

The Red Army and the Second World War

In a definitive new account of the Soviet Union at war, Alexander Hill charts the development, successes and failures of the Red Army from the industrialisation of the Soviet Union in the late 1920s through to the end of the Great Patriotic War in May 1945. Setting military strategy and operations within a broader context that includes national mobilisation on a staggering scale, the book presents a comprehensive account of the origins and course of the war from the perspective of this key Allied power. Drawing on the latest archival research and a wealth of eyewitness testimony, Hill portrays the Red Army at war from the perspective of senior leaders and men and women at the front line to reveal how the Red Army triumphed over the forces of Nazi Germany and her allies on the Eastern Front, and why it did so at such great cost.

ALEXANDER HILL is Associate Professor in Military History at the University of Calgary, Canada

Armies of the Second World War

This is a major new series of histories of the armies of the key combatants in the Second World War. The books are written by leading military historians and consider key aspects of military activity for each of the major powers, including planning, intelligence, strategy and operations. As with the parallel *Armies of the Great War* series, military and strategic history is considered within the broader context of foreign policy aims and allied strategic relations, national mobilisation and the war's domestic social, political and economic effects.

Titles in the series include:

The British Army and the Second World War by Jonathan Fennell
The French Army and the Second World War by Douglas Porch
The German Army and the Second World War by Jeff Rutherford

The Red Army and the Second World War

Alexander Hill

University of Calgary



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-107-68815-5 — The Red Army and the Second World War
 Alexander Hill
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107688155

© Alexander Hill 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2017

Paperback edition first published 2019

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Names: Hill, Alexander, 1974– author.

Title: The Red Army and the Second World War / Alexander Hill, University of Calgary.

Description: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. | Series: Armies of the Second World War | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016010291 | ISBN 9781107020795 (Hardback : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781107688155 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Soviet Union. Raboche-Krestʹsĭianskaĭiia Krasnaĭiia Armiĭiia–History–World War, 1939–1945. | World War, 1939–1945–Campaigns.

Classification: LCC D764 .H523 2016 | DDC 940.54/1247–dc23 LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2016010291>

ISBN 978-1-107-02079-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-68815-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-107-68815-5 — The Red Army and the Second World War
Alexander Hill
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

To my wife Jody, and children Tamsin and Alistair

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>List of Maps</i>	xiv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
<i>Military Ranks</i>	xviii
Introduction	1
1 Of Horses and Men: The Red Army of the Late 1920s	11
2 Tanks, Aircraft and ‘Deep Battle’: The Red Army Transformed 1928–1936	31
3 The ‘Enemy’ within: The Red Army during and in the Aftermath of the Great Purges, 1937–1940	52
4 More than Manoeuvres: Red Army Experience in Spain and at Lake Khasan	77
5 Khalkhin Gol	93
6 Keeping up with the Schmidts and the Suzukis: Soviet Military Equipment and the Small Wars of the 1930s	110
7 Voroshilov’s ‘Lightning’ War: The Soviet Invasion of Poland	125
8 The Finnish Debacle	140
9 Reform and the Road to War	169
10 ‘Barbarossa’: From Minsk to Smolensk	202
11 ‘Barbarossa’: From Smolensk to Moscow	233
12 The End of ‘Typhoon’	265
13 Lost Opportunity	296
14 More Men, Women and Machines	324
	ix

x	Contents	
15	“Not a step back!”	347
16	Change at the Top	361
17	Stalingrad and ‘Uranus’	381
18	The Wrath of the Gods	410
19	The Defence of the Kursk Salient and the Battle for Prokhorovka	429
20	To the Dnepr and Beyond	456
21	The Ten ‘Stalinist’ Blows of 1944	487
22	The End in Sight	513
23	The Fall of Berlin and the End of the Reich	537
	Conclusion	560
	<i>Notes</i>	583
	<i>Appendix 1: The Destruction of the Upper Echelons of the RKKa in 1937–1941</i>	690
	<i>Appendix 2: Soviet Armoured Strength and Serviceability in the Western Military Districts of the Soviet Union as of 1 June 1941</i>	691
	<i>Glossary</i>	692
	<i>Bibliography</i>	698
	<i>Index</i>	716

Figures

1	Troops of 46th Territorial Division parade in November 1925	<i>page</i> 16
2	Cavalry at a May Day parade in Khar'kov in 1928	29
3	Mikhail Tukhachevskii, as its commander, parades on the 10th anniversary of the Leningrad Military District in late 1930	33
4	Some of the first Soviet-manufactured tanks, May Day 1932	36
5	T-26 tanks being paraded on May Day in Palace Square, Leningrad, 1938	57
6	Soviet 'volunteer' tankmen near the graves of fallen comrades in Spain in July 1937	84
7	Soviet commanders on the shore of Lake Khasan in the summer of 1938	91
8	Soviet infantry and tanks advance in the Khalkhin Gol region in July 1939	99
9	An I-16 fighter, in this case in naval service	113
10	Soviet troops including BA-10 armoured cars in what in Soviet terms was Western Belorussia in September 1939	134
11	Soviet 203 mm super heavy artillery fires on Finnish positions during the Soviet–Finnish War of 1939–1940	156
12	Marshal of the Soviet Union Timoshenko and Generals of the Army Zhukov and Meretskov with troops in the L'vov region, July 1940	173
13	Board for the graduation of Red Army commanders on 5 May 1941 – Stalin at the podium	195
14	Troops of 70th Rifle Division, ostensibly on manoeuvres, in May 1941	199
15	A KV-series tank on a Leningrad street, in this instance during the autumn of 1941	216
16	Soviet militia from the Kirov Factory in Leningrad march past a statue of their factory's namesake in the summer of 1941	231

