

Militärhistorische
Exkursion /
Battlefield Tour

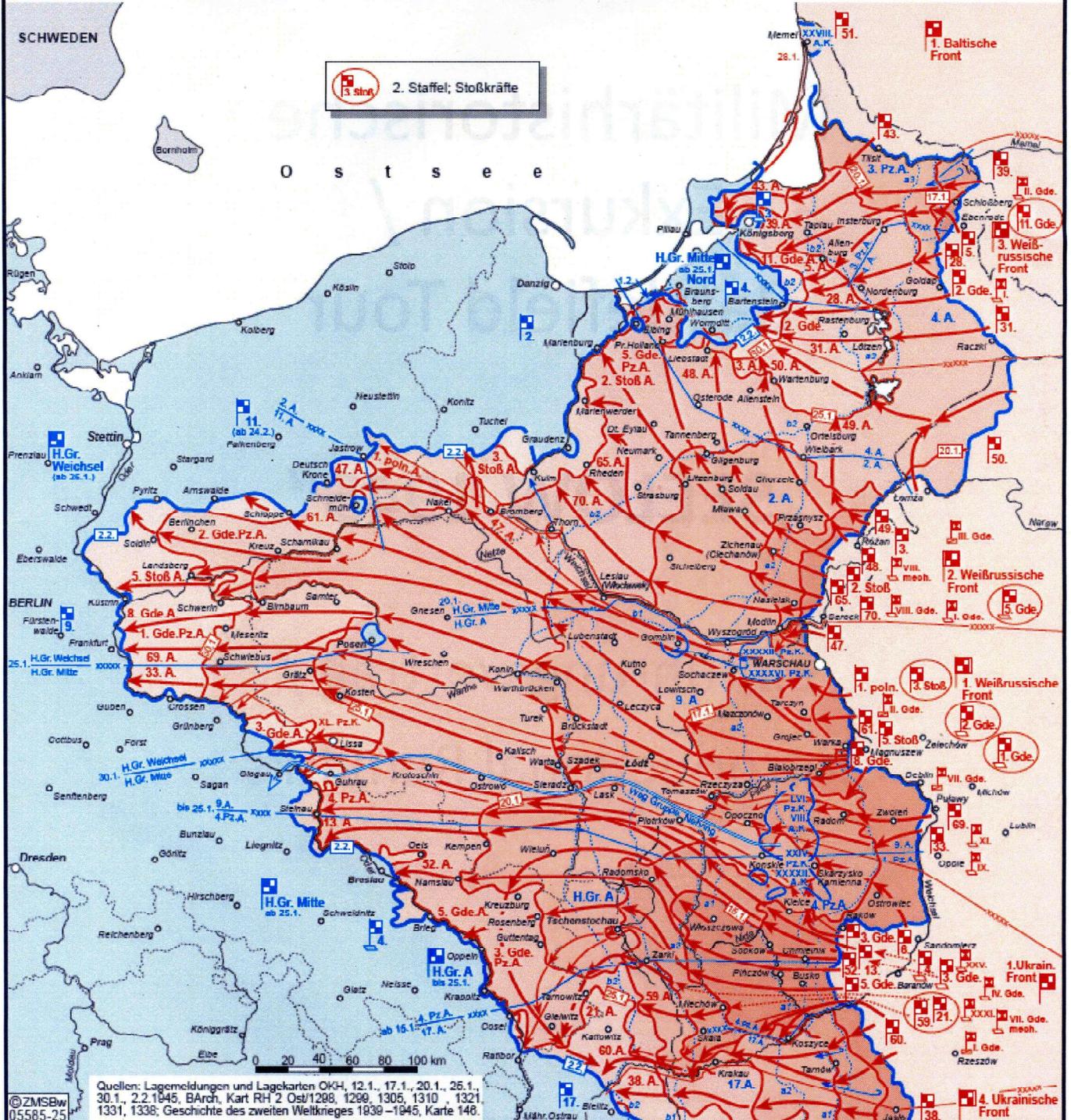
„SEELOW 1945“

Einführungsvortrag /
Introductory Remarks



Übersichtskarte Sowjetische Winteroffensive 1945

Die sowjetischen Operationen vom 12. Januar bis 2. Februar 1945 zwischen Oder, Weichsel und Ostpreußen





Deutsche und Sowjetische Befehlshaber an der Oderfront 1945

HGr WEICHSEL / 9. Armee und 1. Belorussische Front / 8. Gardearmee



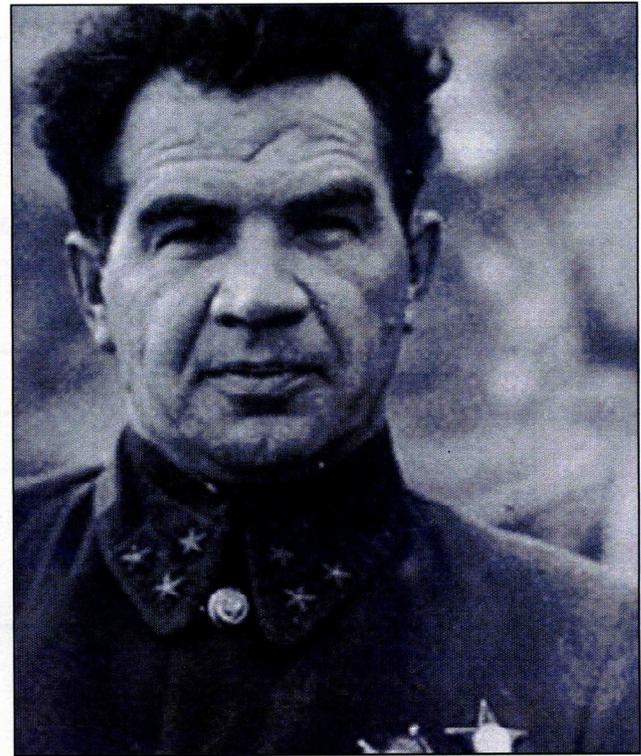
Generaloberst
Gotthart **Heinrici** (1886-1971)



Marschall der Sowjetunion
Georgy K. **Zhukov** (1896-1974)



General der Infanterie
Theodor **Busse** (1897-1986)

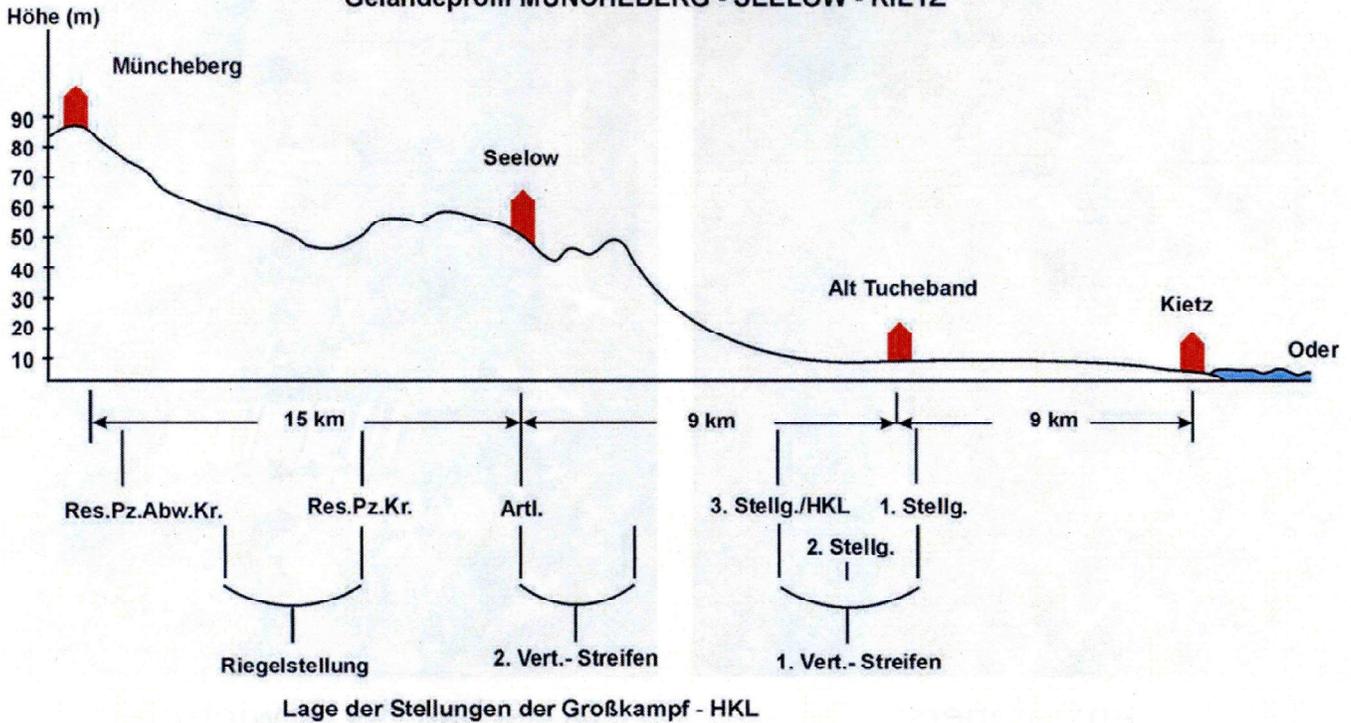


General
Vasily I. **Chuikov** (1900-1982)

