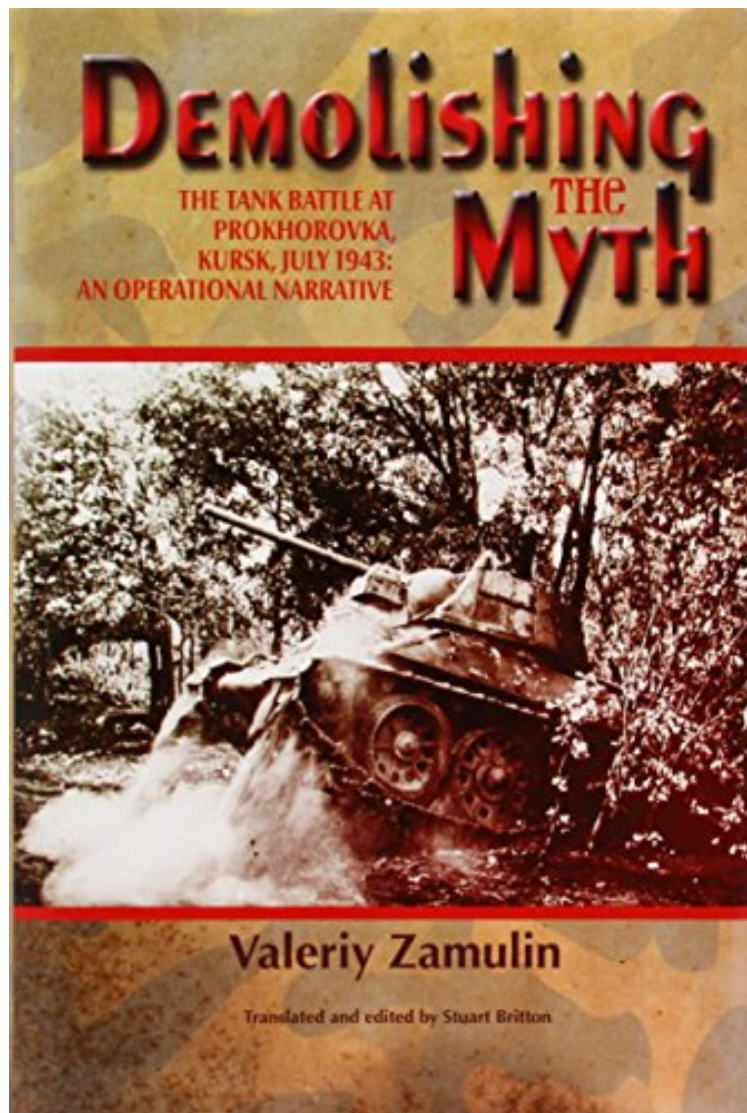


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Demolishing the Myth: The Tank Battle at Prokhorovka, Kursk, July 1943: An Operational Narrative

Valeriy Zamulin

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Valeriy Zamulin : Demolishing the Myth: The Tank Battle at Prokhorovka, Kursk, July 1943: An Operational Narrative before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Demolishing the Myth: The Tank Battle at Prokhorovka, Kursk, July 1943: An Operational Narrative:

107 of 112 people found the following review helpful. Kursk - view from the other side of the hillBy matt8386I

