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## Review Essay

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### A NOVELIST AND HIS HERO

GEOFFREY JUKES

In 1994 a short documentary-historical novella, entitled "A General and His Army," was published in two successive issues of the Russian literary magazine, *Znamia*.<sup>1</sup> Its author, Georgii Nikolaevich Vladimov, had worked for "Novyi Mir" and "Literaturnaia Gazeta" from the 1950s onwards, first as a literary critic and later as a prose writer, but for his human rights activities was obliged in 1983 to emigrate to West Germany, where he has lived ever since. He described the novella as the "journal variant," implying the existence of a longer version (which was in fact published in 1997, and will be discussed later). The novella won the 1995 Russian Booker Prize, and also aroused a considerable storm. Those who attacked it did so almost wholly on non-literary grounds, while those who praised it concentrated on its perceived literary qualities, but, like its attackers, also represented a particular ideological approach to it, rather than one based solely or primarily on literary criteria.

#### VLADIMOV'S SCENARIO

The action centres on the Red Army's preparations to recapture Kiev in autumn of 1943. As in "War and Peace" or, given the author's long residence in Germany, Hans-Helmut Kirst's novel "Aufstand der Soldaten," about the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Hitler in July 1944, the characters and places are a mixture of the real and fictional. The principal character, a fictitious Lieutenant-General Fotii Ivanovich Kobrisov, commands the 38th Army, which has seized a bridgehead across the Dnepr River north of the Ukrainian capital, named Predslavl', but obviously Kiev. Two other armies, 27th and 40th, have also established a bridgehead, south of the city, and the first effort to recapture it is made from there. However, the Germans are expecting it, and repel it, inflicting enormous casualties.

Stalin's Deputy Supreme Commander, Marshal Zhukov, then holds a conference at Kobrisov's headquarters. It is attended by General Vatutin, the "Front" (Army Group) commander, his "Member of Military Council" (chief political overseer) Nikita Khrushchev, under their real names, and the commanders of the five Armies involved (27th, 38th, 40th, 60th and 1st Tank) under readily identifiable variants of their real names. It is decided to transfer 1st Tank Army and a number of other units to the northern bridgehead for a new attack, to be spearheaded by 38th Army.

But complications arise. Kobrisov is pressured to seize beforehand the small town of Miriatin (in real life Liutezh), on the north flank of his bridgehead. He demurs, arguing that it presents no danger, can safely be by-passed, and that to capture it would cost

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1 *Znamia* 4 and 5 (1994).

ten thousand casualties, as many as the town's peacetime male military-age population, thereby "gaining Russia at the price of Russia." Another reason, which he does not disclose, is that he knows the defenders include a regiment of anti-Soviet Russians, and abhors the idea of Russian fighting Russian. His reluctance to incur unnecessary casualties is fiercely criticized by General Tereshchenko, commanding 40th Army, and Zhukov shows indifference to Kobrisov's soldiers' lives by telling him he can simply request replacements for them. Khrushchev is presented in a buffoonish Father-Christmas role, handing out presents of brandy, chocolate and cigarettes to the generals, producing for each an embroidered Ukrainian shirt, which he cajoles them to wear, and insisting that Ukraine's capital must be retaken by Ukrainians. He attempts to make Kobrisov admit to being at least "spiritually" Ukrainian, but Kobrisov pointedly responds that he is a Don Cossack, and that the Khrushchevs he knew in his youth were not Ukrainian either, but belonged to Ukraine's Russian minority.

Kobrisov refuses Vatutin's order to prepare plans for capturing Miriatin, and instead resigns his command, having already heard a rumor that he will be dismissed so that Predslavl' can be taken by a Ukrainian general. Tereshchenko is given command of 38th Army, and Kobrisov is ordered to Moscow, to report to Stavka (General Headquarters) and take leave pending reassignment. But he never gets there. Stopping on the outskirts of Moscow for an alfresco meal, he hears over one of the loudspeakers installed in public places that the offensive has succeeded, the troops that distinguished themselves include his Army, he has been promoted to Colonel-General and named a Hero of the Soviet Union. He assumes from this that he has been reinstated, so celebrates with an impromptu song and dance, and orders his driver to take him back to "his" Army.

There is also a lengthy flashback to the Battle of Moscow in 1941, in which Kobrisov, accompanied only by an orderly, attempts a six-kilometer journey on foot through terrain known to be unprotected, to drink with a former colleague now commanding one of his regiments. They encounter a German patrol, he is seriously wounded and his orderly has great difficulty persuading Soviet troops, mostly fleeing in panic and shooting those who try to stop them, to take him to hospital.

Another subplot involves a *SMERSH*<sup>2</sup> officer, who enrolls the General's orderly, driver, and adjutant as informants on him, and there are vignettes of two historically controversial personalities. One of them is the best-known German tank general, Heinz Guderian, the other Soviet General Andrei Vlasov, who was captured by the Germans in 1942, agreed to head an anti-Soviet "Russian Liberation Army" formed from prisoners of war, and was hanged for treason in Moscow in 1946.

### THE REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

In real life, bridgeheads across the Dnepr north and south of Kiev were established by the 38th, 27th and 40th Armies in September 1943, and the first attempt to recapture the city was indeed made from the southern bridgehead, though the mobile force involved was 3rd Guards, not 1st, Tank Army. The Germans expected it, and after

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2 "Smert' Shpionam (Death to Spies)," military counterespionage organisation.

four days' fighting, in which 27th and 40th Armies suffered very heavy casualties, the attempt was abandoned, Zhukov then proposed making the next attempt from 38th Army's bridgehead, and Stalin agreed.<sup>3</sup>

The new plan necessitated redeploying 3rd Guards Tank Army and several other major units to the northern bridgehead, over distances of up to 200 kilometers. Movement began on 25 October, mostly by night, to preserve secrecy, and bad weather helped by grounding German reconnaissance aircraft. The offensive, supported by diversionary attacks further north by 60th Army, and from the southern bridgehead by 27th and 40th Armies, began on 3 November 1943. On the next day 38th Army broke through, and captured Kiev on 6 November. Vladimov therefore follows the real sequence of events closely, but changes some names of places and persons, and of one of the five Soviet armies involved, and introduces a non-existent Russian force on the German side.