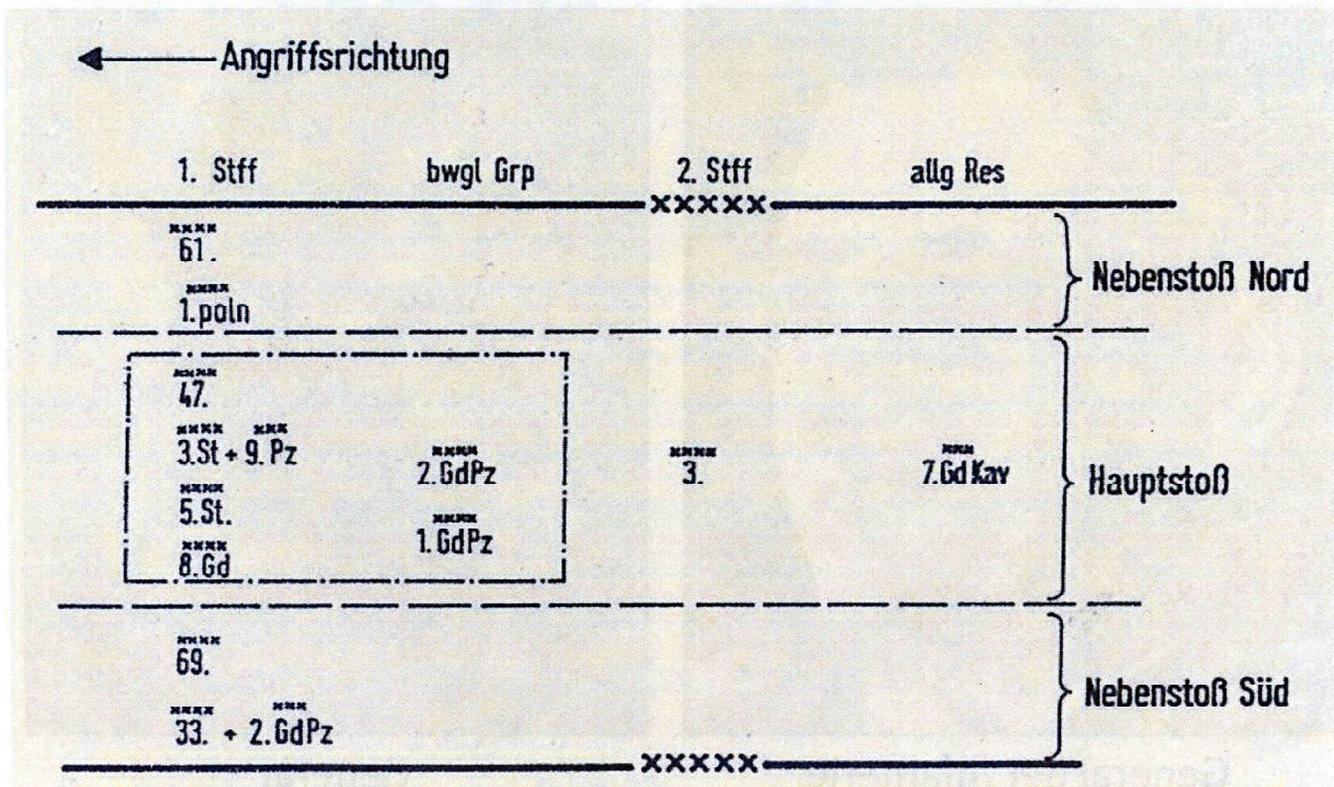


Großkampfverfahren & Prinzip Kräfteansatz 1. Belorussische Front

Geländeprofil MÜNCHEBERG - SEELOW - KIETZ

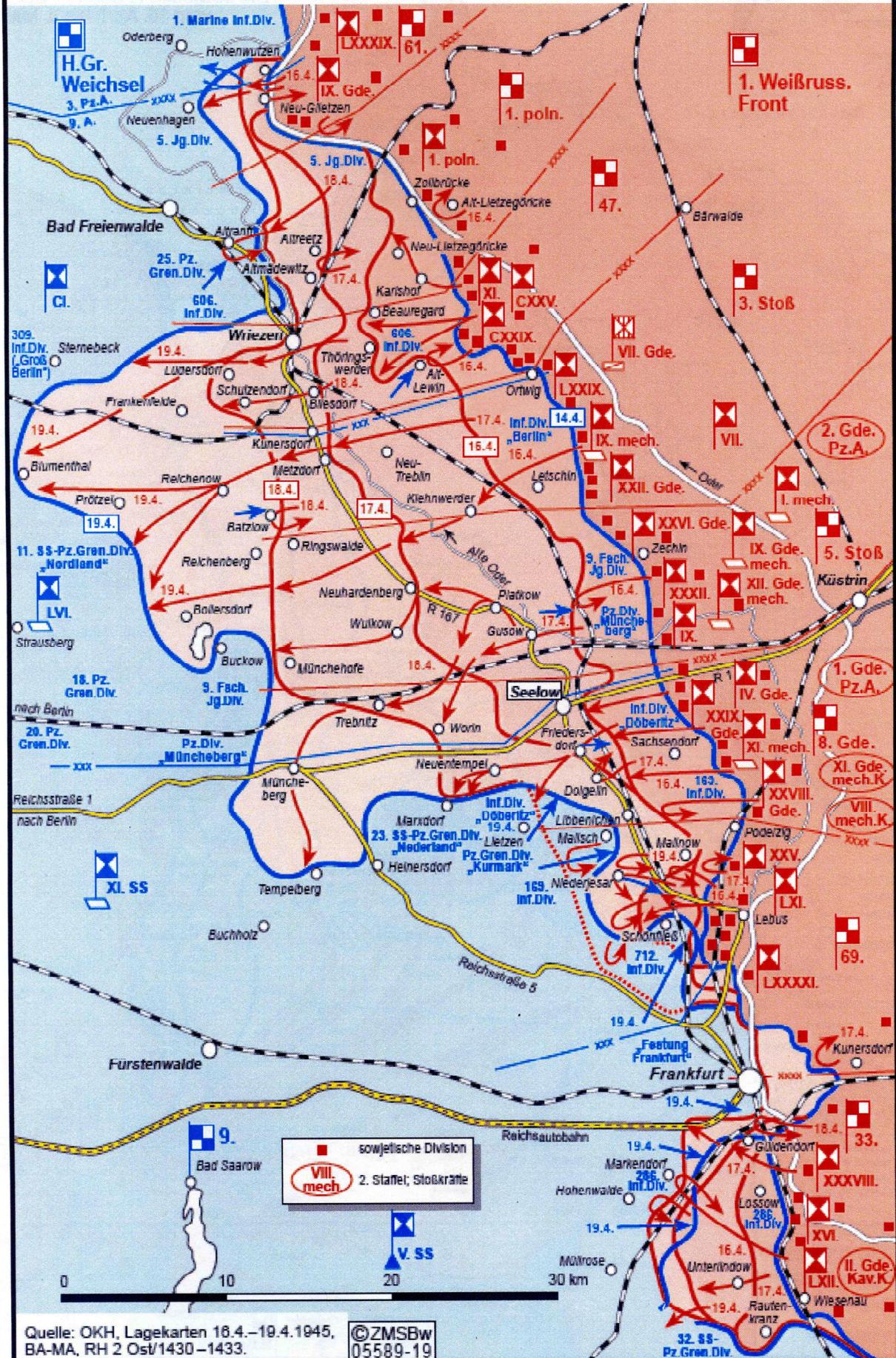


Prinzipskizze des operativen Kräfteansatzes der 1. Belorussischen Front





Die Schlacht um die Seelower Höhen vom 16. bis 19. April 1945



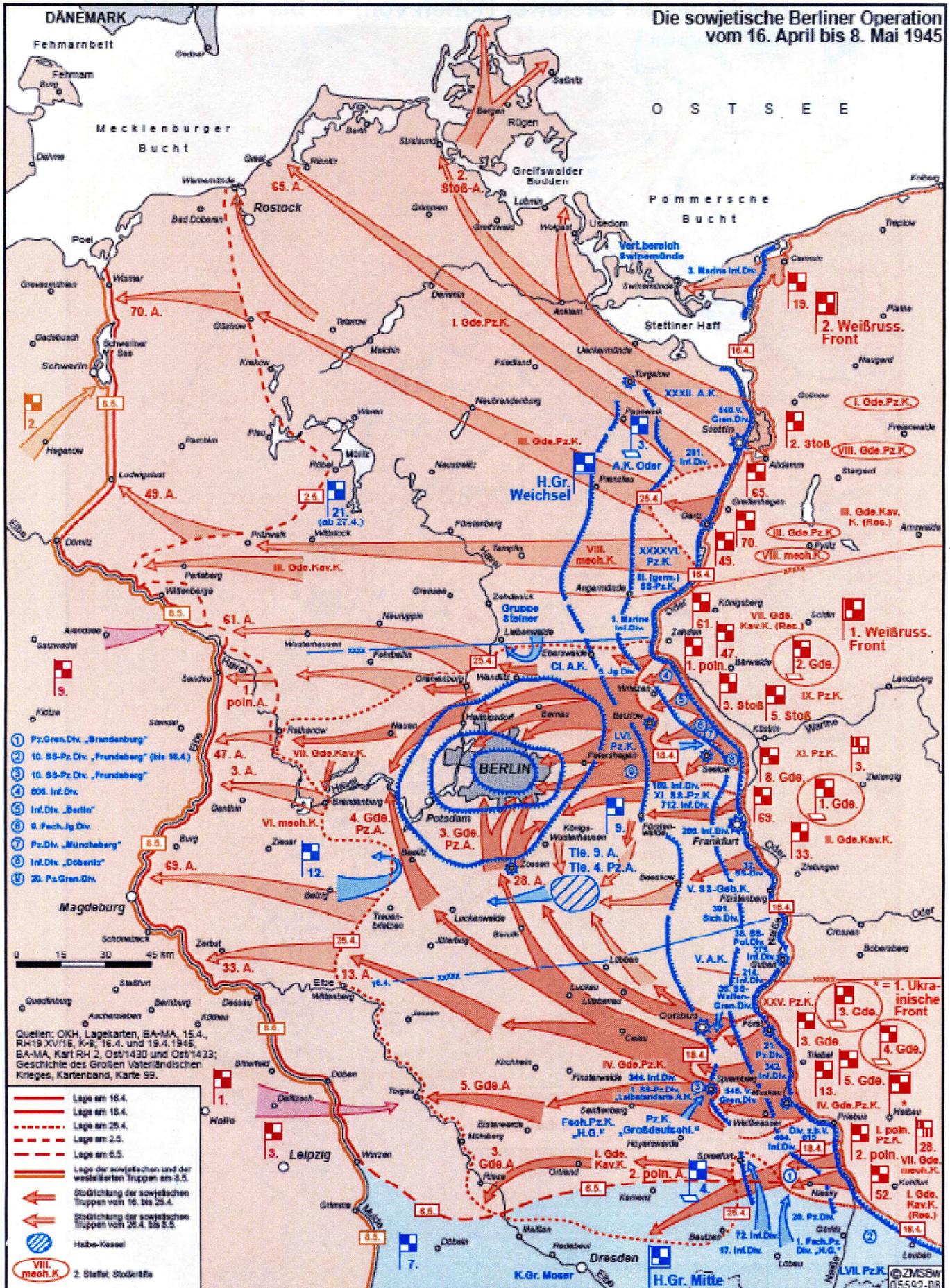
Quelle: OKH, Lagekarten 16.4.-19.4.1945, BA-MA, RH 2 Ost/1430-1433.

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Die Sowjetische Offensive 1945

Die sowjetische Berliner Operation vom 16. April bis 8. Mai 1945



Introduction¹

Theodor Fontane deliberately wrote his oeuvre "Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg" [Journeys through the Brandenburg March] in a plain Prussian prose. But there is one paragraph in which Fontane appears to be overwhelmed by nature when describing a Whitsun evening he had enjoyed while watching into the Oder river marshland from a high point north of Seelow,

"One view from this Seelow Height makes us see God's tremendous blessing. [...] He who comes here in summertime, when the rape plantations are in full bloom and their golden colour and their scent are flowing out over the marshland, believes that some charm has taken him into a faraway wonderland [...]. But he who comes to this height by a lucky chance on a Whitsun evening will never forget this impression. The damp of the marshland settled like a haze over the country, all the peace, the joy, the scent and the distant half dying sound of thirty church towers resound in the air as if heaven itself was ringing in the next morning."² (end of quotation)

In April 1945 it was this idyllic scenery that was struck by the most dreadful disaster that has ever come down on a German region. At the centre of events was the Krugberg hill near Werbig, only two kilometres north from here, from where Fontane had regarded the Oder marshland at the time. The following is a description of the history leading up to the disaster and the course of the battle.

Buildup

At the latest after the Battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943, World War II must have been considered a war that was definitely lost for the German Reich. However, the Red Army found it extremely difficult to push back the *Wehrmacht* and the Soviet leaders often failed to achieve set objectives because again and again they underestimated their enemy who was clearly inferior by his potential.³ An exception to this rule is the Soviet winter offensive from the Vistula river to the Oder river which started in January 1945 and in which the Soviet troops managed to venture much farther than planned. So, what happened to the German Panzer this time? In the first place the answer must be sought in the offensive Hitler ordered in the Ardennes forests – the Battle of the Bulge – to counter the Western powers. Against all military logic, the German Panzer reserves had been wasted here in December 1944. After the failure of the attack, Hitler deployed the bulk of the remaining Panzers to Hungary where the final offensive of the German *Wehrmacht* would take place. Meanwhile the Eastern Front along the Vistula line resembled very much a house of cards that would have to collapse under any major blow. But even more serious was the fact that the *Wehrmacht* no longer had any Panzer reserves it could commit in reaction to an enemy breakthrough.

Slide: Die sowjetischen Operationen vom 12.1.-2.2.1945 zwischen Oder, Weichsel und Ostpreußen (MGFA 05585-23)

¹ Within the framework of a conference, the author conducted a military-historical excursion to the area of Seelow with Dr. Richard Laskowski. The presentations given in the field at the time were the Basis for the "Excursion Folder Seelow 1945" subsequently elaborated by the author for the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (MGFA; Military History Research Institute). This presentation was taken from the folder and has been slightly modified and supplemented with footnotes.

² Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, Part II: The Oder country, Berlin, Weimar, 2nd edition, 1994, p. 195f.

³ One of the few counterexamples is operation "Bagration" in the summer of 1944 which caused the collapse of Army Group Centre. At present, the author is working on a comprehensive account of this operation.

On 12 January, the Red Army started its major offensive out of the bridgeheads west of the Vistula river. Only 19 days later, forward elements arrived at the Oder river. At the first go the frozen river was crossed north of Küstrin near Kienitz on 31 January and south of Küstrin near Reitwein on 2 February. Given this surprising evolution of the situation, the Soviets were offered some unexpectedly positive perspectives. In Moscow it was seriously discussed whether the favourable situation was to be exploited and the forces were to switch over abruptly to launching an attack onto the almost undefended German capital. At this time the bulk of the German troops at the front was still east of the Oder river engaged in fierce defensive fighting. The only genuine threat to the dashing forward Soviet attack forces were the German air forces.

But then the Soviet supreme command backed down from the boldness of this operational idea. On the one hand, the reason was the over-stretched supply lines and a threat to the exposed northern flank. It was feared that the German formations remaining in Pomerania would launch a counterattack. Also, Stalin would on no account run the risk of a military setback which would also be a political and psychological one. Obviously he still had in mind the "spectre of Warsaw" from 1920. At the end of the Russian civil war, the Red Army managed to advance onto Warsaw despite over-stretched front lines. At the time Stalin had been a driving force as one of the Military Council's member. But then, all of a sudden Marshal Pilsudski launched a counteroffensive and the famous "miracle of the Vistula" happened. Apparently, Stalin was still under the influence of this trauma.

In February 1945, the German 9th Army managed to stabilise the front on the Oder river. During the following weeks, the battle for the bridgeheads became a trench warfare, very much resembling the attrition battles at Verdun in World War I. The fiercest fighting were raging around Küstrin because this old stronghold was like a plug on the bottleneck that provided direct access to Berlin on *Reichsstraße 1*. The Soviet forces took until 30 March to take Küstrin after several abortive attacks. By taking Küstrin, it was possible to link up the two separate bridgeheads north and south of the town to form one operational bridgehead. This created an essential precondition for the offensive against the *Reich's* capital Berlin that would bring about the decision.

In the following there will always be the question of why this offensive was forced under such a hectic pressure and why the death of thousands of Soviet soldiers was taken into account as if every single hour or minute had mattered. But the Operation took place under the motto "the race to Berlin," and Stalin did not want to run any risk; he wanted to arrive in Berlin before the Western Allies at any rate.

But this race was only imaginary. After all Berlin was located in the zone that had been awarded to the Soviets during the Yalta Conference. All the more, the Western Allies shrunk from the enormous toll of life to be expected during the house-to-house fighting for the *Reich's* capital. US-General Omar Bradley, e.g., anticipated losses of 100,000 soldiers. Soviet and Polish losses during the whole Berlin Operation by the way amounted to 361,367 men including 81,116 killed in action.⁴

Slide: Portrait General Busse

In this context it is noted that the Western Allies were in a much better position to take Berlin. General of the Infantry Theodor Busse, then commanding general German 9th Army which was employed in the sector of Seelow, wrote on this matter after the war:

⁴ Grif sekretnosti snjat. Poteri voorulennyh sil SSSR v vojnach, boevich dejstvijach i voennyh konfliktach [No longer secret. [Losses of the Soviet forces in wars, combat and military conflicts], editor: G.F. Krivogeev, Moscow 1993, p. 220. In this presentation Soviet losses included the Polish losses.

"Hence the Army went into combat with the motto, 'And if the US or British tanks come right into our back while we deny the Russians any further step forward, we have rendered our duty and obligation as soldiers to the German people, our conscience and history!'"⁵ (end of quotation)

Operational Planning

The Oder line east of Berlin was to be defended by Army Group Vistula under Colonel General Gotthart Heinrici. The Army Group was facing three Soviet fronts:

- 2nd Belorussian Front commanded by Marshal Rokossovkiy in the north,
- 1st Belorussian Front commanded by Marshal Zhukov in the centre, and
- 1st Ukrainian Front commanded by Marshal Konev in the south.

Slide: Portrait Marschall Zukov

The point of main effort was placed in the centre with the front under Marshal Georgi Konstantinovic Zhukov. The Marshal was characterised by a famous Russian Military Historian as follows: "**Zhukov corresponded most to Stalin's concept of a general. He considered him as a man who resembled himself in terms of uncompromising determination.**"⁶ Above all Stalin was impressed by the fact that the Marshal was capable of "**taking firmest action if the situation so required.**"⁷

Moreover, Stalin skilfully exploited the rivalry between Zhukov and the competing Konev, commander of 1st Ukrainian Front attacking further to the south. Contrary to all rules the boundary between these two army groups had not been set for the depth of the enemy area. Stalin wanted to leave the triumph of conquering Berlin to the one of the ambitious marshals who would be the first to break through the German front. Through this principle of *divide et impera* he very much forced the race between the two competitors.⁸

Slide: Die Schlacht um die Seelower Höhen vom 16.-19.4.1915 (MGFA 05589-15)

Zhukov's army group had 11 armies and numerous additional reserves. Four armies launched the main thrust in the first echelon over a width of 44 km, i.e. 47th Army, 3rd and 5th Thrust Army and – in the main effort – near Seelow 8th Guard Army. These forces were immediately followed by 1st and 2nd Guard Tank Army as so-called mobile operational groups. At the wings north and south thereof two armies each were attacking. Second echelon forces and the reserves were following in the centre.

This tremendous concentration of forces was essentially directed against a single German army, i.e. 9th Army commanded by the aforementioned General Busse. 9th Army's mission was to block access to Berlin along *Reichsstraße 1* which was the highway no 1. As the Soviet main effort had been clearly detected, this army received enormous reinforcements at the cost of its neighbouring armies. 9th Army had 15 out of the Army Group's total 24 divisions, and it concentrated 512 of the total 754 remaining operational tanks and assault guns.

But this concentration of forces at 9th Army gave a hopelessly inferior picture compared to the masses of personnel and materiel at the hand of Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front.

⁵ Theodor Busse, Die letzte Schlacht der 9. Armee [The final battle of 9th Army], in: Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau, 5 (1955), booklet 4, p. 157.

⁶ Dmitrij Volkogonov, Stalin. Triumph and Tragedy. A political portrait, Düsseldorf 1989, p. 632.

⁷ Ibid., p. 633.

⁸ See David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, When Titans Clashed. How the Red Army Stopped Hitler, Kansas City 1995, p. 266.

- He commanded nearly one million soldiers compared with the 130,000 men in German 9th Army, i.e. seven times as many men.
- His more than 3,000 tanks outmatched the 500 Panzers of General Busse by the six-fold.
- For artillery and air defence guns, the superiority was the eleven-fold, i.e. also 18,000 opposing 1,600.
- With 14 over 1, the ratio of aircraft was even more overwhelming; more than 4,000 aircraft with 1st Belorussian Front opposed some 300 German aircraft that all the more were running out of fuel.⁹

It must be noted that in all other sections of the front the ratio was even more unfavourable for the Germans. After all Army Group Vistula had clearly identified the main effort of the Soviet attack and consequently placed the main effort of the defence exactly in the same place. Zhukov therefore massed his own troops in a degree that was unprecedented.¹⁰

In the breakthrough sections the armies' attack sectors had a width of 4 to 7 km. The rifle corps and the divisions attacked over a width of 2 to 3 km and 1 to 2 km, respectively. These sectors narrowed considerably with the introduction of the second echelon. During the first phase an average of 30 tanks and assault guns were employed per kilometre of the front. Together with the two guard tank armies introduced into the front at 8th Guard Army and 5th Thrust Army on the first day of attack, the average rises to 100 tanks per kilometre of the front. From a statistic point of view, the attack was launched over a width of 20 km with one tank every 10 m in the main effort. The density of Soviet artillery was just as impressive and amounted to 300 barrels per kilometre of the front in the breakthrough sections. In addition, Zhukov had more than 1,500 rocket launchers. And after all, there was the overwhelming superiority of the Soviet air force.

Without exaggeration we can refer to this situation as a *non plus ultra*. Never before has such an excess of firepower and impetus been concentrated in such a narrow section of the front. But – as shall be seen – this tremendous concentration of forces did create enormous problems.

Slide: Geländeprofil (Gedenkstätte Seelower Höhen)

In the section of Seelow, the German system of defence had a depth of some 40 km. The section was divided into three zones of defence which held three staggered lines of prepared defences.

- The first zone of defence covered the Oder marshland, the swampy lowlands in the Oder valley. Here the actual main battle line ran some 5 km behind the forward line along the so-called main trench (which was a wide draining ditch).
- The second zone of defence along the Seelow Heights was the most important one because it held the major battle position which was to receive the withdrawing forces and the reserves to bring the enemy advance to a halt.

⁹ Cf. Richard Lakowski, *Seelow 1945. Die Entscheidungsschlacht an der Oder*, [The decisive battle at the Oder river], 3rd edition, Berlin 1996, p. 69. The figures given for Soviet aircraft differ from the statistics provided by Lakowski. As 2nd Belorussian Front started its offensive only on 20 April, the aircraft of its 41 Air Army initially flew sorties in support of Zhukov's Belorussian Front. This fact adds up to the total number of 4,188 aircraft. See Tony Le Tissier, *Durchbruch an der Oder. Der Vormarsch der Roten Armee 1945* [Breakthrough at the Oder River. The advance of the Red Army in 1945], Frankfurt on Main, Berlin 1995, p 202

¹⁰ For the following information cf. above all Karl Stich, *Der Durchbruch der Verteidigung der faschistischen deutschen Truppen an der Oder durch die sowjetischen Streitkräfte in der Berliner Operation im Frühjahr 1945*, [The Breakthrough of the Defence of the Fascist German Troops on the Oder River Through the Soviet Forces During the Berlin Operation in the Spring of 1945], dissertation (A) at the "Friedrich Engels" Military Academy, Dresden 1989, p. 66ff.

- The third zone of defence was established in the depth at the level of Müncheberg. Behind this line there were the first forward positions of the by then incomplete defensive belt around Berlin.

Marshal Zhukov is seen as the winner of the "Battle for Berlin." But paradoxically he had never planned a battle for Berlin but a one at the Oder river. He had intended to crush the German forces already here in their positions by an unprecedented rolling barrage. Subsequently, the two Guard Tank Armies that were kept in waiting initially were to advance in a classic pincer movement into the depth and encircle Berlin. Insofar the planning envisaged that on the first day of the Operation the Seelow Heights were to be overran, on the sixth day Berlin was to be taken and on the eleventh day the Elbe river was to be reached.

Start of the Offensive

After two days of probing attacks, the offensive started at 4 a.m. on 16 April with burst fire from thousands of guns immersing the night-dark Oder marshland into daylight within a single second. An incredible artillery fire ploughed through the German forward positions. Marshal Zhukov went to the Reitweiner Sporn, a landmark range of hills west of the Oder river, and joined the commander of 8th Guard Army, General Vasily Chuikov, in his observation bunker.

Slide: Portrait General Chuikov

From here they both watched the infernal sight. Chuikov gave the following account of his impressions:

"The entire lowland of the Oder valley was trembling – 40,000 guns opened fire simultaneously. 40,000! The bridgehead blazed with daylight. A hurricane of fire came down on the Seelow Heights. It seems as if the turned up soil loomed up into the sky like a dense forest."¹¹

Marshal Zhukov himself wrote the following:

"1,197,000 rounds were earmarked for the first day for the artillery alone, but eventually 1,236,000 rounds were fired. We used 2,450 wagons loaded with rounds, i.e. some 98,000 tons of metal."¹²

The effect was also unprecedented. Zhukov's reaction was enthusiastic. He gripped Chuikov's hand and called out, "Excellent! Excellent! Really very good!" The Soviet troops then managed to swiftly take the forwardmost German zone of defence. But then the unexpected happened as the offensive launched with the impetus of a steamroller suddenly slackened and was repulsed eventually.