bought this book not knowing what the myth was - but I did want to learn more about the Battle of Kursk. Author Valeriy Zamulin grew up and lives near the town of Prokhorovka, and was the Director of Research at the Prokhorovka Battlefield Park Museum for 13 years. This book is packed with data, tables of organization, information regarding weapons, which combat unit served in what area, killed, wounded, how many tanks were operational for each side on what day just to give a few examples. Since it is an operational history, it is a day by day, often hour or minute by minute accounting of the fighting that occurred in the southern attack on the Kursk Bulge from July 5-15th. Specifically, the Voronezh Front where the combat led to the town of Prokhorovka. So, what is the myth? There are several. For many years after WW2, the Germans and Soviets had an interest to inflate the size and scope of the battle - the Germans to save face from loosing and the Soviets to explain such high losses. Authors such as Martin Caidin, while a fantastic story teller, often did not do the research needed and perpetuated this myth. In more recent years, post cold war, new information has been shed. David Glantz 1999 book *The Battle of Kursk* is an example. Today, I saw an online article by Michael J. Licari that also attacks the myths of Kursk. Another myth is that the Battle of Prokhorovka was the turning point (not really, the Northern attack had already failed and the Germans had already lost more than they could afford). The issue of the Soviet 'counter attack' and who was responsible is explored as well as several others. Impressive things about this book - research - primary sources. The author was able to access many declassified Soviet documents from the Ministry of Defense, unpublished recollections of soldiers, after action reports, unit reports from each day, actual orders. 75% of the Bibliography is Soviet material, 20% German archives and the balance from other authors. Zamulin knows some of these sources conflict with each other - no commander wants to admit he screwed up, so sometimes things are embellished or left out...especially in armies where you can get shot for making mistakes. There are many excellent BW photos that help show terrain, weapons, soldiers, color pages of the current view of the battlefield. The author admits the topographical map is hard to read, the CGI maps are good to see where units were on which day, and they too, take studying due to the scale of the map. However, they do add value to the book. This is not light reading. It is serious, well written, very good history. It can bog down a bit at times with the detail, debate over the number of vehicles involved, but it provides a much needed view of 'the other side of the hill'. It does not glorify either side; in fact, the author is pretty tough on the Soviets. It's pricey, but for serious historians, worth the purchase. 1 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Zamulin has taken a myth about the greatest tank battle in history and thoroughly demolished it in ...By Brad Golding Zamulin has taken a myth about the greatest tank battle in history and thoroughly demolished it in this outstanding book. The research is impeccable and the statistics are real eye openers. Regrettably the maps chosen by the publishers for the English language edition are rubbish hence the 4 stars and not 5. If you want good maps of the course of the campaign buy George Nipe's *Blood Steel and Myth* as it covers the same campaign but in a completely different way. In fact these 2 books compliment each other really well and are both essential if this is your area of interest. 90 of 95 people found the following review helpful. A Remarkable Book Scrupulously Researched By Dave Schranck This is a remarkable though select study of the battle to reach Kursk from the southern salient. Though demanding and requiring your full attention, an enthusiast could read this operational treasure-trove over and over and never tire of it. It was intriguing but also challenging to read about the same engagement from different perspectives; usually two sometimes three different viewpoints discussed. The fighting on the 12th against the LAH and the 18th and 29th Tank Corps was especially involved. The commentary and analysis is superb and will give the reader a better understanding of the campaign. This book is Russian-centric and it spends more time discussing Soviet plans, assaults and maneuvers than on the German perspective. In the introductory chapters, the author describes the political and military situation in spring 1943 when Hitler and his generals were discussing what the summer offensive should be. The Kursk salient was quickly proposed, debated and then chosen over the objections of some key people. On the Soviet side summer planning was also being debated. The second chapter provides the defensive preparations of the Soviet side for the southern half when it was decided to attack only after the German offensive exhausted itself. Due to the importance of Rotmistrov and his 5th GTA in stopping the 2nd SS PzC, the final chapter before combat coverage begins provides a profile of the General and his Tank Army. The author also explains how Rotmistrov and his Army had just arrived in sector from nearly a 200 mile force march and how he had to cobble an attack plan together when he learned Hausser was much closer to Prokhorovka than expected. On the German side, you will read about Hoth's decision to shift the axis of his SS panzer corps from Oboyan to Prokhorovka among other background info. The fourth chapter is a summary of the 48th PzC action on the western flank through the 9th of July as well as the opening moves of the 2nd SS PzC. (The initial assault by the 48th PzC on the afternoon of July 4th seems to be missing.) A key issue discussed is how the performance of this corps in not reaching the Psel had on the 2nd SS PzC. Another issue that was enjoyed is the terrain features the 48th PzC had to deal with that slowed their advance: The Pena, Vorskla and the Vorsklitsa Rivers and their corresponding swampland were definite deterrents. The many fortified villages and hills were an even bigger impediment. The reactions of 1st TA's and 6th GA's attempts to stop the advance are also covered. The strengths of the two rivals are also presented and compared. The Soviets had the advantage in men, tanks, guns, vehicles. The author also emphasizes here and for the rest of book of the timely entry of Soviet reinforcements into battle. The next 402 pages of this 630 page book revolves around the highly detailed events of the Russian attempts in preventing the 2nd SS PzC from capturing Prokhorovka