The real-life commanders of 27th, 40th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies, Generals Trofimenko, Moskalenko and Rybalko, all bore Ukrainian surnames. This ethnic affiliation is preserved by Vladimov, though the names are changed to Omel'chenko, Tereshchenko and Rybko respectively. Generals Zhmachenko, who succeeded Moskalenko in command of 40th Army, and Kravchenko, commanding 5th Guards Tank Corps, also had Ukrainian surnames. This could not be coincidence; appointments at levels this high required Stalin's approval, and less than 10% of Soviet generals were of Ukrainian origin. A political decision must have been taken at the highest level, ie by Stalin, to have Ukrainian generals recapture Ukraine's capital, and it must have been taken well in advance, because most of them had already held their commands for a considerable time. Vladimov has General Charnavskii, commanding 60th Army, 38th's neighbour to the north, though not Ukrainian, (his real-life counterpart, Cherniakhovskii, was a Jew) also claiming local associations, including having first met his future wife while on a course in the city.

#### LINKAGE TO REAL LIFE. THE KOBRISOV-CHIBISOV NEXUS

However, like the fictional Kobrisov, the real-life commander of 38th Army, Colonel-General Nikandr Evlampievich Chibisov, was not a Ukrainian but a Don Cossack, and his origin helps to account for the prominence of the *SMERSh* Major Svetlookov in the narrative. Most Don Cossacks fought against the Bolsheviks in the Civil War, many emigrated when it was lost, those who stayed later stubbornly, often violently, resisted collectivization of agriculture, and Don Cossacks were prominent in the Cossack Legion which the Germans formed from prisoners of war.<sup>4</sup>

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3 G.K. Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov* (London, 1971), pp.484-485.

4 As early as December 1941 most of a Don Cossack cavalry regiment deserted with its commander, Colonel Kononov, to the German side. It became Donkosakenregiment 120 of the Wehrmacht, nine months before the Germans began formal recruiting of Cossacks. It was about 3,000 strong, and based at Mogilev. J. Hoffmann, *Die Geschichte der Wlassow-Armee* (Freiburg, 1984), p.327; G. Reitlinger, *The House Built on Sand: the Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1941-45* (London, 1960), pp.309-310.

There were two more reasons for Chibisov in real life to attract the attention Vladimir has *SMERSh* give to Kobrisov in the novella. First, he was an ex-Tsarist officer (a First World War Staff-Captain); and second, although he joined the Red Army at its foundation in 1918, he was not admitted to Communist Party membership until 1939.<sup>5</sup> This was almost certainly due to his background. His celebrated contemporary, Alexander Vasilevskii (Chief of General Staff from mid-1942, by 1943 a Marshal, and Zhukov's closest colleague) joined the Red Army in May 1919, and applied for Party membership in 1928. However, his suspect social origins, as son of a village priest, grandson of a church cantor, and, like Chibisov, an ex-Tsarist Staff-Captain, delayed acceptance of his application until 1938.<sup>6</sup>

Chibisov commanded 38th Army from August 1942, and seized the bridgehead north of Kiev in September 1943, thereby exhibiting both loyalty and competence, but nevertheless was replaced before the offensive by the commander of 40th Army, Moskalenko. 40th Army in turn was taken over by Zhmachenko, so that generals with Ukrainian surnames headed all four Armies assigned to take Kiev.

There are, however, some differences between Kobrisov and his real-life prototype. Neither Chibisov nor 38th Army took part in the Battle of Moscow, and the happy ending (in the "journal variant," but not the full-length novel) in which Kobrisov is promoted and returns to his Army did not come Chibisov's way. He was transferred to Second Baltic Front, given command there of 3rd Shock (Udarnaia) Army<sup>7</sup> in November 1943, and in April 1944 moved to command the same Front's 1st Shock Army. But he held that command for only a few weeks, because on 2 June 1944 he was appointed Commandant of the Frunze Military Academy, and remained there until January 1948.<sup>8</sup> His wartime career in fact manifested a slight downward trend throughout. In 1941 he was commanding a frontier Military District (Odessa), in July 1942 briefly Deputy Commander of an Army Group (Briansk Front), then from August 1942 to May 1944 commanded Armies.<sup>9</sup> Even the very responsible Commandantship of the Frunze, which trained middle-ranking officers selected for further promotion, and also ran shorter courses for Generals, was to some extent a professional downgrading. It removed him from a fighting command to a training post just three weeks before the Red Army

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5 *Sovetskaia Voennaia Entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1983), p.810.

6 A.M. Vasilevskii, *Delo vsei Shiny*, 6th Edition, Vol.1 (Moscow, 1989), pp.39,77.

7 In his memoirs the future Marshal Bagramian, mentioned that on 17 November 1943 Stalin appointed him to command the First Baltic Front, and suggested Chibisov succeed him in command of 11th Guards Army, which would be part of the Front. Bagramian demurred, on the grounds that in 1941 Chibisov was already a Lieutenant-General, while he, Bagramian, was then only a Colonel, and that this might make their relations difficult. Stalin asked Bagramian whom he favoured, and Bagramian proposed Lieutenant-General K.N. Galitskii, then commanding 3rd Shock Army. Stalin agreed, and appointed Chibisov to take Galitskii's place at 3rd Shock. Probably sensing that Bagramian's reservations about Chibisov centred on their both having the same rank (Colonel-General), he there and then promoted Bagramian to Army General. I.Kh. Bagramian, *Tak shli my k Pobede* (Moscow, 1988), pp.427-428.

8 A.B. Sholokov, ed., *Voennaia Akademiia imeni M.V. Frunze* (Moscow, 1998), pp.277-278.

9 *Sovetskaia Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, p.810.

launched Operation "Bagration," the first of the series of offensives that culminated eleven months later in the capture of Berlin. After the Frunze his gentle downward slide continued, first to Deputy Chairman of DOSAAF (Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force and Navy, responsible for sponsoring militarily-applicable sports and for pre-conscription training of youths) then, until retirement in 1954, "Assistant" to a Military District commander. He received no promotion after 1943, and died in 1959. Moskalenko, by contrast, commanded 38th Army for the rest of the war, and after it rose to Marshal, Deputy Defense Minister, and Commander-in-Chief of the most important Soviet armed service, the Strategic Missile Forces. His active career ended in 1962, but he lived until 1985.<sup>10</sup> Chibisov's downward and Moskalenko's rising curves intersected at 38th Army. Moskalenko commanded it from its formation in March 1942 until August 1942, and for him it was promotion (he was previously Deputy Commander of 6th Army). Chibisov succeeded him in that month, but for him it was a slight demotion, from having been Deputy Commander of a Front.

