

**Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution
Higher Education
"RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION"**

MID-RUSSIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT – BRANCH

Published as a manuscript

EVGENIJ VALENTINOVICH NIKITIN

**PARTY-POLITICAL WORK IN THE GUARDS TANK FORMS UNDER THE
COMMAND OF M.E. KATUKOV DURING THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR**

Specialty 5.6.1. Russian History

Annotation

to the dissertation on the search
of Historical Sciences degree

Scientific supervisor:

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor
Merkulov Pavel Alexandrovich

Oryol – 2026

The relevance of the research topic is determined by several interrelated factors of a theoretical and practical nature.

Firstly, The historical experience of party-political work (hereinafter referred to as PPR) in the armed forces has not only retained its relevance for modern military history but has also acquired particular significance in the context of contemporary challenges¹. In this regard, an analysis of the experience of the Guards tank formations under the command of M.E. Katukov (1st Guards Tank Brigade, 1st Guards Tank Army) is representative. Their combat history allows us to trace the evolution of the forms and methods of political support for troops in various operational and tactical situations.

Secondly, Despite the significant volume of publications examining the combat history of tank units and the organization of party-political work in the Red Army, a certain historiographical gap remains in terms of a comprehensive study of party-political work specifically in Guards tank formations. Existing studies are typically either general in nature, describing party-political work on the scale of the Armed Forces or fronts, or focus on analyzing the combat employment of tank armies without properly addressing the ideological and educational aspects. The specific activities of political agencies, party, and Komsomol organizations in highly mobile tank units, operating isolated from the main forces, under conditions of rapid advances and the urgent need to quickly replace losses, have been insufficiently studied. Filling this gap is a pressing research challenge.

Thirdly, the relevance of the topic is heightened by the need for a critical reappraisal of the Soviet historiographic legacy. In Soviet-era works, party political work was often idealized, while its shortcomings and contradictions were glossed over. Modern historical scholarship demands an objective, balanced analysis of both the successes and challenges of organizing the Party of the Red Army, which is impossible without examining the concrete experiences of individual units, including those under the command of M.E. Katukov.

¹Order of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation dated December 28, 2021 No. 803 "On approval of the Guidelines for the organization of military-political work in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation." URL: <https://base.garant.ru/405116179/> (date of access 02/10/2022).

The degree of scientific development of the research topic. In the development of the historiography of this issue, it is useful to distinguish several periods, each characterized by specific conceptual approaches, source base, and the degree of ideological bias in the assessments.

The first period (1941-1945) was distinguished by tendentious assessments and the dominance of the journalistic style over the scientific-analytical one. The historiography of this period is descriptive and explanatory in form and heroic-patriotic, agitational and propaganda in content. It is characterized by a desire to avoid sharp, controversial issues and to focus attention primarily on positive aspects. The main tasks of historical scholarship during this period were: highlighting the heroism of Soviet soldiers, exposing the crimes of the Nazi occupiers, and demonstrating the unity of the front and the rear. Academic research as such was hampered by military action and the need to focus resources on the needs of the front.

The second period: 1945–1991. During this period, Russian historiography of the events of the Great Patriotic War developed within the paradigm of strict party-ideological determination. The main vector of research was the systematic creation and dissemination of a patriotic narrative, which served as an instrument of political legitimization².

Within this period, we will highlight a number of stages: 1) 1945 – early 1956; 2) 1956-1980; 3) 1980-1991.

The main focus of research *in the first post-war period (1945 - early 1956)* in Soviet historiography of the Great Patriotic War was the coverage of military operations and battles, the detailed description of which served as evidence of the superiority of Soviet military science and the valor of the Red Army.

The second stage (1956–1980) was characterized by attempts to overcome the most odious ideological clichés (after the 20th Congress of the CPSU) and a broadening of research topics, although party control over historical scholarship generally remained. Bloc confrontation (the Cold War and the ideological standoff between the USSR and the West) had an impact. During this period, important strides were made in

² Mintz I. I. The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1947. 72 p.

the study of party-political work in the armed forces.³ It should be noted that party-political work in the armed forces was also the subject of dissertation research⁴.

The third stage (1980-1991) of historiography was characterized by an expansion of the source base. New archival documents were introduced into scholarly circulation, although access to them remained limited.