How could this happen? Zhukov had walked into the trap of Colonel General Heinrici who commanded Army Group Vistula.

Slide: Portrait Generaloberst Heinrici

Heinrici had already seen service as a staff officer during World War I. He was therefore well conversant with attrition battle tactics the Germans had developed in the Great War called the *Großkampffverfahren* or the tactics of defending in the depth of the battlefield, also known as mobile defence. This method involved a *Hauptkampflinie* or main line of defence located behind a forward frontline, which sometimes was even completed with a second one in between. The forces of the frontlines were to retreat to the main line immediately before the start of an anticipated enemy attack in order to escape elimination through the rolling barrage of the enemy's artillery. As now the

¹¹ Vasilij Chujkov, *Das Ende des Dritten Reichs* [The End of the Third Reich], Munich 196, p. 129.

¹² Georgij K. Zhukov, *Erinnerungen und Gedanken* [Memories and Thoughts], Stuttgart 1969, p. 590.

enemy's infantry stormed onwards – buoyant from the easily obtained initial success – they would surprisingly run into the main line of resistance. However, meanwhile they were no longer within the range of their artillery but within optimal reach of the defender's artillery. It was then that the dashing attackers who were piled up in front of the main line of resistance were destroyed and repulsed in a counterattack.

However, this manoeuvre had a considerable inherent risk because the timing for the withdrawing move had to be perfect. If the defenders' forces left their forward positions too early, they would practically leave the fortifications they had established as a "present" to the attacker. Leaving the positions too late would have an even more disastrous impact, because the defending forces would then find themselves just between the forward and the rear positions, on the move and exposed to the attacker's rolling barrage without any protection.

Slide: Die Schlacht um die Seelower Höhen vom 16.-19.4.1915 (MGFA 05589-15)

But with the exception of some outposts, Generals Heinrici and Busse ordered the withdrawal of their troops at exactly the right point of time. Thus the massive artillery barrage had essentially fallen on empty earthworks. And the Germans managed to bring the attack to a halt at the main line of resistance – some 2 km in front of the Seelow Heights. Also, the employment of 143 air defence searchlights [*one of that type is to be seen on the exhibition area outside*] ordered by Zhukov turned out to be counterproductive. As a matter of fact, it was not the Germans that were blinded, but the advancing Red Army soldiers. This was because the artificial light was reflected from the wall of dust and smoke created by the artillery fire. All the more, the silhouettes of the illuminated Soviet troops made them excellent targets for the German defenders. But the request of many officers to have the searchlights turned off was rejected. After all, their use had been ordered by Zhukov himself.

At noon, Stalin called Marshal Zhukov on the telephone. The latter had to admit that the frontal attack on the Seelow Heights had failed. Stalin then told Zhukov that Marshal Konev had achieved the breakthrough as planned with 1st Ukrainian Front. Hence Zhukov had to fear that his arch rival would be triumphant and win the race to Berlin.

Premature Introduction of the Two Guard Tank Armies

In this situation, Zhukov was so frustrated that he made a fatal mistake. In a rash he changed his operations plan and wanted to force the breakthrough so to say with the crowbar. He ordered that 1st and 2nd Guard Tank Army that were kept in reserve for the time being and earmarked for breaching into the depth after the breakthrough be moved up to the front and that the total of their 1,400 tanks (and assault guns) be used as a ram for the tactical breakthrough. Zhukov intended to use these additional forces as a reinforcement for the stalled 8th Guard Army and 5th Thrust Army employed in the north of 8th Army near Gusow.

In a threefold sense this decision turned out to be a serious mistake.

(1) As commander of 8th Guard Army, General Chuikov, would later on harshly criticise that his army had sufficient – in fact rather too many – organic tank formations. This was because the Germans had flooded the swampy Oder marshland. Consequently there were only a few roads available and these were already congested with tanks. As a result, a total of 1,000 tanks and assault guns were huddled together in his frontal section with a width of 10 km. In the north with 5th Thrust Army the situation was similar.

(2) General Chuikov's order to reorganise his army and have the artillery pulled up

to the front coincided with Zhukov's order to the same effect. An incredible mess ensued which was exacerbated by the concurrent introduction of 1st Guard Tank Army. Two armies were carrying out reorganisation manoeuvres in one combat sector simultaneously and were hence paralysing each other. Chuikov described the developing chaos as follows,

"I implored Marshal Zhukov to cancel this order [...]. But Marshal Zhukov was not fond of cancelling his orders. Starting at noon, tank columns of three corps started to move on the few roads that had already been congested by the manoeuvre units of 8th [Guard] Army. The tank columns forced themselves between the columns of motor vehicles and tractors causing the failure of the artillery's change of positions. The spearheads managed to do their job, but the second attack echelon of divisions, corps and armies was completely paralysed."¹³

(3) The operational mission of 1st and 2nd Guard Tank Armies had originally been to thrust into the depth and make a pincer movement on Berlin once the forward formations achieved their breakthrough. But now, the roughly 1,400 tanks of the two armies were used to force the tactical breakthrough — similar to the mission of tanks during World War I.

In this context we may ask the question of what made Marshal Zhukov establish the main effort at Seelow of all places when he intended a 44-km wide breakthrough section. For Hitler, the Seelow Heights were to be the breakwater to protect the *Reich* from the "red flood" coming in from the east. This natural obstacle actually represents the location which was most unfavourable in terms of geography. And this was where the Germans had placed the main effort of their defences. But Zhukov apparently did not only follow operational and tactical considerations but also personal ones. So the actual reason for his approach was the fact that he wanted to outmanoeuvre his arch rival Konev and be the first to reach Berlin. This was the reason why he selected *Reichsstraße 1* from Küstrin to Berlin via Seelow as the main axis of attack. This was clearly the direct and shortest way and, logically, seemed to be the fastest one. It turned out, however, that this was a fatal error that cost the lives of so many Soviet soldiers.

The outcome of the attack on 16 April was shattering for Marshal Zhukov. As General of the Infantry Busse so aptly remarked, **"The enemy did not achieve a breakthrough anywhere, and not even a decisive penetration into the ridge."**¹⁴

Below the Seelow Heights the wreckage of 361 killed Soviet tanks was scattered blocking the roads.¹⁵ The hopelessly inferior soldiers of the German 9th Army had won a defensive victory nobody had expected.

Paradoxically, the Soviet frontal attack on Seelow did not fail though but because Zhukov had massed such huge force concentrations in the main effort of the breakthrough. With his allocation of forces he did not achieve an acceleration but a blocking of the attack. And the stage was reached where the attacker — to use Clausewitz's words — is wrecked not only **"by the sword of the defender"**, but by **the force "of his own efforts."**¹⁶

¹³ Chujkov, *Das Ende* [The End] (same as footnote 11), p. 132.

¹⁴ Busse, *Die letzte Schlacht* [The Final Battle], (same as footnote 5), p. 163.

¹⁵ Lakowski, *Seelow 1945*, (same as footnote 9), p. 81.

¹⁶ Carl v. Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* [On War], 19th edition, Bonn 1980, p. 655.

Soviet Breakthrough

With repulsing the massive Soviet frontal attack on Seelow on 16 April the German Wehrmacht had achieved its final success during World War II. But it was only a temporary success. The Germans had no operational and tactical reserves left. Eventually the Red Army asserted itself through its superiority and actually crushed the defenders. On the following day, 17 April, the decisive penetration was achieved north of the Seelow Heights near Gusow, i.e. in the neighbouring sector with 5th Thrust Army. Now, also 8th Guard Army was in a position to outflank Seelow to the north and encircle the town. But it took the attackers until 18 April to take Seelow and achieve the tactical breakthrough. Be reminded of the fact that Marshal Zhukov had planned this outcome already for the first day of the operation. On 19 April, the third German zone of defence was breached near Müncheberg, and the tactical breakthrough had been expanded to an operational one.

The bottom line of this battle that essentially lasted for four days is that the breakthrough at Seelow cost the lives of nearly 38,000 soldiers of the Red Army, and another 140,000 wounded. Though these official Soviet figures probably represent but the lower limit. For tanks total losses were established at 743.¹⁷ In comparison German 9th army, counting 23,900 dead on 16 and 17 April, the two days of fiercest fighting alone, suffered even heavier losses in relation to its initial strength.

Conquest of Berlin and End of the War

Slide: Die sowjetische Berliner Operation vom 16.4.-8.5.1915 (MGFA 05592-07)

After this battle there were no more obstacles to taking Berlin by storm. 25 April represents an outstanding date because this was the day the Soviet and US forces met at Torgau on the Elbe river. This meant that the *Wehrmacht's* remaining area of operations had been cut into two pieces. On that same day the spearheads of Zhukov's Belorussian Front and Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front united at Ketzin west of Berlin. The city had been encircled. Elements of the German 9th Army managed to fight their way through from the area of Seelow to Halbe south-east of Berlin where they were then encircled together with elements of 4th Panzer Army. Though many soldiers were able to break out of the encirclement, there were no coherent formations left.

Now, Hitler's last hope was a relief attack of 12th Army, better known as the "Wenck Army." But as this major formation was only just in the mounting process, it was an efficient army only in Hitler's dreams. After all, General Wenck succeeded in withdrawing his motley formations from combat with the US and British forces at the Elbe river and launching an attack towards Berlin with a reverse front. But the last German offensive had to be halted at Ferch south of Potsdam for lack of forces.

Meanwhile, a fierce battle had started in Berlin. When the Soviet troops advanced on the *Reich* Chancellery, Adolf Hitler committed suicide on 30 April. Berlin surrendered to the Soviet army on 2 May. This meant the end of the war in Europe, – an end that was formally sealed in Reims on 7 May and in Berlin-Karlshorst shortly after midnight on 9 May.

¹⁷ Le Tissier, *Durchbruch* [Breakthrough], (same as footnote 9), p. 332, doubts these official Soviet figures given for personnel losses and estimates that they are roughly twice as high.