Chibisov would be unusually saintly if he did not carry a sense of grievance to the grave. Establishing the bridgehead was his greatest professional feat. It was close to Kiev, a city of enormous symbolic importance, not merely as Ukraine's capital and the largest Soviet city still in German hands, but as the mother city of Russian culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity (hence Vladimov's symbolic renaming of it as Predslavl'), several centuries before Moscow was founded. His army was justifiably allocated the spearhead role in its recapture. But then, at the very summit of his achievement, he was replaced by a General ten years his junior, who had just overseen a disaster to his own Army, and whose most visible assets were a Ukrainian surname and indifference to casualties. And while Chibisov's career stagnated, Moskalenko went on to scale the heights. Chibisov, retired into obscurity, could hardly air publicly a grievance against someone as powerful as Moskalenko, but he may have confided it privately. So one way to view Vladimov's work is as an apologia for Chibisov, an unjustifiably mistrusted general who, implicitly like Guderian and Vlasov, explicitly unlike Zhukov or Moskalenko/Tereshchenko, valued his men's lives, and was deprived of his just deserts largely for that reason. In replying to criticisms (discussed below), Vladimov admitted the Kobrisov-Chibisov connection, did not claim to have known Chibisov, but mentioned having read some of his writings and talked to retired senior officers who had known him.

### THE SILENCE OF THE MEMOIRISTS

Moskalenko's and Zhukov's own memoirs shed little light on the incident. Moskalenko mentioned Chibisov only four times, three times in passing and once in order to quote Zhukov in support of his claim that he, not Chibisov, captured a particular Ukrainian town in the summer of 1943.<sup>11</sup> He wrote that his move to 38th Army was ordered

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10 *Sovetskaia Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, p.462; *Kto byl Kto v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine 1941-45* (Moscow, 1995), p.176.

11 K.S. Moskalenko, *Na Iugo-Zapadnom Napravlenii 1943-45*, 2nd edition, Book 2 (Moscow, 1973), pp.5, 91, 103, 119.

“as a matter of urgency,” but did not say why, and did not mention Chibisov as present when he arrived there.<sup>12</sup> This could, of course, mean that Chibisov had been wounded, injured or taken ill. But if so, there would be no reason for Moskalenko not to say so. Besides, the Stavka directive, which he reproduces in full, said nothing about changing commanders. The order for Moskalenko’s move was issued on 27 October, and three weeks later Chibisov was appointed to command another Army,<sup>13</sup> so is unlikely to have been ill or wounded. Moskalenko praised 38th Army’s Chief of Staff, but said nothing about its previous Commander. This is unusual, especially as 38th Army’s offensive must have been conducted mainly to Chibisov’s plans; there was no time to make radical changes to them, because the offensive began only six days after Moskalenko’s arrival.

However, if Chibisov had resigned for the reason Vladimov attributes to Kobrisov, he would never have been given command of another Army, especially a Shock Army. There were only five of these, all formed between November 1941 and December 1942. Their function was specifically to deal the main thrust in offensives,<sup>14</sup> so they were likely to incur above-average casualties, and would hardly be entrusted to a general who had demonstratively declined to incur them. It is more likely that Zhukov’s and Vatutin’s personal preferences, and Moskalenko’s politically more appropriate surname, ensured Chibisov’s removal.

Zhukov mentions Chibisov only once, and only in passing, in his memoirs,<sup>15</sup> whereas he names Moskalenko ten times, and lists him among a select group of twenty Generals especially esteemed by Stalin.<sup>16</sup> Occasional pious platitudes notwithstanding, Stalin did not rate economy in casualties among a general’s highest virtues. Of the twenty listed, only Rokossovskii enjoyed a reputation for it, and even he made wider use than was normal in the German or Anglo-American armies of “reconnaissance in force,” testing the strength of enemy defences by sending a relatively large unit (usually a Penal Battalion) against them.<sup>17</sup>

## THE POLEMIC

Although Vladimov was educated in a Suvorov School, he decided against the military career to which such schooling normally leads, and was too young to serve in the Second World War. Communication with retired senior officers may explain the authenticity that several commentators claim to detect in his description of a front-line Soviet general’s life. However, his account also contains some errors, and most of the critics who praise its realism are neither military historians, nor old enough to have seen

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12 Moskalenko, *Na Iugo-Zapadnom Napravlenii 1943-45*, pp.152-153.

13 For the circumstances of his appointment see footnote 7 above.

14 *Sovetskaia Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, p.762.

15 Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, p.483.

16 Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, pp.377, 378, 381, 386,387, 485, 486, 538.

17 He also refused to allow the Kursk provincial administration to evacuate the civilian population from the Kursk Salient before the battle, on the grounds that to see them leaving would have adverse effects on his troops’ morale. This, of course, wilfully exposed the civilians to the hazards of battle. K. Rokossovskii, *A Soldier’s Duty* (Moscow, 1970), p.191.

wartime service. Broadly speaking, and with a few exceptions, praise has come from literary critics belonging to the “sixties” generation or younger, while older commentators with war experience, and/or military historians, have mostly ignored it, or attacked it on entirely non-literary grounds.

### THE CONSERVATIVE ATTACK

The most comprehensive and virulent attack came from V.V. Bogomolov, a conservative author of works on the Second World War. In 1995 he published a book excoriating several “revisionist” works about that war, including Vladimov’s novella, and in May 1995 his attack on Vladimov was republished in the “Knizhnoe Obozrenie [Book Review].”<sup>18</sup> Bogomolov pointed out a number of errors, ranging from substantial to insignificant, in Vladimov’s treatment of Red Army wartime practices. He noted, for example, that a mere Major, even one employed by *SMERSh*, could not attend meetings of an Army’s Military Council as of right, but only at its invitation, and certainly could not browbeat its members, all of whom were Generals or senior Party officials, and often were both. A general defending Moscow at the lowest point in Soviet fortunes in 1941 would be unlikely to leave his headquarters, thereby losing all contact with his troops, to go six kilometers on foot, accompanied only by an orderly, through snow-covered and enemy-infiltrated terrain, simply to drink with an old comrade. Nor would a general (especially one who, like Kobrisov, had experienced the NKVD’s tender mercies in the pre-war purge) ordered to *Stavka*, which meant to Stalin, stop just short of his destination and go back unordered to his Army, simply on hearing himself named in a broadcast. Routine discipline, not to say prudence, would dictate at least telephoning the General Staff, to confirm his promotion and find out whether his reassignment had been cancelled, or was simply too recent to have reached the compilers of bulletins.