Third period: 1992 – present. With the change in the political system, the study of party political work has undergone significant changes. Modern research has shifted its emphasis to a critical analysis of the activities of the CPSU and its role in the country's history, including the Party of the Red Army. At the same time, interest in the history of tank units remains relevant.

Thus, despite a significant amount of research, many aspects of this complex and multifaceted topic, especially in tank formations under the command of M.E. Katukov, remain insufficiently studied.

The object of the research is the system of party-political work in the Red Army (June 1941 – May 1945).

The subject of the research is the preparation of personnel of the guards tank formations under the command of M.E. Katukov for combat operations, presented through a set of priority areas of party-political work, specific forms, methods, as well as the achieved results in strengthening the moral and political state, military discipline and offensive impulse of tank soldiers (1941-1945).

The purpose of the research is to identify and systematize, based on a comprehensive analysis, the content, forms, methods, and results of party-political work in the Guards tank formations under the command of M.E. Katukov during the Great Patriotic War, and to determine its role in ensuring the combat effectiveness and moral and psychological stability of personnel.

Research objectives:

- to characterize the prerequisites and features of party-political work in the

³ Party - political Job in the Soviet Armed Forces Forces / [General editor: Lieutenant General A. E. Khmel]. Moscow : Voenizdat, 1968. 352 p.; Soviet Armed Forces: History of Construction. Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978 . 516 pp. Radzievsky A. I. Tank Strike: Tank Army in the Front's Offensive Operation Based on the Experience of the Great Patriotic War. Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977. 290 p.

⁴ Zhuraylev A. G. Party-political work in the First Tank Army during the battles on the Kursk Bulge in the summer of 1943 : diss Cand. of History: 07.00.00. Moscow, 1971. 210 p.

armored forces of the Red Army in 1941-1942;

- to summarize the experience of increasing the level of moral, political and combat training of soldiers of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade (September 1941-November 1942);

- determine the role of Komsomol organizations in the mobilization of personnel of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade to carry out combat missions (1941-1942);

- to identify areas for improving party-political work in the context of preparation for defensive battles on the Kursk Bulge (January-July 1943);

- to study the specifics of political and educational work in the troops of the 1st Tank Army in July-December 1943;

- describe the strengthening of the role of agitation and propaganda activities of the political departments of the 1st Tank Army units before the battle, during the battle and after the battle;

- to highlight priority areas for the ideological and political training of Komsomol members and non-Union youth in the mechanism for increasing the combat effectiveness of the 1st Guards Tank Army;

- to analyze the forms and methods of strengthening party-political work in units of the 1st Guards Tank Army in the Zhitomir -Berdichev, Proskurov -Chernivtsi and Lvov- Sandomierz operations;

- to identify the priorities of political training of personnel of the 1st Guards Tank Army in the Vistula- Oder , East Pomeranian and Berlin offensive operations (January-May 1945).

The chronological framework of the research is June 1941 – May 1945. The lower boundary of the study is associated with the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, as well as the formation of the 4th Tank Brigade under the command of M.E. Katukov, which was later part of the 1st Tank (Guards) Army. The upper boundary of the study is determined by the end of the Great Patriotic War and the disposition of units of the 1st Guards Tank Army . in the territory of the Soviet occupation zone of Germany.

Territorial scope of the research are determined by the combat space of the 4th Tank (then 1st Guards) Brigade and the 1st Guards Tank Army (Western, Voronezh, 1st

Ukrainian, 1st Belorussian Fronts).

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research. In developing the topic, the author drew on the works of domestic and foreign historians devoted to the development of the armed forces, the evolution of armored forces, and the organization of party-political work in 1941-1945.

Methodological basis of the research. The work is based on the principles of objectivity and historicism, as well as a systems approach. In addressing the goals and objectives, the author applied historical-genetic, historical-typological, and historical-systemic methods, as well as historical-comparative analysis.

Research source base. In achieving the stated goal and objectives, we used sources of diverse origin and content, which can be divided into several groups.

The first group of sources These documents constitute regulatory documents of state and party bodies, as well as military command bodies . The second group of sources includes the office documentation of the 4th Tank Brigade (1st Guards Tank Brigade) and the 1st Tank Army (1st Guards Tank Army), reports, summaries, dispatches, and papers. The third group of sources for the dissertation research includes party journalism. The fourth group includes personal sources. The fifth group of sources is the press and periodicals.

