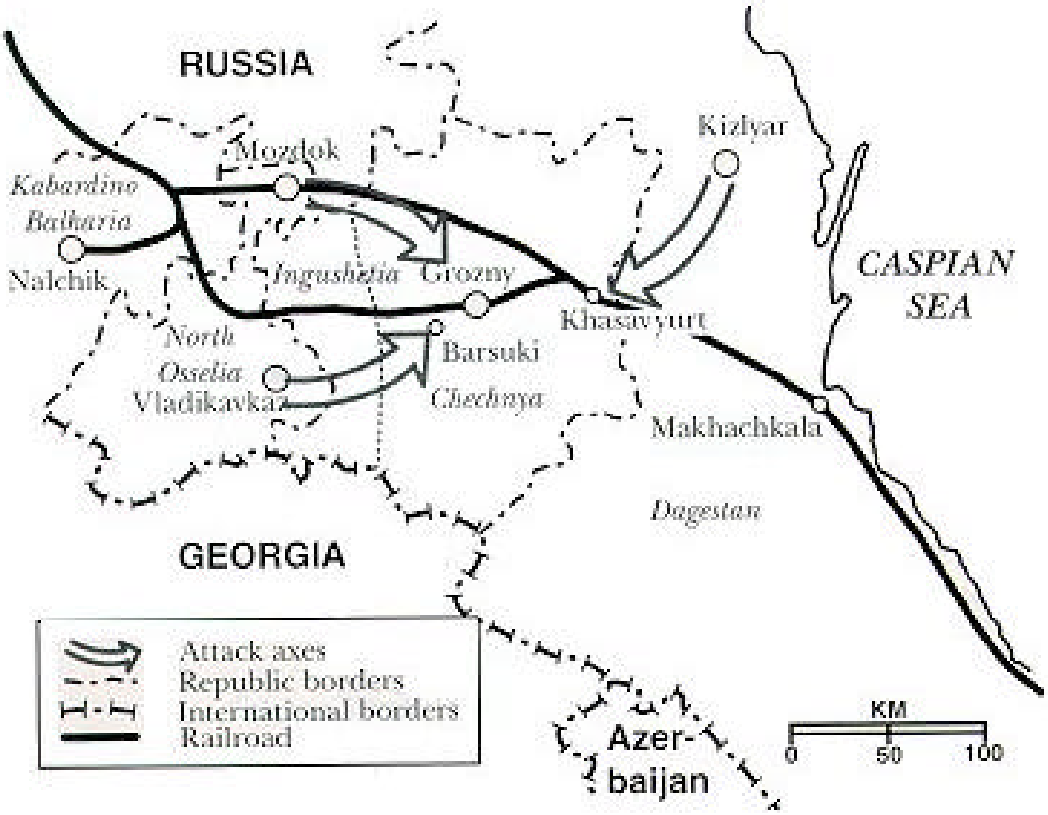
SKETCH OF GROZNY



Source: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/chechnya-map.htm

APPENDIX D

TACTICAL APPROACH TO GROZNY



Source: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/chechnya-map.htm

APPENDIX E

IMAGERY GROZNY BEFORE (ABOVE) AND AFTER (BELOW)
THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE

Source: http://community.webshots.com/photo/9035954/9087906iNvcNQCwl

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Appendix C. [Online], accessed 14 May 2003; available from http://www.globalsecurtiy.org/military/world/war/chechnya-maps.htm

Appendix D. [Online], accessed 14 May 2003; available from http://www.globalsecurtiy.org/military/world/war/chechnya-maps.htm

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