Bogomolov also pointed out an oddity in the description of Kobrisov’s meeting with Zhukov in September 1943. Zhukov asks where they had previously met. Kobrisov replies that it was at Khalkhin Gol (Zhukov’s first victory, over the Japanese in Mongolia in 1939), and that he was among a number of officers Zhukov had ordered to be shot. Zhukov merely remarks that Kobrisov seems to have learned his lesson. This is indeed odd. Kobrisov headed an Army in the Battle of Moscow. Vladimov does indeed depict it as one of two which Stalin kept for an “inner-ring” of defense, and did not put under Zhukov’s direct command, but he also presents it as adjacent to 20th Army. That army, commanded by Vlasov, was under Zhukov’s control, and played an important part in both the defensive battle and the counteroffensive. Vladimov’s account has the two Armies so close that Vlasov commandeers an entire Brigade that has been sent to reinforce Kobrisov’s army, but has lost its way. It is unlikely that less than two years later Zhukov would have forgotten the existence of 38th Army and its commander, and equally unlikely that Kobrisov would remind him of their unfortunate first, but not their more auspicious second, association.

However, as one of the favorable critics pointed out, “War and Peace” was also criticized for errors in portraying military life, even though Tolstoy had seen active

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18 No.19, May 1995, pp.14-19.

service as an artillery officer in the Crimean War. Bogomolov not surprisingly used the errors to attack Vladimov's credibility, but seemed less perturbed by them than by his relatively favorable portrayals of Guderian and Vlasov. Guderian is depicted as on first-name terms with his troops, then, while using Tolstoy's home at Iasnaia Poliana as his headquarters, sitting at the very desk on which Tolstoy wrote "War and Peace," first writing an affectionate letter to his wife, then signing the order for retreat. Bogomolov slated Vladimov for not mentioning that Guderian's retreat order included instructions to burn all occupied villages before withdrawing, and that the Germans vandalized and partly destroyed Iasnaia Polyana before leaving. He also excoriated him for ignoring Guderian's alleged war crimes, including atrocities committed during suppression of the Warsaw Rising in August 1944, and his devotion to Hitler, which included expelling the July 1944 plotters from the Army, to a show trial and death sentence in a civil court.

### VLASOV. TRAITOR OR MARTYR?

Vladimov's treatment of Vlasov roused Bogomolov to even greater fury, in which he replicated the standard Soviet-era depiction of Vlasov as incompetent and cowardly, deserting his troops and willingly putting himself at the enemy's service. In fact the situation was more complex than Soviet-period historiography was ever allowed to admit. In 1940 the 99th Division, which Vlasov then commanded, was repeatedly held up as an example to the rest of the Red Army, and Vlasov was awarded the Order of Lenin.<sup>19</sup> In the first months of the war he commanded 37th Army, and was considerably more successful than most other commanders in extricating his troops from the Kiev encirclement, the Red Army's biggest single disaster. In the Battle of Moscow he commanded 20th Army both in the defense and in the counter-offensive, and was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.<sup>20</sup> He then received command of 2nd Shock Army, but the Germans encircled and destroyed it, and he was captured on 12 June 1942.

This was opportune for a faction in Germany that favored forming an anti-Stalinist army from its enormous pool of prisoners. That pool included a number of Generals, some of whom, unsurprisingly, indicated repugnance at the Stalinist regime, which had recently killed or imprisoned so many of their colleagues. A number of them were consulted to identify an officer, sufficiently anti-Stalinist to lead a proposed Russian Liberation Army, and sufficiently respected by his colleagues to attract others to join it. Three names came up persistently. Vlasov's was one, and after his capture he justified his colleagues' assessment of his anti-Stalinism. But Hitler's plans for Russia did not

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19 The 99th was one of the few Soviet divisions to perform well in the first weeks of the war. The preface to a book about its achievement (A. Vasil'ev, *Vozvrashchenie k Legende* (Moscow, 1967)), was contributed by Marshal Bagramian. By June 1941 Vlasov had moved on to higher command, but 99th Division's performance suggests it merited the "exemplary" status to which he had raised it.

20 Some other Army commanders in that battle received the (higher) Order of Lenin, and Bogomolov argued from this that Vlasov's contribution at Moscow was secondary. But as Vladimov pointed out, Vlasov already had the Order of Lenin.

include "liberation"; the Army materialized only in late 1944, formed only one complete Division, and never fought on Soviet soil.<sup>21</sup>

The other two repeatedly named were Rokossovskii and Malinovskii.<sup>22</sup> Both subsequently proved among the most outstanding Soviet commanders, and both had become Marshals before the war ended. What matters here is not whether either was indeed anti-Stalinist, but that their captive colleagues rated Vlasov as their professional equal. This is congruent with Vlasov's record before his capture, but completely negates the obligatory Soviet-period denigration of him. To have been anti-Stalinist is today more benignly regarded; many Russians would now fault Vlasov only for naivete in thinking that Hitler would have granted Russia genuine independence. To most, however, especially elderly conservatives, he remains simply a traitor.

Bogomolov seemed especially enraged that Vladimov depicted Guderian and Vlasov rather more favourably than Soviet generals. He presents Guderian as revered by his troops, compares Vlasov to a Byzantine military hero and martyr, but depicts Zhukov and Tereshchenko as rude, domineering and callous, Charnavskii and Vatutin as sharing Kobrisov's desire to minimize casualties, but lacking the moral courage to confront Zhukov on the issue. An additional thrust at Vatutin resides in Vladimov's use of the name "Miriatin" for the town (actually Liutezh) that he orders Kobrisov to capture. Ukrainian nationalist guerillas ambushed and mortally wounded Vatutin in February 1944, near a village named Miliatin.

Bogomolov's venomous onslaught may be merely a conservative reaction against the novella's modernist undertones; Moscow literati have so far been less exposed to modernism, let alone post-modernism, than Russians living in Germany. But it mainly reflects Soviet-era idealization of the Red Army's wartime performance, and reluctance to accept any depiction of it as less than superhuman.