The degree of reliability of the research results This is provided, firstly, by a detailed historiographical analysis of works illuminating the forms and methods of party-political work in the Red Army. Secondly, the work is based on a representative corpus of sources, both in volume and composition, subjected to a comprehensive critical review using available verified data.

The provisions submitted for defense and having scientific novelty:

1) It was determined that during the initial period of the Great Patriotic War (1941–1942), the system of party-political work in the armored forces adapted to frontline conditions. Its specificity was determined by a combination of factors related to the nature of armored vehicles, crew organization, tactics, and combat conditions. The response to wartime challenges was expressed in the restoration of the institution of military commissars (July 1941), followed by the transition to unity of command with

the introduction of the position of deputy commander for political affairs (October 1942); and the simplification of the procedure for admission to the party and Komsomol (August–December 1941). This dynamic reflected the search for an optimal model for the relationship between political control and command-and-control management. It was revealed that the substantive content of party-political work included three main blocks: a) ideological and political education (explanation of the goals of the war, patriotic and international education, popularization of the decisions of the party and government); b) strengthening military discipline and law and order (combating panic, cowardice, desertion, preventing violations); c) military-technical propaganda (increasing technical literacy, mastering new technology, popularizing the experience of driving and firearms experts). The main methods of party and political work in the armored forces in 1941-1942 were: oral agitation (individual and group conversations, political information sessions, meetings), printed propaganda (frontline, army and divisional newspapers, leaflets, combat leaflets), cultural and mass work (clubs, amateur performances, cinema, radio), as well as the personal example of commanders, commissars and political workers on the battlefield. The key requirement for agitation and propaganda activities was its targeted nature, efficiency and connection to the specific tactical situation (Section 8 "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", Section 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of the scientific specialty 5.6.1 Domestic history).

2) It has been proven that in the 1st Guards Tank Brigade (before November 11, 1941, the 4th Tank Brigade), a flexible system of party-political work was developed during the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, combining organizational and party-related, agitational, propaganda, and control methods. The key methods of influence were the personal example of communists and Komsomol members, individual work with military personnel, socialist competition, and moral incentives. The variability of the methods used (from rallies and readings to "Battle Leaflets" and political classes) depending on the specific situation—on the march, in the echelon, before battle, during combat operations, and during replenishment—enabled a rapid response to changing tactical situations. Thanks to this, the brigade was able to maintain a high level of

discipline, moral and psychological stability and combat readiness of personnel in the difficult conditions of 1941-1942. (Section 8 "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", Section 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 Russian history) .

3) It is argued that the Young Communist League organizations of the 4th and then 1st Guards Tank Brigade in 1941-1942 were a key link in the system of mobilizing personnel for combat missions. They provided feedback to personnel, promptly identified shortcomings, and served as a reserve for promotion to command and party positions. This duality allowed Komsomol organizations to integrate into the military command system, complementing rather than duplicating the work of political agencies and commanders. The Komsomol organizations of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade combined mass (socialist competition, rallies, general meetings, fundraising campaigns), group (battle leaflets, newspaper readings, unit discussions of articles, bureau and presidium meetings), and individual (personal conversations, mentoring, individual assignments, personal responsibility for assigned work areas) forms and methods. The brigade's Komsomol organizations contributed to the creation and strengthening of the Guards unit's spirit. By promoting heroic deeds, awarding distinguished service members, and through the daily education of the Katukov Guardsman, they fostered a strong identity that became an important factor in the moral and psychological stability of personnel. Along with these achievements, shortcomings were also identified in the work of Komsomol organizations: weak individual work with group Komsomol organizers, irregular monitoring of decision implementation, formalism in meeting preparation, and insufficient educational work in certain units. However, the brigade's political department and Komsomol bodies promptly identified these shortcomings, discussed them at meetings and seminars, and developed measures (Section 8, "Military History of Russia, the Development of its Armed Forces at Various Stages of Development," Section 22, "History of the Great Patriotic War," of the academic specialty datasheet 5.6.1, "Russian History").