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„SEELOW 1945“

Übersichtskarte /
Roadmap



Übersicht Besprechungspunkte



Militärhistorische
Exkursion /
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„SEELOW 1945“

Übersichtspunkt 1 /
Overview Point 1

„KÜSTRIN“

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„SEELOW 1945“

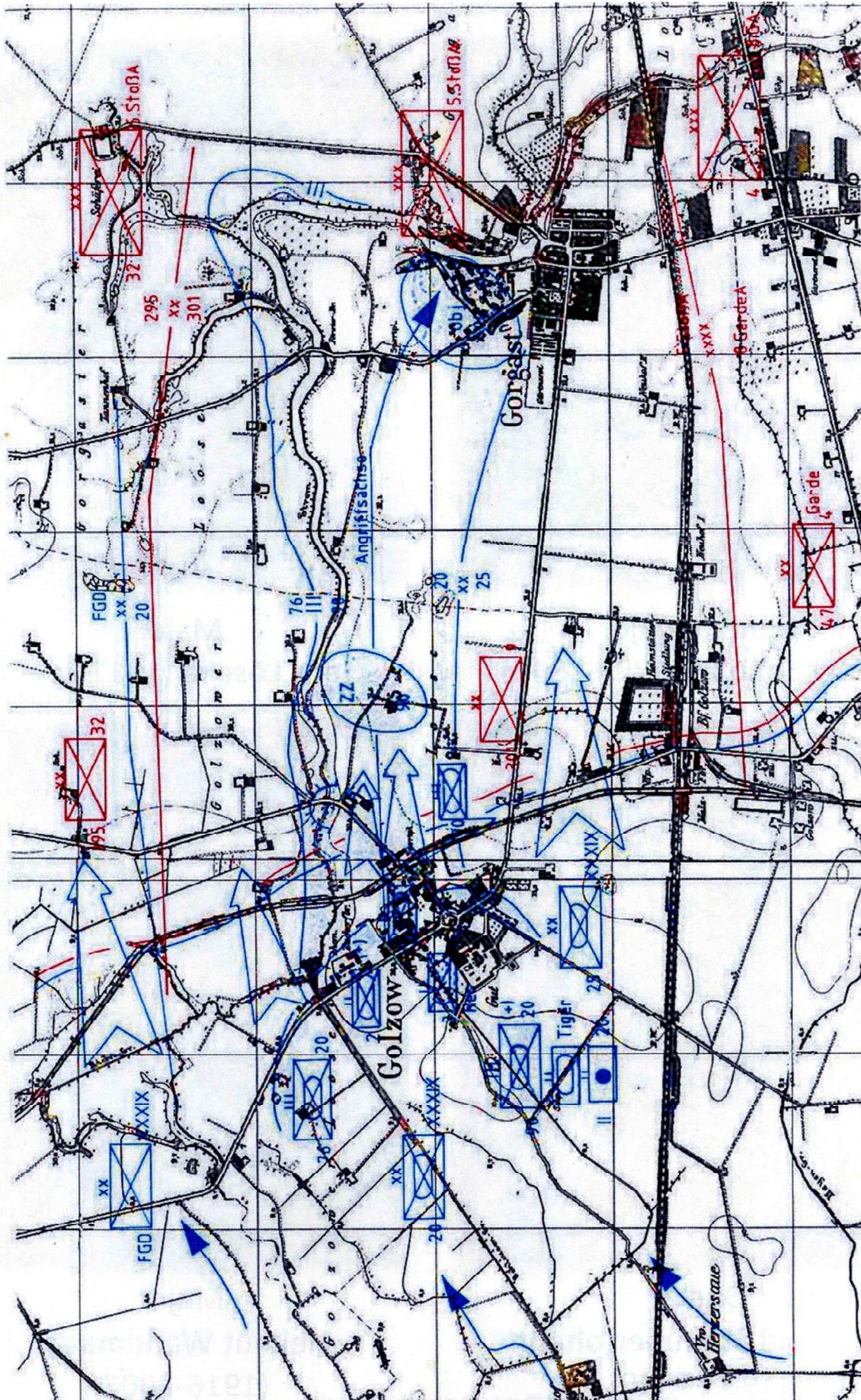
Übersichtspunkt 2 /
Overview Point 2

„GOLZOW“



Angriff PzGrenRgt 90 am 27.03.00apr45

Entsatzangriff des I./II. PzGrenRgt 90





Kommandeure der 20. PzGrenDiv an der Oderfront 1945

20. PzGrenDiv / PzGrenRgt 90 / PzGrenRgt 76 / PzGrenRgt 76 (ab 17.04.1945)



Generalmajor
Georg **Scholze** (1897-1945)



Major
Hans **Löseke** (1911-1989)



Oberst
Reinhold **Stammerjohann**
(1908-1945)



Major
Helmut **Wandmaker**
(1916-2007)

Militärhistorische
Exkursion /
Battlefield Tour

„SEELOW 1945“

Übersichtspunkt 3 /
Overview Point 3

„REITWEIN“



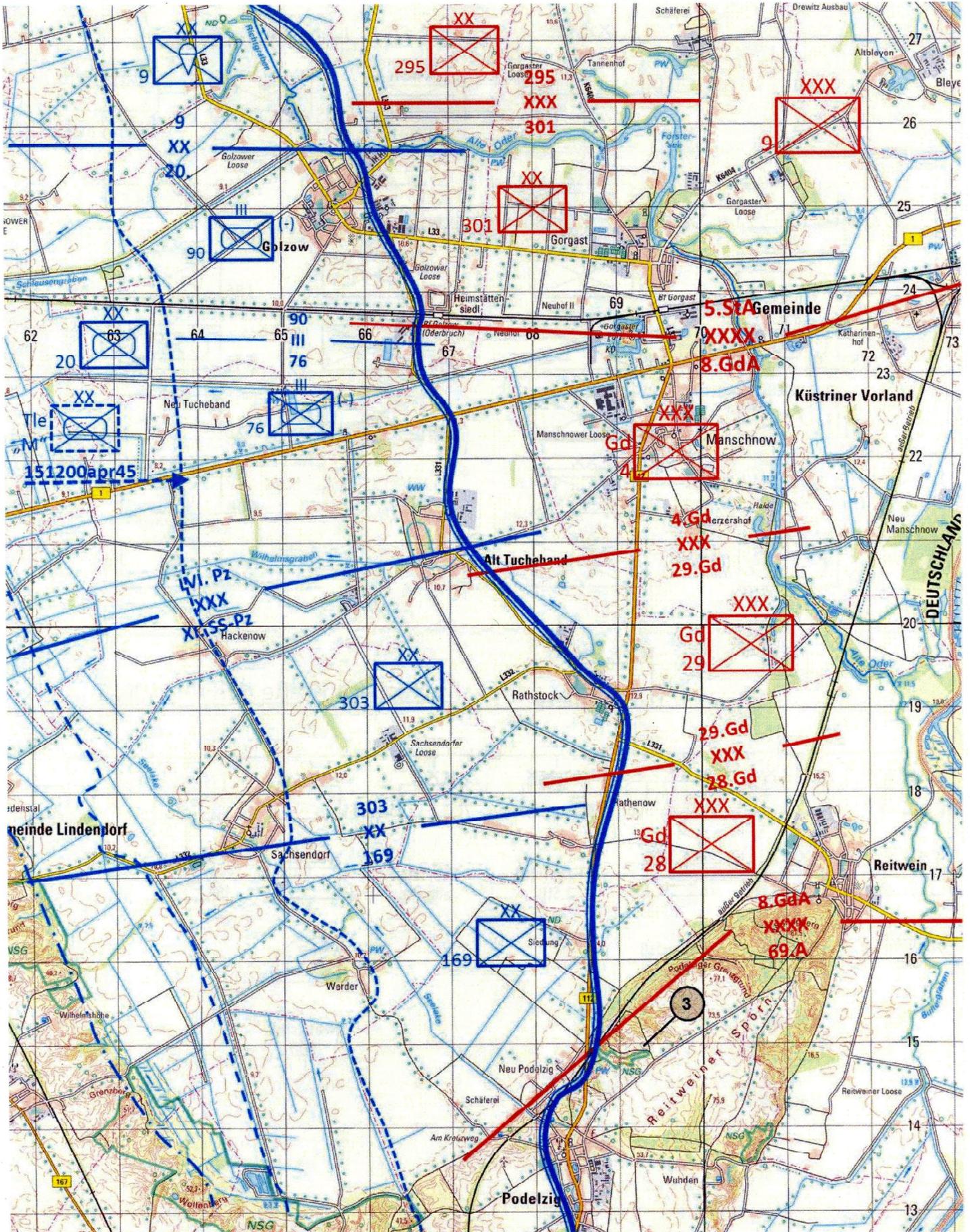
Lage:

- HptKr 9. Armee in 1. Stellung 1. VtgStr
- Bereitstellung AngrKr 1. Belorussische Front im Brückenkopf abgeschlossen



Kartenausschnitt REITWEIN

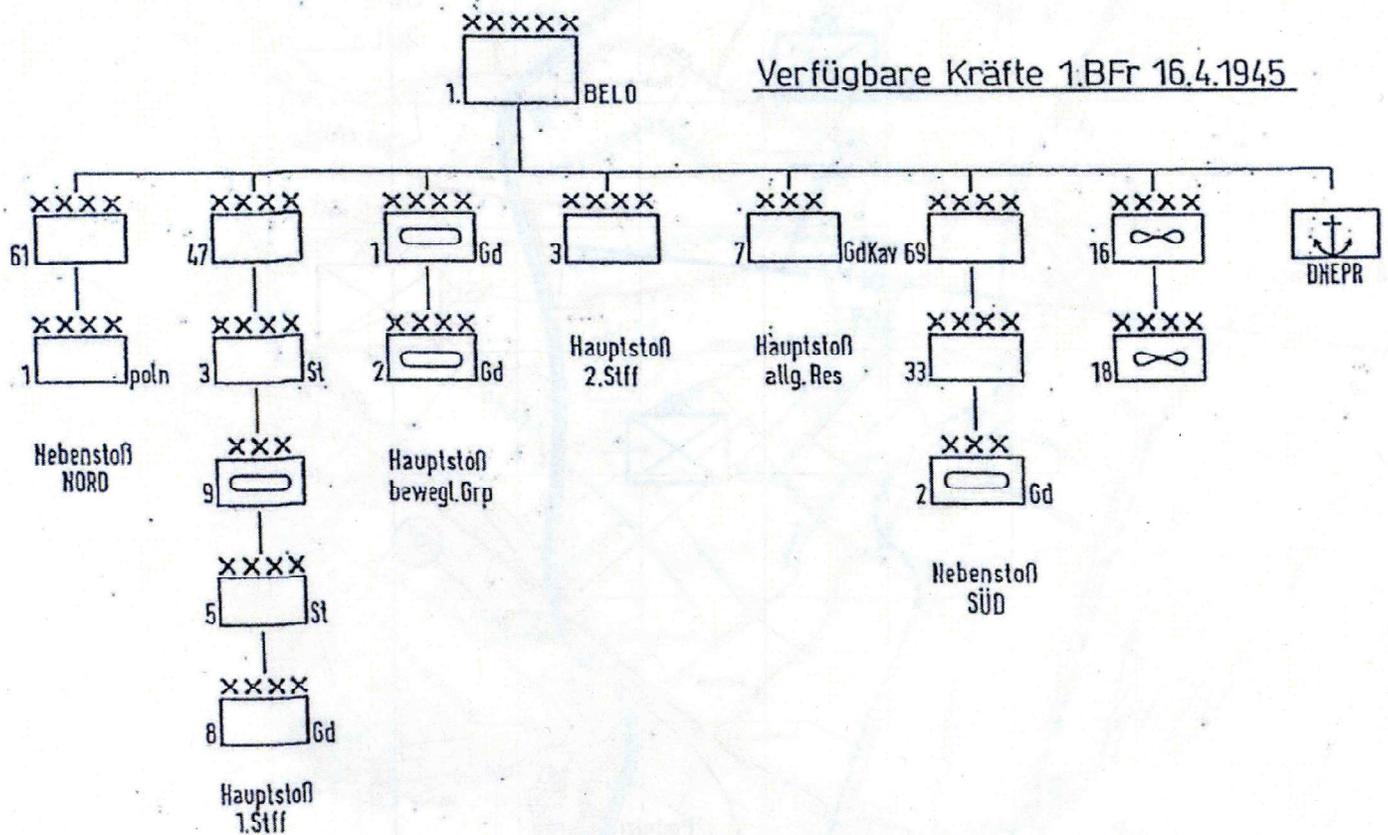
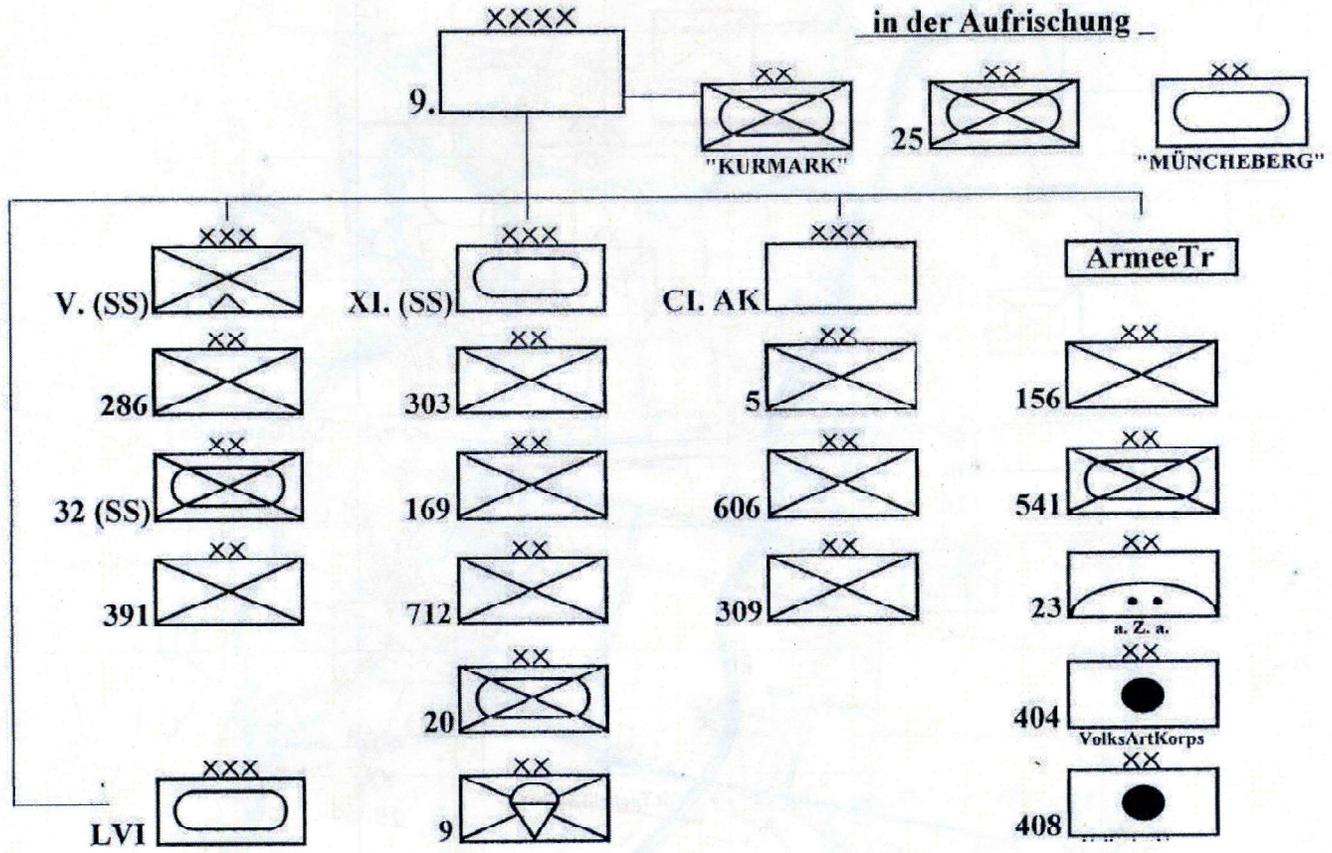
taktisch 140800apr45