### UNDERCURRENTS. (1) WAS THE PRICE OF VICTORY TOO HIGH?

Despite the title, the General's Army is little depicted. However, two scenes, one where repair of a battle-damaged tank includes scraping off the charred remains of a previous occupant, the other contrasting gruesome operations at the Medical Battalion with a soldier a few yards away placidly milking a cow, again hint at Soviet indifference to casualties. So, of course, do the acerbic exchanges at Zhukov's conference. All reflect a major controversy between traditionalist and revisionist Russian historians, namely whether the human cost of the Soviet victory need have been so high.

In the Soviet period, at least until the 1980s, the war was presented with the same semantic manipulations which depicted Stalin's dictatorship and the oligarchy that followed it as the highest form of democracy, and the only empire enlarged by the war as the leading opponent of empires. The Red Army's casualties were played down; hardly

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21 J. Hoffmann, *Die Geschichte der Wlassow-Armee*, Chapters 6, 8, 9.

22 Reitlinger, *The House Built on Sand*, p.317. Stalin must have got to know of these discussions soon after the war. He kept Malinovskii in Far East Military District until 1951, and Rokossovskii in Poland, thereby keeping both far from Moscow and even further from each other.

any figures were given, and next to nothing was said about the millions who surrendered, or the various anti-Soviet formations the Germans succeeded in recruiting among them. The Red Army was depicted as one of "mass heroism," initially suffering grievously from the treacherous German surprise attack and Stalin's "mistakes," but prevailing gloriously thereafter. For fourteen years after the war, figures of Soviet wartime dead remained completely secret, apart from an unrealistically low seven million mentioned by Stalin in 1946.<sup>23</sup> Their true magnitude could scarcely even be guessed at until the first post-war census, held in 1959, showed twenty million fewer men than women then alive. By itself this figure did not determine the war deaths. They were in fact much higher; the official figure is now 27.7 million, and many consider even that an underestimate.<sup>24</sup> However, Soviet leaders, propagandists and analysts used the figure of "twenty million war dead" for almost thirty years, and the reasons for such a high figure were never seriously discussed. War memoirs and official histories were censored to delete or obfuscate references to Soviet casualties, and knowledge that this would be done undoubtedly prompted writers about the war to avoid publication problems by self-censorship.

Only in the "glasnost" period did the human cost of victory begin to be seriously analysed. In a controversial, ground-breaking work "The Price of Victory," Boris Sokolov produced data from a source published in 1967, but because of its specialized nature overlooked by censors and historians alike. This was a book "War and Military Medicine" by E.I. Smirnov, who headed the Red Army's medical services throughout the war. It contained a graph of the monthly totals of military wounded, injured and sick, not in absolute figures, but as percentages of the monthly average for the entire war. The graph showed clearly that most casualties were incurred not in the first but in the second half of the war; they were above the average in eighteen of the twenty-three months from July 1943 to May 1945. Smirnov did not mention dead, but on normal ratios of about one dead to every four wounded, most deaths must also have occurred in the second half of the war. To counter military arguments that for most of that period the Red Army was attacking, and attack necessarily incurs more casualties than defense, Sokolov compared Eastern and Western Front casualty ratios for the period from the Anglo-American-Canadian landings in France in June 1944 to the German surrender in May 1945. These showed the Soviet to German casualty ratio as 3:1, and Western to German as 1 to 1.7; the Westerners, who like the Soviets were attacking for most of the time, therefore incurred far fewer casualties than the German defenders. Juxtaposing the two ratios showed that to kill or wound a given number of Germans cost the Red Army roughly five times the casualties it cost its Western allies.

These ratios, and Soviet casualties three times those of heavily outnumbered German forces, fighting for almost two years from July 1943 under generally Soviet-dominated skies, indicate that Soviet generals tolerated casualties opponents and allies alike would consider excessive. And in the first half of the war, when the Germans were mostly on the offensive, losses among the Soviet defenders also greatly exceeded those of the German attackers, because of the large-scale surrenders that must be added to the

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23 *Pravda*, 14 March 1946.

24 G. Krivosheev, et al., *Grif Sekretnosti Sniat. Poteri Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR v voynakh, boevykh deistviyakh i voennykh konfliktakh* (Moscow, 1993), p.144.

battle casualties.<sup>25</sup> There is much German anecdotal evidence of Soviet profligacy in lives, and also the notorious conversation between Eisenhower and Zhukov in 1945, in which, when asked how the Soviets dealt with minefields, Zhukov replied that the troops were simply ordered to run over them. Furthermore, rivalry between generals, encouraged by Stalin, led to unnecessary assaults on fortresses that could have been encircled or by-passed. Another factor was pressure to take important towns and cities in time for Soviet “anniversaries,” for example at Kiev urgency was imparted by militarily irrelevant exhortations to recapture it by 7 November, the anniversary of the 1917 Revolution (38th Army made it with one day to spare).

Rivalry between Marshals Zhukov and Konev, stimulated by Stalin with the additional, false, suggestion that the Anglo-Americans intended to get to Berlin first, and the proximity of a major Soviet holiday (1 May) prompted the storming of Berlin. In the 23-day battle that ensued, 81,000 Soviet and Polish soldiers died, and 280,000 were wounded. Most of these casualties were unnecessary. The city, already largely in ruins from Anglo-American bombing, could have been starved into surrender, probably within a few days, at most within a few weeks, with last-ditch resistance only from the relatively small proportion of fanatical Nazis among the defenders.

Nor was the Berlin battle an isolated case. In the several major assaults carried out between 12 January 1945 and Germany’s surrender on 8-9 May, 367,000 Soviet servicemen died,<sup>26</sup> almost as many as the total British (375,000) or American (405,000) armed forces’ dead of the entire war. Nor was this due to greater German forces facing the Soviets. In the last months of the war the Wehrmacht was about equally distributed between the Eastern and Western Fronts, and the Anglo-American presence was limited by their heavy commitments against Japan, with which the Soviet Union was not yet at war.