4) it has been substantiated that in the period from January to July 1943, a comprehensive restructuring of the system of party and political work was carried out in

the 1st Tank Army under the command of M.E. Katukov, caused by the need for: a) combat coordination of formations of different composition and combat experience; b) adaptation to new operational and strategic tasks, including in connection with the abolition of the institution of deputy company commanders for political affairs; c) the integration of new forms and methods of educational work taking into account the specifics of tank troops. The main forms of party and political work were: individual and group conversations (including with the involvement of the army commander M.E. Katukov), rallies, party and Komsomol meetings, technical conferences, as well as targeted work of agitators. Particular attention was paid to a differentiated approach to various categories of military personnel (tank commanders, drivers, gunners, radio operators) and to working with new recruits, including non-Russian soldiers. In preparation for the Battle of Kursk, the 1st Tank Army's political department conducted a series of inspections that revealed significant shortcomings: formalism in the conduct of party and Komsomol meetings, weak oversight of decision implementation, poor quality of political reports, and political workers' disconnect from the real situation. In response to these problems, the army's political department organized a series of meetings, seminars, and training sessions, introduced personal responsibility for party and Komsomol organizers for the state of the military personnel's work, and improved the reporting and control system. This made it possible to quickly correct shortcomings and increase the effectiveness of political and educational work in units and subdivisions of the 1st TA (paragraph 8 "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", paragraph 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 Domestic history);

5) It was revealed that the specifics of political and educational work in the 1st Tank Army during the offensive operations of 1943 were determined by the transfer of the center of gravity of all political work to company party organizers and Komsomol organizers, who became key figures in the educational process; the operational adaptation of forms and methods of work to the rapid nature of the offensive (if in the defense relatively static forms dominated - planned political classes, lectures, rallies, meetings on the scale of companies and battalions - then in the offensive priority was

given to operational, mobile forms: short political briefings, individual conversations in crews, operational communication of combat orders, popularization of heroic deeds directly during combat operations). During the summer and autumn battles of 1943, the content of political education work in the 1st Tank Army was significantly enriched by the systematic inclusion of military-technical topics: studying the tactical and technical characteristics of German armored vehicles, practicing countermeasures, and mastering their own equipment. Technical conferences, discussions about the vulnerabilities of enemy vehicles, and the exchange of experience between crews became an integral part of political education. The combination of ideological education with the continuous transfer of combat experience, the ritualization of the memory of the fallen, and reliance on the personal example of communists and Komsomol members in offensive battles ensured high morale, discipline, and mass heroism among personnel. As a result, despite significant losses, the Party and Komsomol membership steadily grew, and the army itself maintained high combat effectiveness and was successfully prepared for new winter operations. (Section 8 "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", Section 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 Domestic history).

6) It has been proven that the key elements of agitation and propaganda work in the 1st Tank Army in 1943 were : the utmost efficiency in popularizing heroic deeds and disseminating Sovinformburo reports to personnel; situational adaptation of forms – from relatively static forms (lectures, reports, large-scale rallies) to mobile, operational methods (short conversations, individual work in crews, oral transmission of information "from mouth to mouth", leaflets); personal responsibility of commanders and political workers for the delivery of newspapers to each crew; the inseparable unity of agitational words and the personal example of agitators, communists, and Komsomol members. After leaving the fighting and during operational pauses, agitation work reoriented itself to welcoming and educating new reinforcements. Newly arrived soldiers were given talks on the unit's combat traditions and the exploits of its heroes, given tours of the units, and shown artistic and documentary materials. Agitation groups and reading groups were created to engage with young soldiers, and books were

actively used, as well as visual aids (slogans, posters, and photo displays). This system, which also included targeted work with the multinational composition, made it possible to transform agitation and propaganda into an effective factor in managing the morale and psychological state of the 1st Tank Army, ensuring a high level of offensive fervor, mass heroism, and the successful completion of combat missions in both defensive and offensive operations in 1943, as well as the rapid integration of new recruits into the Guards corps. (Section 8 "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", Section 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 Domestic history).