and the Psel River basin. A good summary of 3rd PzC's drive north and its eventual retreat through 7/16 is also included. Many key people are mentioned but the discussion details the impact these people's decisions, actions or communications had on the outcome of the battles. While some anecdotal experiences of a strictly personal nature are conveyed, the overwhelming amount of information is operational. Also included with the narrative are 12 colored maps. These are some of the best maps I've seen though I do have minor criticisms which I'll explain in a minute. Three maps are topographical and show the key villages, rivers and hills that are included in the campaign. The roads are presented but not labeled. The last nine maps are tactical and are broken down in the following manner. The first map shows the German deployment of the Orel and Kursk salients. The next map depicts Vatutin's estimate of the ideal route for the German offensive and succinctly shows Hoth's error in planning the 48th PzC's deployment. The next maps include: the penetration of the first defense line by the 2nd SS on 7/5; the advance of the SS to the Prokhorovka axis on 7/6; combat operations southwest of Prokhorovka on 7/10 and again on 7/11; Kempf's drive through 7/11; combat operations of the Soviet counterattack on 7/12 and the last map concerns Kempf's pullback from 7/13 to 7/16. These maps are new computer generated color maps that have great eye appeal, many details and are easy to study. The German side is depicted to division level while the Soviet side is shown in corps, division, regiment, brigade level as required. These are some of the most useful maps available but wish there were more maps. While these very detailed maps are the most important, showing the general progress of the SS advance on the 7th, 8th and especially the 9th plus the advance of the 48th PzC would have been very helpful, allowing the reader to graphically see the whole campaign in the south. Though gaining less ground than the other two SS divisions, the deployment of the Das Reich division could have been more extensive. The topographical maps are also visually appealing and helpful but they are presented in a less than perfect layout with gaps in the terrain. Different mileage scales and orientations increases the confusion. Unless you're an expert or invest a lot of time to study these maps, it will be difficult to take advantage of them. An additional map or two here would have been helpful culminating in a two page layout of the entire southern salient to tie the assortment together would have been nice. Also there are several villages and hills that are discussed in the narrative that are missing on these maps. Most are in 48th PzC sector but since they were mentioned it would have been nice to see them on the maps. The missing includes Gertsovka, Krasnyi Pochinok, Kalinin, Krasnyi Poliana, Kalinovka, Kruglik, Lutovo and especially Novoselovka. Hills missing include 260, 244 and 222. Some of these locations had bitter battle action. The last chapter which is quite extensive. Besides summation of the campaign, the author deals with the myths and realities of the Campaign and especially on the tank battles of 7/12 that have been generated over the decades. Mr Zamulin describes the true scale of the separate tank engagements that TK, Das Reich and especially LAH found itself in as they launched their attacks that early Monday morning toward Prokhorovka. They weren't expecting the five+ corps would be attacking them that did prevent them from achieving their objectives. An interesting discussion by the author and several other historians are included on the tank casualties of both sides. The number of operable tanks 5th GTA had weren't as many as some claim but Rotmistrov did lose 80 pct of them in the next couple days. Human casualties for both sides is estimated as well. The importance of the results of this campaign for the rest of the war are also briefly discussed. There are also 34 informative data tables running throughout the book concerning key statistics that will help the reader understand the scope of this campaign. (There is a handy list to help you find the data you need) There are no wild claims; in fact the author downplays the scale of the tank battle but not the importance of 5th GTA arriving in the nick of time. There are many good photos of the key people from both sides but many more Soviets, as well as battlefield scenes. It was nice attaching a face with a name that you've read about for years. Some of the photos are in color and show the current fields where men died and tanks destroyed in 1943. Also appreciated is the detailed Orders of Battle that were included. With so many units discussed, it was studied often while reading the book. There is also a competent Notes Section and Bibliography that includes primary and secondary sources. Most entries are Russian related. A helpful Index that will speed your research closes out the book. Displaying a good understanding of strategy and tactics, Mr Zamulin does an excellent job of explaining the engagements as well as providing the significant results and ramifications of each that will add to the reader's understanding of the campaign. The author explains the terrain features, different defensive belts, why certain days the Germans made good gains and on other days few gains. He also discusses the strategic errors made by Hoth in planning, deployment of his forces and the poor utilization of the new Panther brigade that jeopardized the entire campaign. Vatutin's tactical errors that cost his armies dearly are also explained. Hundreds of communiques, after action reports, divisional diaries and personal diaries from both sides are blended nicely into the narrative. You'll get a real feel and understanding of what each side was thinking, experiencing. This is a specialty book that excludes the northern salient and gives only a summary to the 48th PzC and 3rd PzC sectors but its extraordinary when it comes to the 2nd SS PzC's drive toward Prokhorovka and its attempt to control north of the Psel River. The summary of the resistance and escape of the remnants of 48th RC from the encirclement between the two Donets Rivers when Kempf loosely linked up with Das Reich was also done well as is the attempted encirclement of 48th PzC by the 6th GA and 1st TA from the 12th on. While trying to judge this book critically, I found only trivial issues to mention. This book is solid, dramatically adds to the knowledge base and would ideally complement the other serious campaign books by Mark Healy, David Glantz and Franz Kurowski and is highly recommended to all Citadel fans.