Gliederung 9. Armee / 1. Belorussische Front

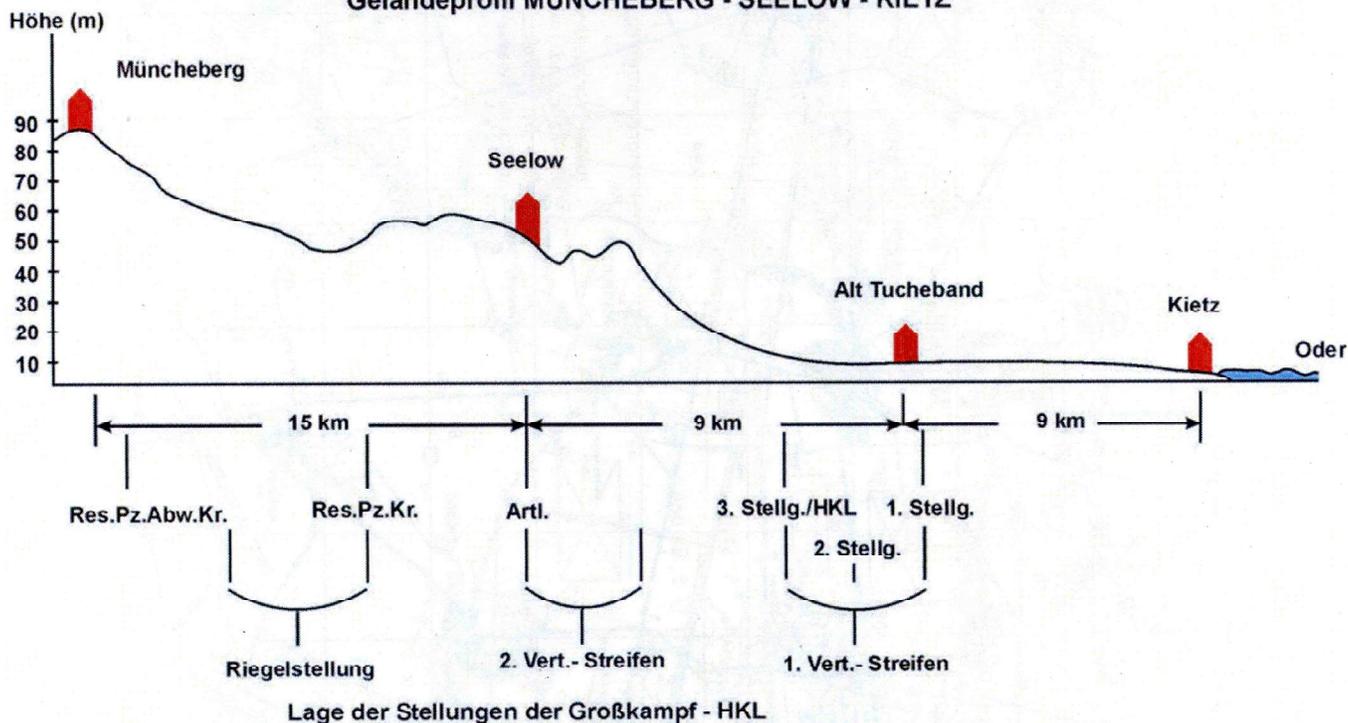
Stand 160300apr45



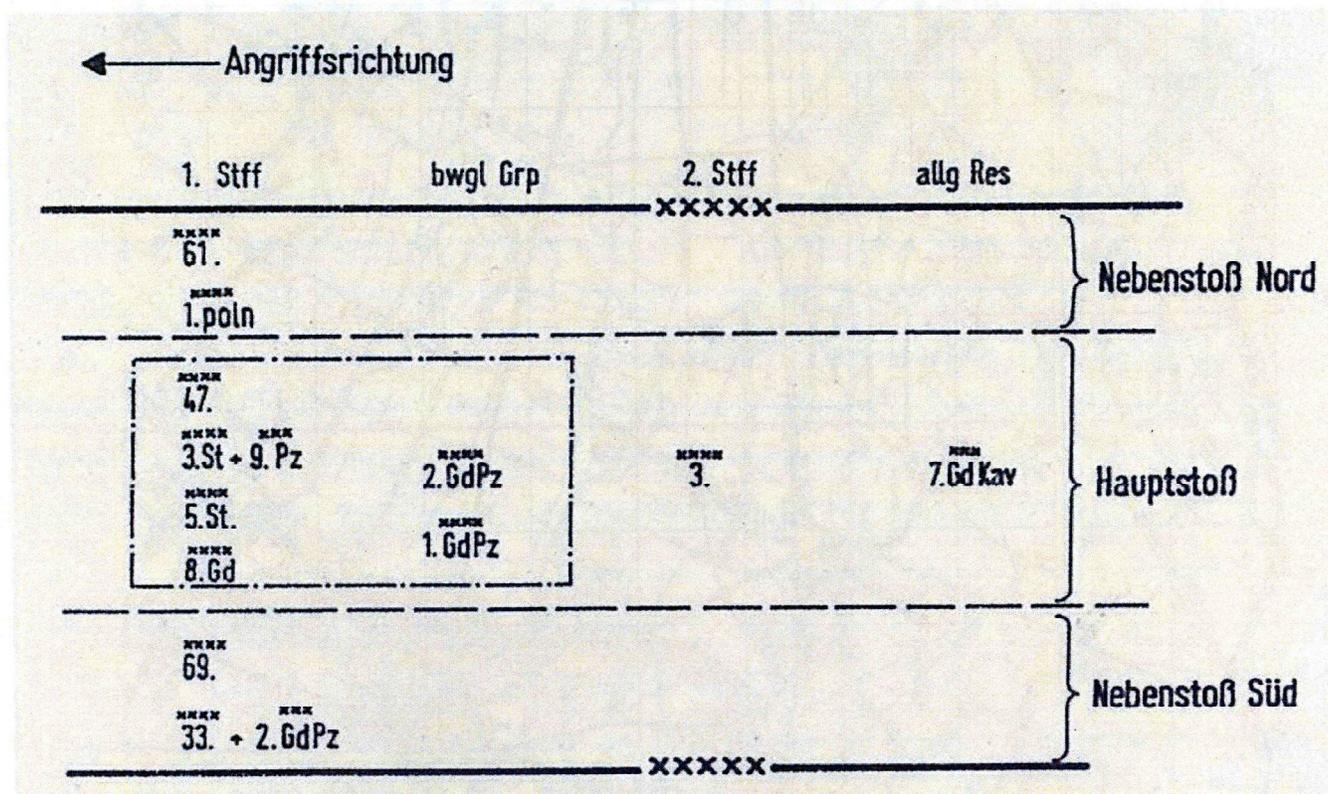


Großkampfverfahren 9.Armee / Kräfteansatz 1.Belorussische Front

Geländeprofil MÜNCHEBERG - SEELOW - KIETZ



Prinzipskizze des operativen Kräfteansatzes der 1. Belorussischen Front



Militärhistorische
Exkursion /
Battlefield Tour

„SEELOW 1945“

Übersichtspunkt 4 /
Overview Point 4

„ALT TUCHEBAND“



Kartenausschnitt ALT TUCHEBAND

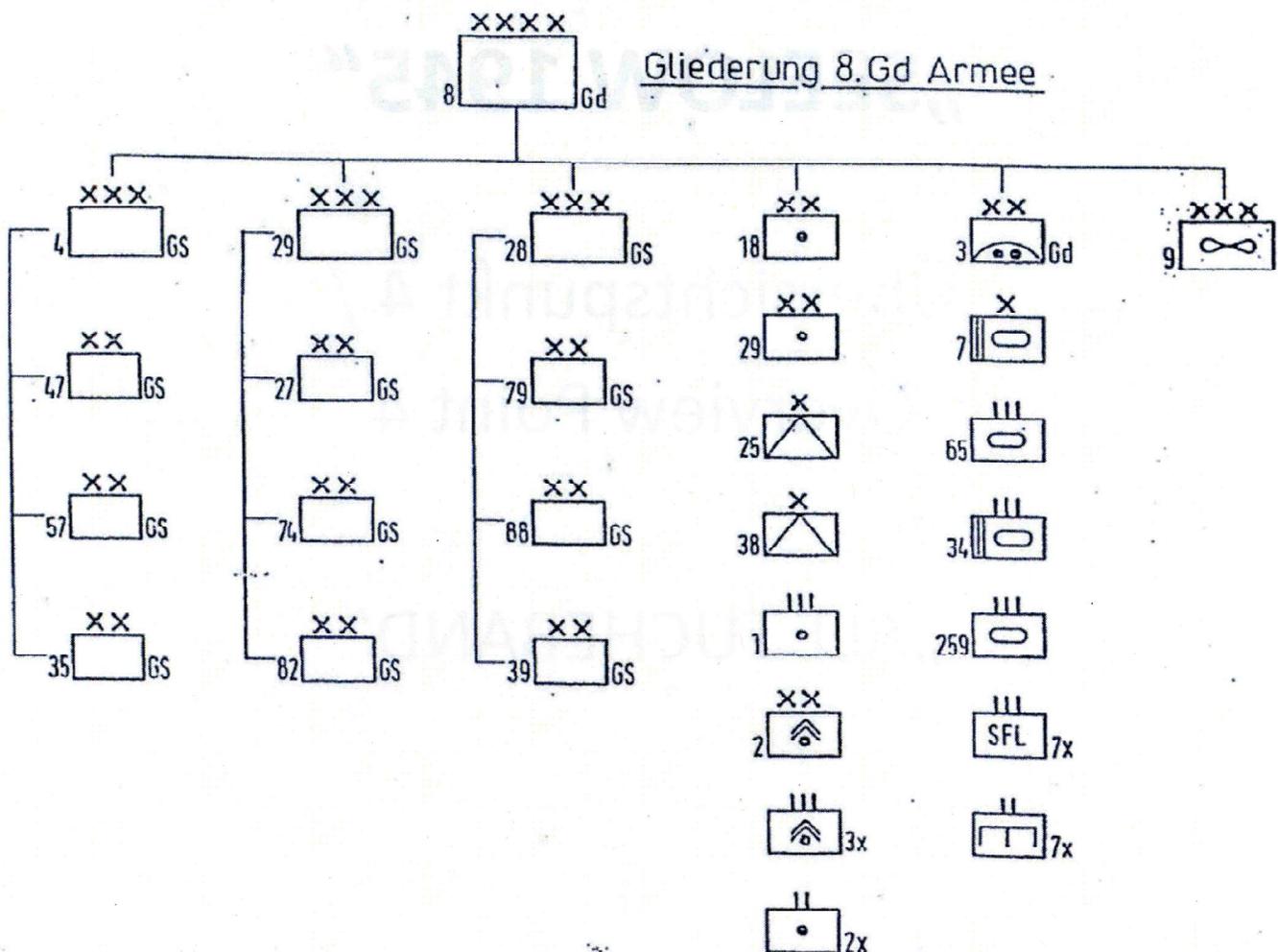
taktisch 160420apr45

Lage:

- HptKr 9. Armee am 152100apr45 planmäßig unter Zurücklassung von Nachtruppen auf 2. Stellung 1. VtgStr ausgewichen