7) It has been substantiated that in 1944-1945, in the 1st Guards Tank Army, under multi-level party leadership and through the implementation of GlavPU RKKA Directives No. 010 and No. 06, a system of ideological and political training for Komsomol members and non-Union youth was established. Its key elements included: the institution of group Komsomol organizers as grassroots educators, a system of targeted Komsomol assignments, a differentiated approach to various categories of young soldiers (including reinforcements from liberated regions and fighters of non-Russian nationality), as well as the inextricable link between ideological education and combat practice and the personal example of Komsomol activists. This system ensured the reproduction of Komsomol ranks, the continuous replenishment of the party by the best Komsomol members and the vanguard role of youth in battle, becoming a significant factor in increasing the combat capability of troops at the final stage of the war (paragraph 8 of "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", paragraph 22 of "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 Domestic history).

8) it is argued that in During the Zhitomir -Berdichev, Proskurov -Chernivtsi, and Lvov- Sandomierz offensive operations of 1944, the party-political work of the 1st Guards Tank Army adapted to the conditions of highly maneuverable combat, the crossing of large water obstacles, and the transfer of hostilities to the territory of Western Ukraine and Poland . It was based on the following: continuity of political influence at all stages-from preparation for the march to the consolidation of

bridgeheads; an operational combination of rallies, short meetings, conversations, and visual agitation based on the popularization of the exploits and personal example of communists and Komsomol members; differentiated work with reinforcements, including conscripts from the liberated regions and soldiers of non-Russian nationality, aimed at assimilating Guards traditions and fostering hatred of the enemy; As well as a targeted explanation of the Red Army's liberation mission in Poland. It was this system that made it possible to quickly replenish losses, build up the Party and Komsomol ranks, and successfully resolve complex operational tasks, including crossing the Western Bug, San, Dniester, Prut, and Vistula rivers (Section 8, "Military History of Russia, the Development of its Armed Forces at Various Stages of Development," Section 22, "History of the Great Patriotic War," of the academic specialty datasheet 5.6.1, "Russian History").

9) it has been established that in the Vistula- Oder , East Pomeranian and Berlin offensive operations of 1945, the distinctive features of the party-political work of the 1st Guards Tank Army were: the comprehensive application of interrelated organizational, agitation-propaganda and educational measures, the targeted implementation of the directives of the Main Command of the Red Army No. 012 and No. 013, which ensured the cohesion of crews, the mastery of equipment and the creation of a trained reserve of party cadres; the prompt adaptation of forms and methods of work to the exceptionally high pace of the offensive - from joint party meetings of forward detachments to leaflets "pass it on along the chain" and the presentation of certificates of gratitude from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief directly on the battlefield; comprehensive political support for street fighting (creation of political organs in assault groups, work with reinforcements, combating immoral phenomena and clarifying directives on the attitude towards the German population); as well as maintaining the vanguard role of communists and Komsomol members (paragraph 8 "Military history of Russia, the development of its armed forces at various stages of development", paragraph 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War" of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 Domestic history).

Compliance of the dissertation topic with the requirements of the specialty passport of the Higher Attestation Commission. The research complies with the scientific specialty passport 5.6.1. Domestic history: p. 8 "Military history of Russia, development of its armed forces at various stages of development"; paragraph 22 "History of the Great Patriotic War".

The practical significance of this study lies in the potential for its findings, summarized historical experience, and archival materials introduced into scientific circulation to address contemporary challenges in military development and personnel training in the Russian Armed Forces. Specific examples of the educational activities of commanders and political officers of the 1st Guards Tank Army can be used as historical case studies in the training of cadets and students at military educational institutions.

Theoretical significance of the research results Its significance is determined by its contribution to the expansion and concretization of scientific knowledge regarding the nature, driving forces, and practical impact of party-political work in armored forces during the Great Patriotic War. A comprehensive reconstruction of the party-political work experience in the Guards tank formations under the command of M.E. Katukov made it possible to systematize the range of forms, methods, and substantive areas of political education used by personnel.

Validation of the research results. The dissertation results were validated through discussion and recommendation for defense at the Department of History, Political Science, and Public Policy of the Central Russian Institute of Management, a branch of the RANEPa. The dissertation's key provisions and conclusions are presented in 13 scientific publications, including four articles in journals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC). The dissertation's findings were presented at international and national scientific and practical conferences.

The structure of the dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, nine paragraphs, a conclusion, a list of used sources and literature, and appendices.


E.V. Nikitin