xii List of Figures

17	Soviet troops fight on the approaches to Odessa in the late summer of 1941	241
18	Soviet tanks pass through a village in the Moscow region in mid-October 1941	252
19	Type 7 destroyers of the Northern Fleet, pictured in 1944	262
20	Red Army soldiers fight on the streets during the liberation of Rostov-on-Don in late November 1941	263
21	Partisans of the Pskov region on the move, September 1941	275
22	Soviet partisans of the Leningrad region operating a radio set in May 1943	284
23	Matilda and Valentine infantry tanks being loaded in Britain for shipment to the Soviet Union	291
24	Soviet SMG-armed troops head out on a reconnaissance mission in the Leningrad region in early 1942	304
25	Cavalry of General Belov's cavalry corps on the move in mid-December 1941	315
26	A Soviet medical sister tends to a Red Army soldier in what is probably a posed picture, 1941	327
27	'Not a step back!' – Soviet troops defending the Caucasus in late September 1942	355
28	'Death of a soldier' reads the caption for this photograph taken during the fighting near Kerch in the Crimea in the spring of 1942	366
29	Snipers await their prey on the Western Front in August 1942	387
30	Soviet troops amongst the ruins of Stalingrad after the German surrender on 2 February 1943	408
31	General Mud had arguably switched sides, autumn 1942	412
32	Troops of 167th Rifle Regiment of 1st Guards Rifle Division of the Western Front advance in the autumn of 1942	413
33	Troops of an anti-tank company in frontline positions on the Central Front on the Kursk salient on 5 July 1943	448
34	Heavy artillery being ferried across the Dnepr River in late September 1943	467
35	Il-2 attack aircraft, here serving with the Northern Fleet in 1944	481
36	Soviet forces on the streets of Viborg on the Karelian Isthmus in June 1944	492
37	Soviet troops advance to the west of Minsk in mid-July 1944 during the successful Operation 'Bagration'	500
38	Soviet assault guns in early October 1944 poised to move into Hungary	525

List of Figures	xiii
39 Dead German troops lie beside a SU-76 assault gun knocked out in the Polish town of Elbing in early 1945	530
40 Soviet troops on the streets of Vienna at the end of the war	536
41 Königsberg in early April 1945 after its capture by Soviet forces	545
42 Soviet tanks and infantry on a German street at the end of April 1945 prior to the final stages of the battle for Berlin	552
43 Soviet light craft of the Dnepr Flotilla, Berlin 1945	553
44 The winning team	571

Maps

1	Soviet military commitments prior to the Great Patriotic War considered in this book – where, when, and in which chapters they are discussed	<i>page</i> 78
2	The German advances of 1941 and 1942	221
3	The Moscow region in early December 1941, with the locations of Soviet tank units equipped with British-supplied vehicles indicated	290
4	Soviet territory liberated by the Red Army in late 1942 and 1943	415
5	The Soviet advance during 1944	488
6	From the Oder to the Elbe – the Berlin Operation of April–May 1945	538
7	Street fighting in Berlin – the capture of the damaged Brommybrücke in April 1945 (adapted from TsAMO f.233.o.2356.d.775.l.50)	550

Acknowledgements

Many people have provided assistance and support over the years that has in some way contributed to the outcome here, although in these acknowledgements I will largely focus on assistance and support provided specifically during the period in which this book has been written. From the point at which I was asked by Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press to write this book and submit an outline in 2011, my wife Jody has been extremely supportive of the project even after it became apparent that writing such a book was going to be a far more involved and protracted process than she had originally envisioned! With two young kids I was initially wary of taking on such a commission, but Jody's encouragement to take the opportunity undoubtedly contributed to my accepting – little did she know... The last time I produced a book I hadn't met Jody and didn't have children. Life with a young family – on what amounts to being in some ways a small 'farm' – certainly requires a much more focused approach to writing a book than the last time round when I was a single academic! In their ways, my kids Tamsin and Alistair (one still a baby and the other barely conceived when the project began) have been very tolerant of daddy disappearing into his basement office space to write, and particularly so during those periods when a deadline loomed and writing was essentially from dawn till dusk, day after day. I apologise to all of them for my at times grouchy mood as deadlines loomed. Regarding those deadlines, my thanks certainly go to Michael Watson at Cambridge University Press for his tolerance and understanding in allowing a number of extensions! At or through Cambridge University Press, in addition to the commissioning editor Michael Watson, I would like to thank my production editor Amanda George for her assistance in seeing this work through to publication, and Bindu Vinod and Kalai Periassamy at SPi in Chennai who oversaw copyediting and typesetting there.