Verlauf des Angriffs 8. GdA

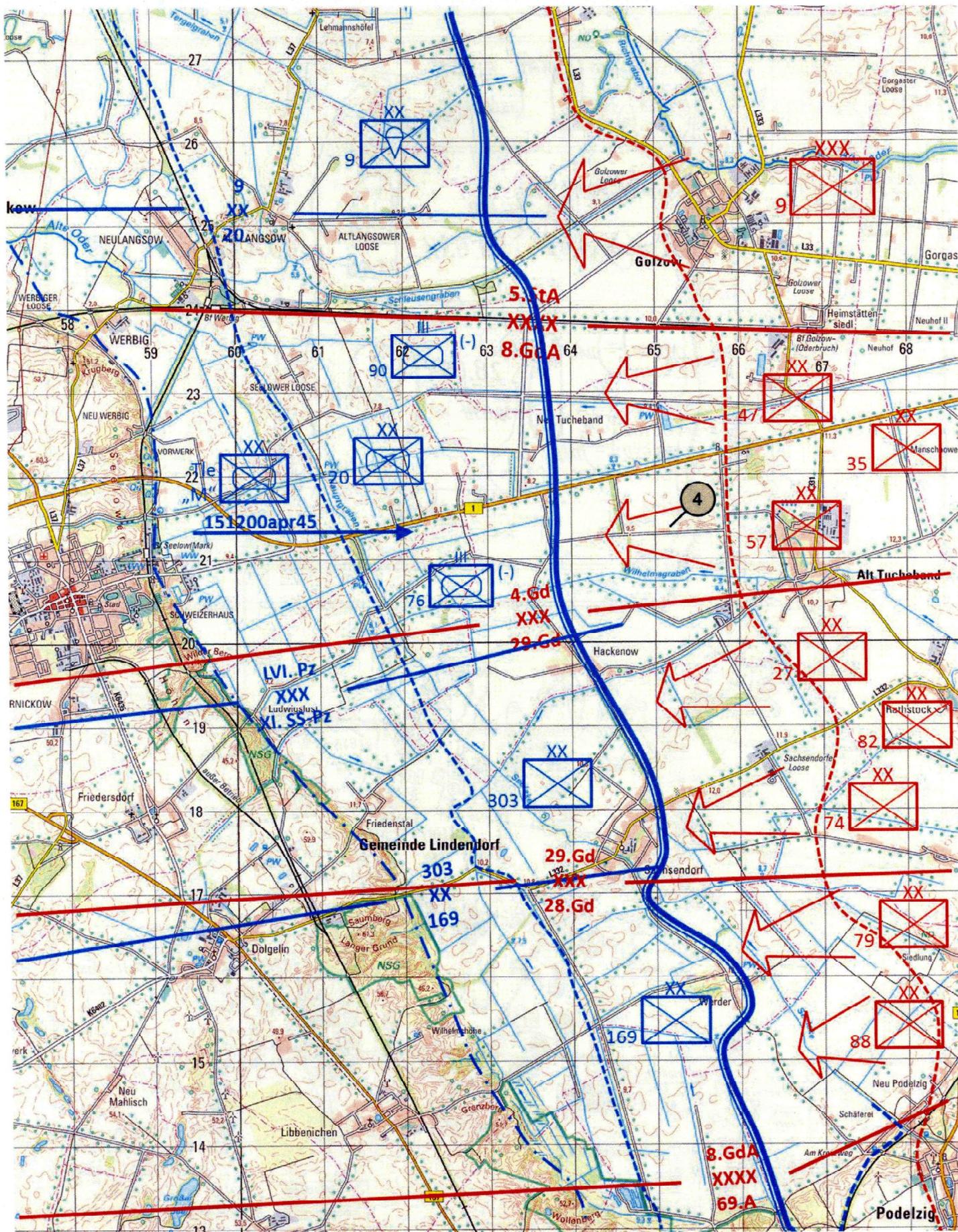
- Feuervorbereitung mit 3.250 Gesch/RakWf (326/km, STAWKA- Norm 250)
- Einsatz von 109 leichten Nachtbombnern (16.LA) auf 1. VtgStr und 745 schweren Bombern (18.LA) auf rückwärtigen Raum (Ortschaften)
- Angriff der SchtzKorps mit 2 SchtzRgt in 1. Stff (geschlossen) und 1 SchtzRgt folgend
- Angriff SchtzRgt mit 3 Btl á 3 Kp nebeneinander, je Btl 1 PzKp und/oder 1 SFL-Kp unterstellt
- Einsatz 143 FlakScheinwerfer im direkten Richten





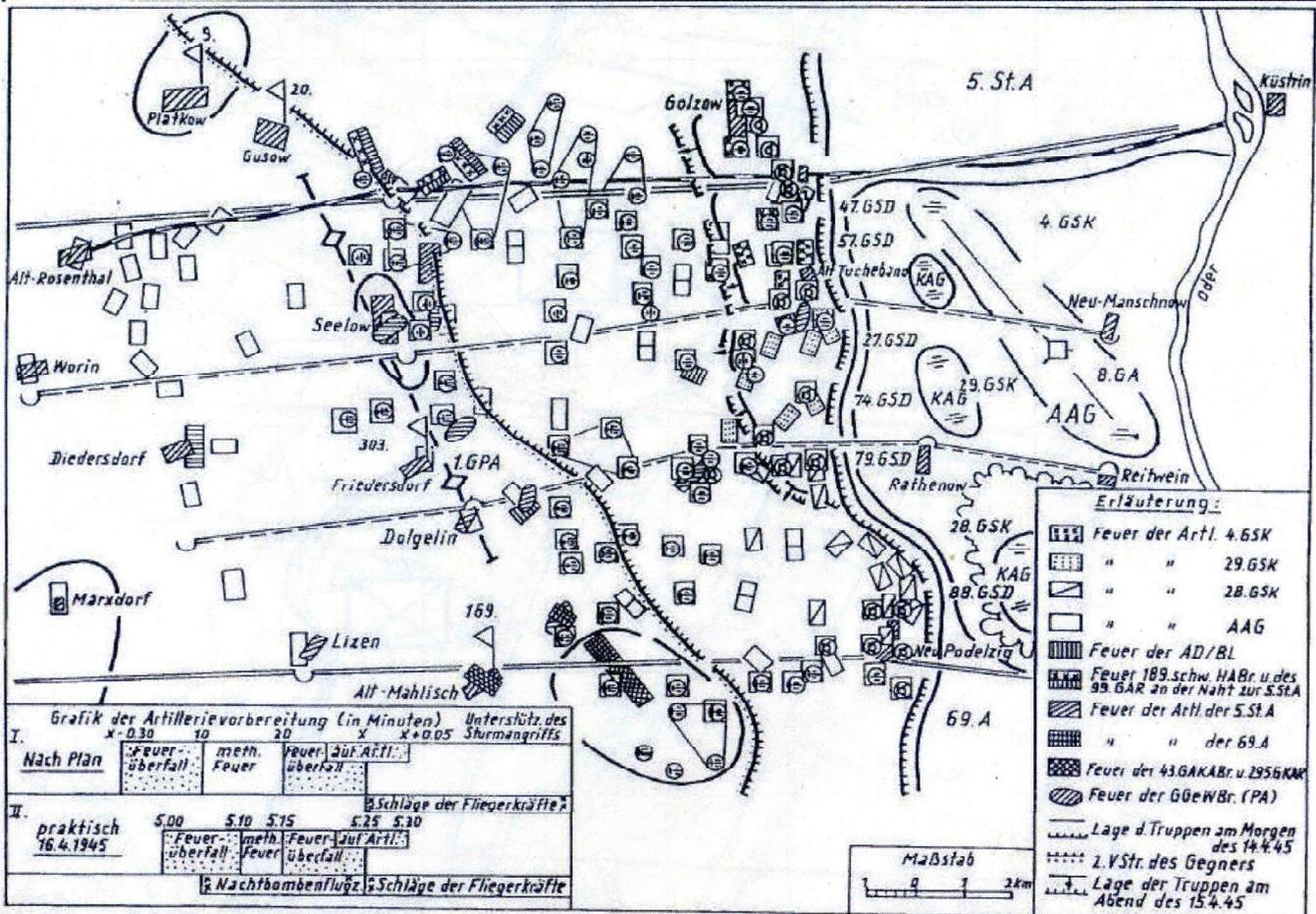
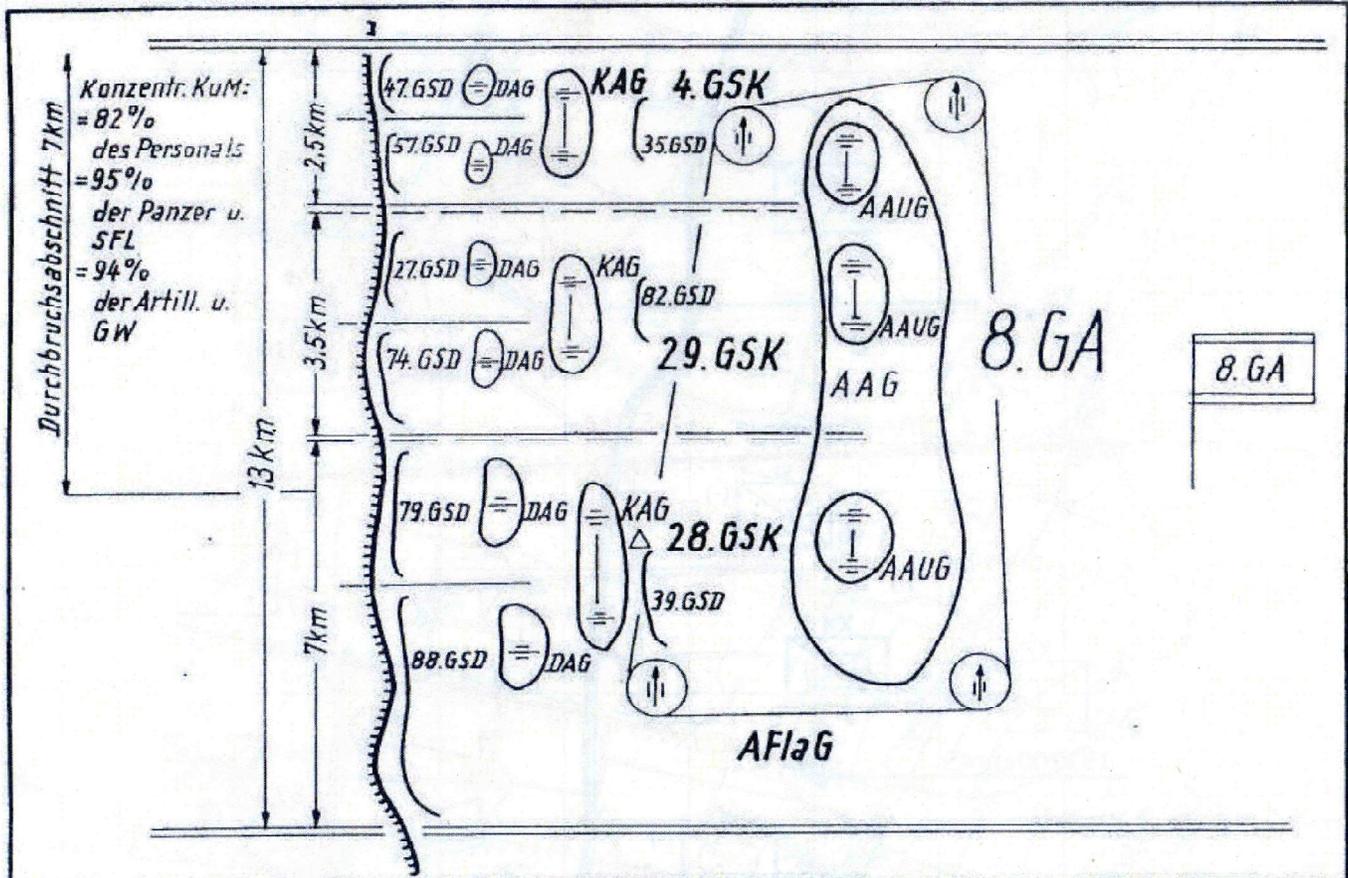
Kartenausschnitt ALT TUCHEBAND