The Soviet public was staggered by glasnost-period “revelations” known in the West for almost forty years. The Red Army had draconian penalties for surrender, which it treated as treason, unless wounded and/or unconscious, and heavy penalties were inflicted on soldiers’ families. Yet over four and a half million Soviet soldiers surrendered, most of them in the first six months. As well as the 50,000 or so Russians who joined Vlasov’s “Russian Liberation Army” (ROA), many more thousands of Soviet prisoners of war joined German-led fighting units such as the Cossack, Turkestan and Azerbaijan Legions. Soviet battlefield surrenders not only exceeded those of all other belligerents combined, they were numerically unprecedented in the entire history of wars. Furthermore, voluntary collaboration with their captors, with several hundred thousand captured Soviet soldiers serving as mechanics, drivers, cooks and orderlies in German units, was on a scale unparalleled in any other belligerent country, or in Russia’s own past. Many Soviet prisoners of war liberated by the Anglo-Americans did

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25 German figures claimed 5.2 to 5.75 million taken prisoner, but these figures apparently include Soviet civilian officials and men of military age not called up because of the speed of the German advance. The most authoritative Russian figures are 4,559,000 captured or missing in the entire war, most of them in the first year. Krivosheev, et al., *Grif Sekretnosti Sniat*, pp.333-340.

26 Krivosheev, et al., *Grif Sekretnosti Sniat*, pp.212-221.

their utmost to avoid repatriation, and many who had collaborated preferred to kill their dependants and then themselves, as happened in Austria in 1945, during British 8th Army's handover of the Wehrmacht's Cossack Corps to the Red Army.<sup>27</sup>

These revelations came at a time when the Soviet Army, touted for four decades as "invincible and legendary," was already beset by revelations of corruption among senior officers and of ill-treatment of conscripts, and since 1978 had been conducting, without obviously winning, an increasingly unpopular war in Afghanistan. They prompted a number of authors into producing revisionist accounts of the Soviet-German war that inevitably questioned the previous highly selective and idealized accounts. Equally inevitably, some of them overcompensated. So revisionist publications came to include allegations, true of some generals in most armies, but never of all in any army, that all the leading Soviet generals had been mere butchers, totally bereft of talent, and able to win only by overwhelming numerical superiority and profligate expenditure of lives. This shotgun approach ignored both general historical experience that superior numbers do not guarantee victory, and the specific truth that in 1941 Red Army formations had frequently been annihilated by much smaller German forces. That being so, defeating the Germans in 1942-45, even if always (which it was not) due only to numerical superiority, exhibited at least ability to learn from experience.

Not surprisingly, the "Price of Victory" has been a subject of contention ever since the figures became available, and Vladimov clearly touched on a very sore nerve. Conservative reactions to revisionism were epitomised in Bogomolov's criticisms. He concluded by identifying Vladimov with an alleged "aspiration to denigrate our participation in the defeat of Hitler's Germany, and opinions that we were 'second-rate' [which] arose as early as the end of the 40s, in the heat of the Cold War. Publicists and individual historians in the West have deliberately practiced this for decades...if this goes further, it will seem in the near future that we took no part at all in the Second World War."

#### UNDERCURRENTS (2). SOVIET PARANOIA.

Here Bogomolov reflects more than thirty years of Soviet-period paranoia. Early Western accounts of the Second World War not unnaturally concentrated on Anglo-American actions, such as the bombing offensive against Germany, or the campaigns in Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Western Europe. Soviet accounts of the war were, until after Stalin's death, neither copious nor credible, whereas accounts from German generals were the former, if not always the latter. Most German generals were unemployed, with ample time to write memoirs. Many faced the prospect of a war crimes or denazification trial, and had clear incentives to emphasize the technical as opposed to the political aspects of their actions. They had a ready audience in the victorious Western powers, anxious to codify German experience of fighting the Soviets in case they themselves might soon have to do so.

However conscientiously German generals evaluated their experiences, they had a natural human tendency to ascribe the initial victories to their own professionalism and the subsequent defeats to factors beyond their control, such as inclement weather,

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<sup>27</sup> Described in N. Tolstoy, *The Minister and the Massacres* (London, 1986)

interference by Hitler, or overwhelming Soviet numerical superiority. These factors undoubtedly did have their roles, but excessive resort to them tended to overshadow facts that placed Soviet performance in a better light. For example, even at the peak of their success in 1941, the Germans were thwarted at Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov-on-Don. In 1941 they took much territory and enormous hauls of prisoners, but in 1942 the territorial gains were accompanied by far fewer prisoners, and ended in a catastrophic entrapment at Stalingrad. Manstein's failure to relieve Stalingrad owed far more to Malinovskii's resistance and Paulus' passivity than to Hitler's interference. The victory at Kursk, where the Red Army had at least a 50% numerical edge, owed its decisiveness mainly to a strategically bold decision to wear the Germans out by letting them attack first. And in handling Guderian's great innovation, Panzer Divisions combining tanks and motorized infantry, Soviet commanders such as Katukov, Romanenko, Rotmistrov and Rybalko equaled and ultimately outperformed their German counterparts. Nevertheless, German accounts of the war tended to stress the numbers, hardiness, courage, stoicism and self-sacrifice of Soviet soldiers, rather than the professionalism of Soviet generals.

Another reason for underrating the Red Army's professionalism was the lack of credible accounts from the Soviet side. Until Stalin's death in 1953 all Soviet victories were ascribed to his genius. Even the forced retreat to the Volga and Caucasus was depicted as luring the enemy on the better to destroy him, as Kutuzov had lured Napoleon in 1812. The offensives which drove the Germans back to their homeland were described as "Stalinist blows," as if envisaged and planned as a sequence in advance. Generals who knew better were constrained to silence by the knowledge that what happened to their colleagues in 1937-8 could easily happen to them, now that victory had made them dispensable. To make sure they got the message, some of them, including the Commanders-in-Chief of the Navy and Air Force, were tried and imprisoned or demoted on trumped-up charges, and some were executed. Stalin feared Zhukov's popularity; he did not venture to arrest him, but had some of his closest associates beaten till they confessed to a non-existent conspiracy for a military coup led by him, and relegated him to minor commands, first in Odessa and then in the Urals. The most outstanding of the other Soviet generals, Marshals Malinovskii, Rokossovskii and Konev, had proved their loyalty over and over during the war. But Stalin removed them too from the public eye. He sent Konev and Rokossovskii out of the country, to command Soviet forces in Austria-Hungary and Poland respectively, and Malinovskii to command the Far East Military District.