A groundbreaking book when first published in Russia in 2005, now Valeriy Zamulin's study of the crucible of combat during the titanic clash at Kursk - the fighting at Prokhorovka - is available in English. A former staff member of the Prokhorovka Battlefield State Museum, Zamulin has dedicated years of his life to the study of the battle of Kursk, and especially the fighting on its southern flank involving the famous attack of the II SS Panzer Corps into the teeth of deeply-echeloned Red Army defenses. A product of five years of intense research into the once-secret Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense, Zamulin lays out in enormous detail the plans and tactics of both sides, culminating in the famous and controversial clash at Prokhorovka on 12 July 1943. Zamulin skillfully weaves reminiscences of Red Army and Wehrmacht soldiers and officers into the narrative of the fighting, using in part files belonging to the Prokhorovka Battlefield State Museum. Zamulin has the advantage of living in Prokhorovka, so he has walked the ground of the battlefield many times and has an intimate knowledge of the terrain. Examining the battle from primarily the Soviet side, Zamulin reveals the real costs and real achievements of the Red Army at Kursk, and especially Prokhorovka. He examines mistaken deployments and faulty decisions that hampered the Voronezh Front's efforts to contain the Fourth Panzer Army's assault, and the valiant, self-sacrificial fighting of the Red Army's soldiers and junior officers as they sought to slow the German advance, and then crush the II SS Panzer Corps with a heavy counterattack at Prokhorovka on 12 July. The combat on this day receives particular scrutiny, as Zamulin works to clarify the relative size of the contending forces, the actual area of this battle, and the costs suffered by both sides. The costs to General P. A. Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army and General A. S. Zhadov's 5th Guards Army as they slammed into 1st SS Panzer Grenadier Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, 3rd SS Panzer Grenadier Division Totenkopf and a portion of 2nd SS Panzer Grenadier Division Das Reich were particularly devastating, and Zamulin examines the nuts and bolts of the counteroffensive to see why this was so. Zamulin does not exclude the oft-overlooked efforts of Army Group Kempf's III Panzer Corps on the right-wing of the Fourth Panzer Army, as it sought to keep pace with the II SS Panzer Corps advance, and then breach the line of the Northern Donets River in order to link up with its left-hand neighbor in the region of Prokhorovka. Zamulin describes how the Soviet High Command and the Voronezh Front had to cobble together quickly a defense of this line with already battered units, but needed to reinforce it with fresh formations at the expense of the counterstroke at Prokhorovka. Illustrated with numerous maps and photographs (including present-day views of the battlefield), and supplemented with extensive tables of data, Zamulin's book is an outstanding contribution to the growing literature on the battle of Kursk, and further demolishes many of the myths and legends that grew up around this battle.

