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Bayramov, Ruslan S., Korovin, Vladimir V.

South-West State University, Region, Kursk, Russian Federation

Experience of Building Defensive Lines on the Northern Face of the Kursk Bulge in  
Summer–Fall 1943 as Reflected in Archival Documents

Abstract

The defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad proved extremely painful for Nazi Germany, and Wehrmacht's sole hope for success was Operation Citadel, which in many ways could have predetermined the outcome of the war. If the enemy's plan were implemented, a significant

number of troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, civilians, strategically important objects (including airfields, warehouses, and railway junctions) would have been surrounded; but most importantly, a direct road to Moscow would have been opened for the German troops. Therefore, the opposing sides carefully prepared for implementation of plans for the 1943 summer campaign on the Kursk Bulge. The problem of logistics support of the greatest battles of the Great Patriotic War incites research interest due to insufficiency of prior research from standpoint of modern methodology and due to instability of geopolitical situation, characterized by regular appearance of hotbeds of armed confrontation. Thus, the experience of creating deep-echeloned defense in preparation for one of the key battles, one that marked a radical turning point in the Great Patriotic War, requires additional reflection with reference to newly discovered documentary sources. Documents, as studied by the authors, detail how the department of defensive construction no. 34 of the Central Front addressed building three army and three front-line defensive lines on the northern face of the Kursk Bulge and fortification of large settlements located within the borders of the front. The article reflects the participation in defense construction of the Kursk City Defense Committee, which was engaged in development of plans for the defense of Kursk and mobilization of the population. It notes the shortage of labor and transport support preventing simultaneous construction of all lines, thus necessitating a determination of priorities in their construction. The novelty of scientific research springs from insufficient coverage of the issue in national and foreign historiography. The purpose of the study is generalization of experience of building three army and three front-line defensive lines on the northern face of the Kursk Bulge and fortification of large settlements, based on documents from the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and regional archival fonds.

### Keywords

Historical sources, Battle of Kursk of 1943, Central Front, defensive construction, engineering management, line, reconnaissance, mobilization.

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## About the authors

Bayramov Ruslan Sagifovich, South-West State University, department of constitutional law, postgraduate student, Kursk, Russian Federation, +7-4712-51-50-23, +7-930-858-44-48, bayram1316@ya.ru

Korovin Vladimir Viktorovich, PhD in History, professor, South-West State University, department of constitutional law, Kursk, Russian Federation, + 7-4712-51-50-23, +7-951-087-08-38, vlavikor@ya.ru

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