Not surprisingly, the Stalinist version of the war was so manifestly unbelievable that no reputable war historian outside the Soviet bloc took much notice of it. Only after Khrushchev initiated de-Stalinization in February 1956 did Soviet senior officers begin to publish their memoirs, and by then the "German version" was well-established in Western historiography. A "second wave" of Western accounts by historians with a knowledge of both Russian and German was able to take advantage of the post-Stalin memoir literature and professional journals such as the "Military-Historical Journal," published from the mid-1960s, to produce more balanced accounts. However, these were not written from a Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, and most contained facts, for example about the scale of Soviet surrenders, which the Soviet public would not be permitted to know until the era of glasnost. Few of these works were translated into Rus-

sian, and none were readily available to the public. But in a classic example of Soviet siege mentality, since few Soviet readers could even know they existed, let alone obtain them, a campaign was mounted in the military press to discredit “bourgeois falsifiers of history.”<sup>28</sup> Bogomolov’s suggestion that Vladimov was part of a concerted Western effort, sustained over “several decades” to denigrate the Soviet part in the war is, of course, nonsense, but it is symptomatic of older-generation historians’ continued preoccupation with Russia’s greatest triumph and at the same time greatest tragedy.

#### VLADIMOV’S COUNTERATTACK

Vladimov’s response to Bogomolov<sup>29</sup> was equally vitriolic. He (wrongly) alleged that Bogomolov had been a *SMERSh* officer in his youth, but noted (rightly) that Guderian had left Iasnaia Poliana long before it was vandalized, and that his orders to destroy villages before leaving exactly paralleled Stalin’s previous “scorched earth” orders. He riposted over Guderian’s sacrificing of his colleagues to Hitler’s show trials by pointing out that in 1937-8 Soviet senior officers, including the universally revered Marshal Shaposhnikov, had gone considerably further, by personally sentencing colleagues to death on charges they must have known were false. His defence of Guderian against Bogomolov’s charges of responsibility for war crimes committed during the Warsaw Rising in 1944, was factually correct but decidedly provocative. He noted that the unit responsible for the worst atrocities there was the Kaminski Brigade of Russian defectors, so disgusting even the SS that Kaminski was arrested and shot,<sup>30</sup> and his Brigade removed. As for Guderian, his role at Warsaw had been confined to persuading Hitler to treat the surrendered insurgents as prisoners of war, rather than shoot them as partisans. Nor was Vladimov content simply to point out that the Nuremberg tribunal did not charge Guderian with war crimes. He rubbed it in by noting that in 1941 it was Guderian’s troops that overran the Katyn area, where two years later the Germans uncovered the mass graves of several thousand Polish officers captured by the Soviets in 1939. The Soviet prosecutor at Nuremberg initially attempted to pin the killings on Guderian, and only under Gorbachev did the Soviet Union finally admit that they had been committed in 1940, on Stalin’s direct order.<sup>31</sup>

So Vladimov’s line of defense was to attack, by finding every atrocity attributed to the Germans equaled or exceeded by a Soviet action. Perhaps most calculated to infuriate his opponents was his suggestion that some incidental remarks in Guderian’s memoirs about command at the last going to “Nazi fanatics,” not experienced soldiers, and “time wasted” in teaching troops the Nazi salute, made him a German counterpart to Zhukov, whose distaste for the Red Army’s Political Officer apparatus was well-known.

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28 Eg. in *Voenno-Istoricheskii Zhurnal* 2/82, 12/82, 5/83, 9/83.

29 *Knizhnoe Obozrenie* 12 (19 March 1996), pp.11-16.

30 He escaped to Galicia, but was ambushed and killed by the Germans in October 1944.

31 The relevant Soviet documents are published in *KATYN: Dokumenty Ludobojstwa* (Warsaw, Institut Studiow Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1992).

**"ALTERNATIVE HISTORY"**

Vladimov's extended defence of Vlasov took him into an area of post-modernism, "alternative history." He speculated about what would have happened if Guderian and Vlasov had ever met, and what role an enlarged Russian Liberation Army could have played if the plan Guderian urged on Hitler, to make peace with the Anglo-Americans while continuing to fight the Soviets, had come to fruition. This ascends into fantasy; by then Germany could not adequately provide for its own rapidly diminishing forces, let alone arm a "Third Force" of Russians. If the plan were to do more than postpone defeat by a few weeks, the Anglo-Americans would have had not merely to stop fighting, but to change sides. Guderian's plan did not even involve overthrowing Hitler, and there was not the slightest chance that the British or American governments would immediately undertake a new war, with Nazi Germany as ally and the USSR as enemy. Post-war West Germany needed ten years of democratization and Cold War to gain membership of NATO, and even then much Western European public opinion opposed its admittance.

One hostile critic (Toporov) went so far as to say that Kobrisov is not a Soviet but a typical German general, and put this down to the author's long residence in Germany. He did not specify the "German" aspects of Kobrisov, but regard for his men's lives is what sets Kobrisov apart from most of his colleagues, and was indeed a quality more generally subscribed to by Wehrmacht generals than by their Red Army counterparts. As well as acknowledging that Kobrisov is based on Chibisov, Vladimov claimed past acquaintance with some Soviet generals, including Marshal Meretskov (in the 1939-40 Soviet-Finnish war commander of 7th Army, with Chibisov as his Chief of Staff), Generals Sevast'ianov (Chief Political Officer to Moskalenko), Lukin (who was in German captivity with Vlasov, but did not join his Liberation Army), and Badanov (who met the then Major Guderian when he visited Russian tank factories and training grounds before the war), but none with officers from the Wehrmacht or Bundeswehr. And since the high-point of the narrative is the meeting at which Kobrisov's refusal to incur needless casualties angers Zhukov and Tereshchenko, Toporov would seem to have put the ball through his own goal.

But perhaps the greatest indication of German influence on Vladimov is in the literary form chosen for the "journal variant." It was after all in nineteenth-century Germany that the novella, in classic form as a short novel centered on a single or small number of events, became the most popular form.