Zamulin's fresh new book on Kursk represents the best of recent Russian scholarship on the war and is as close to definitive as possible. (David M. Glantz) Zamulin's painstaking analysis definitively establishes the Soviet counterattack at Prokhorovka as the decisive event in the Battle of Kursk, and a turning point in the development of the Red Army. Comprehensive scholarship and convincing reasoning, enhanced by an excellent translation, place this work on a level with the best of David Glantz. (Dennis Showalter, Colorado College) painstakingly researched perhaps the most accurate look yet at why and how the German offensive failed to meet its objectives plethora of tables, maps, pictures, including current pictures of the Prokhorovka battlefield, and appendices detailing; German and Soviet comparative strengths, tables of organization and equipment, losses sustained by each side, and more a true operational history also featuring detailed first person accounts and studiously examining lessons learned; all while providing balanced and well reasoned insight helping the reader to understand how and why events unfolded as they did..an absorbing read, even for those who consider themselves otherwise well informed on the topic. (Globe at War) "In his majestic and provocative book ... Zamulin analyses the real costs and achievements of the Red Army at Kursk, and especially Prokhorovka ... Using an overwhelming and stunning amount of sources, both from German and especially Russian archives as well as from participants in the battle and secondary literature, he paints a vivid and often horrifying picture of the events that occurred ... Zamulin is to be congratulated on writing a highly convincing and thorough analysis of the tank battle at Prokhorovka. By doing so, he indeed demolishes many of the myths that surround that pivotal engagement ... Zamulin has written a book that will be the standard on the Prokhorovka battle for many years to come". (Martijn Lak, Journal of Slavic Military Studies) Demolishing the Myth is a much needed and very welcome addition to military-historical writing on the Eastern Front, a refreshing change to the standard Anglo-American-German interpretation of events. (Dr Steven J Main, DefAc UK, British Army) "I cannot recommend this book too highly ... Scrupulously researched and supplemented by a number of excellent maps and photographs, this work will intrigue and inform serious students of the Eastern Front for years to come." (Richard W. Harrison, The Russian) "It is very difficult to do justice to the level of detail provided in this study... in summary, Zamulin has managed to lift the lid on many of the weaknesses of the Red Army during the Battle of Kursk ... While the casual reader may find the length of the narrative rather daunting, the specialist interested in the history of armored warfare and the Great Patriotic War will delight in it. Yet the significance of this work goes further; it provides a genuine, brave, and honest corrective to the Soviet historiography on the Red Army's efforts at the Battle of Kursk. The publisher, Helion, is to be congratulated for making it available to an English-speaking audience, not least of all given the excellent maps and photographic material which are included." (Alaric Searle, Centre for European Security,

University of Salford, reviewing for Global War Studies) painstakingly researched to produce perhaps most accurate look yet at why and how the German offensive failed to meet its objectives an absorbing read, even for those who consider themselves otherwise well-informed on the topic. (Globe At War) "Zamulin's fresh new book on Kursk represents the best of recent Russian scholarship on the war and is as close to definitive as possible."-- David M. Glantz "Zamulin's painstaking analysis definitively establishes the Soviet counterattack at Prokhorovka as the decisive event in the Battle of Kursk, and a turning point in the development of the Red Army. Comprehensive scholarship and convincing reasoning, enhanced by an excellent translation, place this work on a level with the best of David Glantz."-- Dennis Showalter, Colorado College

About the Author Valeriy Zamulin is a leading expert on the battle of Kursk and the author of several Russian-language books and a number of articles about the battle. Zamulin is a former staff member of the Prokhorovka State Battlefield Museum who is now working on his Ph.D. in History at Belgorod State University. He is currently working on a book about the fighting on the northern shoulder of the Kursk bulge, centered on Ponyri. Valeriy currently resides in Prokhorovka, which has allowed him to walk the battlefield many times and take part in archaeological digs.