In terms of the shaping of this work, constructive criticism from the three 'anonymous' reviewers of the initial proposal, and comments by the manuscript reviewer for Cambridge University Press, have

xvi Acknowledgements

certainly all been appreciated. Particularly appreciated is the fact that Drs Roger Reese, Jeff Rutherford and the soon to be Dr, Jan Mann, along with my former undergraduate honours student Aaron Bates, all took time out of their schedules to look over a full draft manuscript. Dr David Stahel was kind enough to find time to review those chapters relating to his published work. Their comments have all helped shape and improve this work. A number of people have provided assistance in obtaining materials for this work. There are far too many archivists and librarians to list all of them, and particularly to include those who helped in obtaining materials used in this project that I collected during the previous decade and even in the late 1990s as a PhD student. Since 2011 the University of Calgary library has been excellent at gaining the necessary interlibrary loans required, and here Rosvita Vaska undoubtedly deserves most of the credit. Dr Sergei Kudriashov – now of the German Historical Institute in Moscow – has continued to send me the latest archival publications from the Russian Presidential Archive that he has edited and are relevant to my work, and I was particularly pleased to be given his latest edited collections of documents while attending a conference he organised in Moscow in the spring of 2015. In this work I also make some use of valuable Soviet archival materials on Lend-Lease to the Soviet Union made available to me by Dr Mikhail Suprun some years ago, and which were important sources in articles and chapters I wrote prior to this book and to which I also refer here. Ralph Gibson of what was RIA-Novosti provided photos from the press agency's archive at a very reasonable rate – many paid for through a start-up grant provided by the University of Calgary when I started there in 2004 and which I had carefully husbanded to finally spend the last funds on photographs for this book. I was also grateful for the six-month research leave provided by the University in 2014 that allowed me to make real headway with writing. At the University of Calgary, I would also like to thank my PhD student, Keith Hann, who was provided with additional funding unbeknown to me on the understanding that he undertake research for a professor – and scoured a number of English-language translations of German memoirs for concepts and terms I had selected that certainly saved me some valuable time. He also provided a brief translation from Polish that I used in Chapter 6. I would also like to thank the Russian historians and enthusiasts who collated archival materials in pdf form from the Russian Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence that were published on the website *Podvig Naroda*, and those who run and contribute to the online library *militera.lib.ru*, that was extremely valuable in locating materials that I then consulted in hardcopy where possible.

Acknowledgements

xvii

So, thanks to all who have helped this work to see publication. At the end of acknowledgements, it is customary to point out that although a number of people have contributed to this work in a variety of ways, any errors or omissions in the content remain the author's responsibility, and so I have done just that! I hope you find this work interesting and thought provoking, and that any minor errors do not detract in any meaningful way from the whole.

Military Ranks

Approximate comparative Red Army officer-grade ranks over time used in the text with their Wehrmacht equivalents

Red Army (1935–1945)	Political command equivalent	Soviet navy	Wehrmacht
Marshal of the Soviet Union			<i>Generalfeldmarschall</i>
Principal Marshal (of Branch)			
Marshal (of Branch)			
<i>Komandarm</i>	Army commissar	<i>Flagman</i> of the Fleet	<i>Generaloberst</i>
1st rank/General (of the Army)	1st rank	1st Rank/Admiral of the Fleet	
<i>Komandarm</i>	Army commissar	<i>Flagman</i> of the Fleet	<i>General (of Branch)</i>
2nd rank/General-Colonel	2nd rank	2nd rank/Admiral	
<i>Komkor</i> /General-Lieutenant	Corps commissar	<i>Flagman</i> 1st rank/ Vice-Admiral	<i>Generalleutnant</i>
<i>Kombrig</i> / <i>Komdiv</i> / General-Major	Brigade commissar/ Divisional commissar	<i>Flagman</i> 2nd rank/ <i>Kontr</i> -Admiral	<i>Generalmajor</i>
<i>Kompolk</i> / <i>Kombrig</i> / Colonel [<i>polkovnik</i>]	Brigade commissar/ Regimental commissar		<i>Oberst</i>
<i>Kombat</i> / <i>Podpolkovnik</i>	Senior battalion commissar		<i>Oberstleutnant</i>
<i>Kombat</i> /Major	Battalion commissar		<i>Major</i>
Captain	(Senior) <i>politruk</i>		<i>Hauptman</i>
Senior lieutenant	<i>Politruk</i>		<i>Oberleutnant</i>
Lieutenant	(Junior) <i>politruk</i>		<i>Leutnant</i>
Junior lieutenant			

Sources: Postanovlenie TsIK i SNK SSSR ot 22 sentiabria 1935 g., *O vvedenii personalnikh voennikh zvanií nachal'stviuushchego sostava RKKA*... (Moscow: Otdel izdatel'stva NKO SSSR, 1935), p.8; M.M. Kir'ian (editor-in-chief), *Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia*, 3 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), pp.434–5; Earl F. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East* (Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1987), p.505; <http://army.armor.kiev.ua/titul/> [Accessed 10 September 2015].