**VLADIMOV'S DEFENDERS**

Vladimov was defended in "Novyi Mir" and in "Znamia." In "Znamia" Natal'ia Ivanova began by citing Josef Brodski's dubious aphorism that the Second World War was the last great myth, but that unlike previous myths, such as the Iliad, which dealt with the struggle between good and evil, was a modernist myth in being "a fight of two Demons." The aphorism is striking, but its reductionism inaccurate in making the war merely a struggle between Stalin and Hitler. It also misrepresents the Iliad, which clearly states in its opening lines that its subject is the anger of Achilles and its consequences

for the Greeks and Trojans, and gives no monopoly of good or evil to either side or any individual. Ivanova went on to cite Brodski's poem "On the Death of Zhukov," linking his references to Pompey and Belisarius (who like Zhukov won great victories for their Empires, only to be disgraced by those they served) to the passage which opens the novella. This is a prose-poetic panegyric to the vehicle in which Kobrisov is being driven to Moscow - where she sees an allusion to Imperial Rome in Vladimov's reference to it as "our chariot of victory." The average Russian reader would perhaps be more likely to see in it an evocation of the famous "Troika" passage in "Dead Souls." But whereas Gogol's symbol of Russia is the quintessentially Russian troika, Vladimov's "chariot of victory" is a "Villis," the quintessentially American Jeep.<sup>32</sup>

L. Anninskii's favourable review, in "Novyi Mir"<sup>33</sup> posed at the outset the question of the novella's meaning for the current literary situation. He praised Vladimov's ability to convey the reality of wartime life, his eye for detail, and his polished prose. But he reacted with puzzlement to Vladimov's obvious distaste for both Khrushchev and Zhukov, and deplored as "unfitting" his interpolation that if Ukraine's capital must be taken only by Ukrainians, then other Soviet nationalities could apply the same principle and fight only for their own territory. He discussed at length the SMERSH major's relationship with his informants, Guderian's inability to understand the Russian psyche, and the willingness of Russians to die at the behest of military leaders whom he unequivocally described as "butchers." But he did not answer the question he had posed, of what the novella's publication meant for the current situation in literature. Instead he ended his review by defining Kobrisov as "a symbol of that reality which Vladimov senses as a 'feral feeling'," and pinpointing that reality as the novella's main value to himself.

#### THE FULL-LENGTH NOVEL. GRIST TO THE CONSERVATIVES' MILL?

The full-length novel version, published in 1997, in fact provided far more scope for the conservative critics than the "journal variant." It had Kobrisov released from prison at the outbreak of war, and sent to command a Division of an Army in the Baltic Military District. He removes the sick army commander to hospital, is elected by his colleagues to command the army, and leads it back to Soviet-held territory by the practical though unheroic expedient of avoiding fighting whenever possible. Later it depicts him spending his afternoons in bed with one of his army's nurses, an aspect of Red Army life not usually mentioned in Soviet military memoirs. No marital complications arise, as the nurse is conveniently killed in action. And the novel completely annuls the happy ending of the "journal variant" - when Kobrisov arrives back at "his" army, his Chief of Staff, horrified at his re-appearance, tells him his replacement is already in charge, and advises him to leave at once.

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32 Known in the Red Army as the "Villis," from the manufacturer's name (the Willis Corporation) on its bonnet. The name "Jeep" (from "General Purpose" vehicle) was not known in the USSR.

33 L. Anninskii, "Saving Russia at the Price of Russia," *Novyi Mir* 10 (1994), pp.214-221.

Meanwhile the egregious *SMERSh* Major Svetlookov has, for reasons not fully explained, decided to kill him. Assuming a false identity and rank, Svetlookov orders a nearby howitzer battery to lay down blanket fire along the road where Kobrisov's jeep is parked, on the pretext that anti-Soviet Russian troops have been sighted there. While Kobrisov is walking back to his jeep, a direct hit destroys it, killing his adjutant, driver and orderly (ironically, Svetlookov's three informants on him). Kobrisov himself is wounded, but survives, and is given command of an Army in Second Baltic Front, as was Chibisov. There the Front Commander, General Markian Mikhailovich Popov (another character from real life)<sup>34</sup> upbraids him for his army's inactivity, whereupon Kobrisov says bluntly that as long as the Germans don't disturb him, he won't disturb them. Mutual restraint of this kind is common between front-line troops when the front is static, but seldom overtly condoned, much less practised, by their generals. It was also quite inappropriate to a phase of the war in which the Red Army was out to "disturb" the Germans as much as possible by mounting one offensive after another.

There is a long additional and generally favorable passage about Vlasov, and several further incidents, all derogatory to the Soviet system, are inserted. One concerns the fate of the anti-Soviet Russian defenders of Miriatin. Most are shot out of hand after its capture, but *SMERSh* promises some that they will be freed if they can swim to the east bank of the river, and that they will not be fired upon while in the water. The promise is kept; instead motor launches are driven over them, and they are cut to pieces by the propellers.

Another episode introduces a very senior Political Officer, Drobnis, clearly modeled on the sinister Lev Mekhlis,<sup>35</sup> mainly to depict him having a major on his staff shot for causing him to lose face in front of professional soldiers. Another episode has a Soviet Division advance behind a screen of unarmed walking wounded wearing their hospital gowns. The Germans retreat, their commander is captured and brought to Kobrisov, who asks why he abandoned his position. The German explains that he and his men were unwilling to fire on the wounded.

The contrast between Soviet ruthlessness in all three episodes, and the Germans' humaneness in the only one involving them, is painted too thickly to convince. Nor can it be said that these and other episodes advanced the narrative, or added much to the already emphatic presentation of Kobrisov's character, as a general who believes above all in preserving his men's lives. What they did, however, was to provide grist to the mill of critics such as Bogomolov, in that the anti-Soviet tinges apparent in the novella appear in full color in the novel.

As Appendices to the novel Vladimov included his reply to Bogomolov from the earlier polemic, discussed above, and some additional pieces of his defence. In one of

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34 Army General M.M. Popov commanded 2nd Baltic Front until April 1944.

35 Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis. In 1937-40, as Head of the Chief Political Directorate of the Red Army, personally responsible for massive purges of the military and its leaders. For incompetence in the role of Stavka representative in the Crimea he was reduced in rank and responsibilities to Chief Political Officer first of an Army and then of several Fronts in succession. In the novel the Soviet failure in the Crimea is attributed to Drobnis, clearly identifying him with Mekhlis. *Kto byl Kto v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine 1941-45*, p.170.

these he mentioned discussions with various generals, particularly Petr Grigorenko, a dissident who suffered considerable persecution during the Brezhnev era. He quoted Grigorenko as saying that generals are just like the rest of us, except for having a lower proportion of decent people and a higher one of scoundrels. Apart from Kobrisov, the Soviet generals Vladimov depicts conform to that definition.

Given the vitriol that characterized the earlier polemic, renewal of the conservatives' attacks, with a chorus of "we told you so," could reasonably have been expected. However, no reaction has been noted in the three years since the full-length novel appeared. It would seem that enough spleen had been vented. The polemic that attended the "journal variant" had died down, and the book was on prominent display in the principal *Voennaia Kniga* [military bookshop] in Moscow.

SAPPORO

23 September 1999.