taktisch 160420apr45





Schema Operativer Aufbau 8. Gardearmee / Feuerschema Artillerie 8. Gardearmee am 160420apr45





Schema Gruppierungen Artillerie 8. Gardearmee am 160420apr45

	RAG	DAG	KAG	AAG	PAREs	
0,9 km	140. GSR 142. GSR	RAG-142 2.3./99.GAR 76 Rohre 419. GWR Artl.d. GSR*	DAG-47 1191. I. AR 113 Rohre 118. GAR 1430. I. AR Artl.d. 35. GSD** 1430. I. AR (1PA)	40. Garde-Kan. AR 311. Garde GWR KA6-4	AAUG-4 189. s.HABr 184. s.ABr KM* 1. KAR „BL“ 17.26.66ewBr	
	137. GSR	RAG-137 I./99 GAR 66 Rohre 565. GWR Artl.d. GSR*	47. GSD 53. GGewD (1PA)** Artl.d. 140. GSR** 55. selbst. PJD** 491. selbst. PJR (38.PJBr)*	40 Rohre	194 Rohre*** u. KM	
0,5 km	172. GSR 170. GSR	RAG-172 2./3./128.GAR 55 Rohre 2./1416. GWR Artl.d. GSR	DAG-57 1154. I. AR** 139 Rohre 1170. I. AR (1PA) 270. GGWR (1PA)**	4. GSK 35. GSD		
	174. GSR	RAG-174 I./128.GAR 52 Rohre I./1416. GWR Artl.d. GSR*	57. GSD 405. GGewD (1PA)** 372. selbst. PJR 38. selbst. PJBr* Artl.d. 35. GSD* Artl.d. 170. GSR* 84. selbst. PJD*			
1,5 km	74. SR 76. GSR	RAG-74 2./3./154 GAR 2./1532. GWR Artl.d. SR*	DAG-27 65. I. ABr** 1071. I. AR (1PA) 265. GGWR (1PA)**	KAG-29 58. HABr. 36. GeWR 79. GeWR**	AAUG-29 2./80. s.HABr 26. s.GWBr 1091. KAR 340. AA „BL“	
	83. GSR	RAG-83 I./154. GAR I./1532. GWR Artl.d. GSR*	27. GSD 32. selbst. PJD* Artl.d. 76. GSR*	128 Rohre	20. GeWR* 200. I. AR**	
7 km	240. GSR 226. GSR	RAG-240 2./3./157.GAR 2./1564. GWR**	DAG-74 568. GWR 266. GPJAR** 1187. GPJAR** 350. I. AR 243. GWR** 185. GAR** 82. selbst. PJD*	82. GSD 29. GSK	200 Rohre*** (mit Koeff. 0,75)	
	236. GSR	RAG-236 I./157. GAR I./1564. GWR Artl.d. GSR*	74. GSD Artl.d. 82. GSR* Artl.d. 226. GSR*			
3,2 km	227. GSR 216. GSR	RAG-227 I./172. GAR 141. GWR Artl.d. SR*	DAG-79 1285. HAR 87. GAR 83. s. PJD Artl.d. 216. SR** Artl.d. 39. SR**	KAG-28 186. HABr 59. GeWR 115. GGewD** 1317. PJD* 25. PJBr	AAUG-28 43. GABr 120. 66ewBr KM 322. selbst. AA „BL“ 295. GAR 36. GeWR	
	220. GSR	RAG-220 2./3./172.GAR Artl.d. SR*	79. GSD	107 Rohre	116 Rohre u. KM/PA	
2 km	266. GSR	ges. * 64 GW 67 gesch.	DAG-88 490. PJR* 96. s. PJD*	39. GSD 28. GSK		
	271. GSR		88. GSD			
5 km	269. GSR					

Anm.: * Nur in der Periode der Artillerievorbereitung

** Nur in der Periode der Artillerievorbereitung und Unterstützung des Sturmangriffs (ohne Feuerstellungswechsel)

*** Bei Umrechnung der Abschubgestelle M-31 auf Kampfmaschinen (BM-31-12) der Panzerarmeen mit dem Koeffiz. 0,75

Gruppierung	Artillerie	Gardes	Gruppierung	Artillerie	Gardes
1. Gruppe	1. Batterie	1. Kompanie	2. Gruppe	2. Batterie	2. Kompanie
2. Gruppe	3. Batterie	3. Kompanie	3. Gruppe	3. Batterie	3. Kompanie
3. Gruppe	4. Batterie	4. Kompanie	4. Gruppe	4. Batterie	4. Kompanie
4. Gruppe	5. Batterie	5. Kompanie	5. Gruppe	5. Batterie	5. Kompanie
5. Gruppe	6. Batterie	6. Kompanie	6. Gruppe	6. Batterie	6. Kompanie
6. Gruppe	7. Batterie	7. Kompanie	7. Gruppe	7. Batterie	7. Kompanie
7. Gruppe	8. Batterie	8. Kompanie	8. Gruppe	8. Batterie	8. Kompanie
8. Gruppe	9. Batterie	9. Kompanie	9. Gruppe	9. Batterie	9. Kompanie
9. Gruppe	10. Batterie	10. Kompanie	10. Gruppe	10. Batterie	10. Kompanie

Die Gruppierungen Artillerie & Gardes am 16.10.1945

Die Gruppierungen Artillerie & Gardes am 16.10.1945

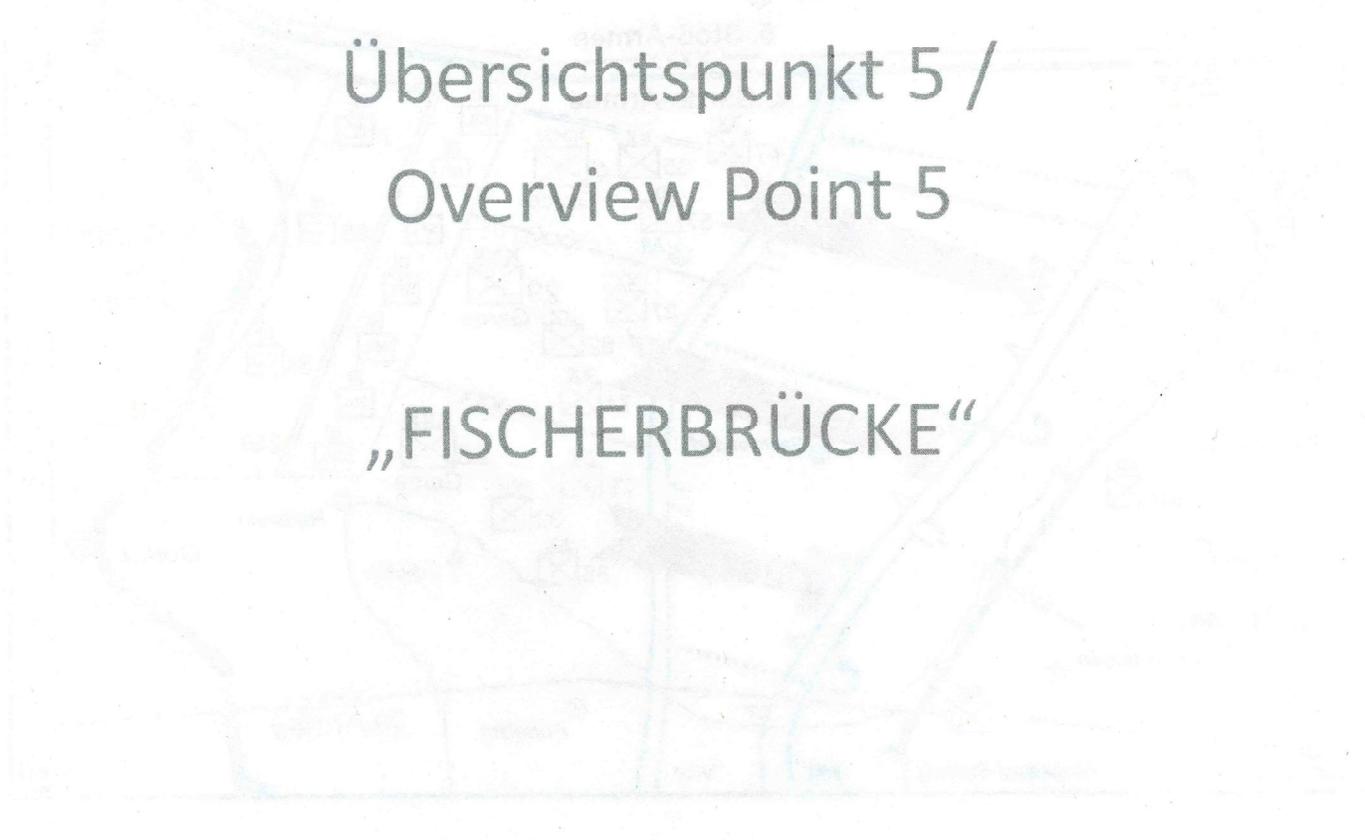
Die Gruppierungen Artillerie & Gardes am 16.10.1945

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Exkursion /
Battlefield Tour

„SEELOW 1945“

Übersichtspunkt 5 /
Overview Point 5

„FISCHERBRÜCKE“





Kartenausschnitt FISCHERBRÜCKE

taktisch 161300apr45

Lage:

- 2. Staffel der Schützenkorps 8.GdA eingeführt
- Angriff dennoch vor 3.Stg des ersten dt. VtgStr liegengeblieben

Entschluss Tschuikow (8.GdA)

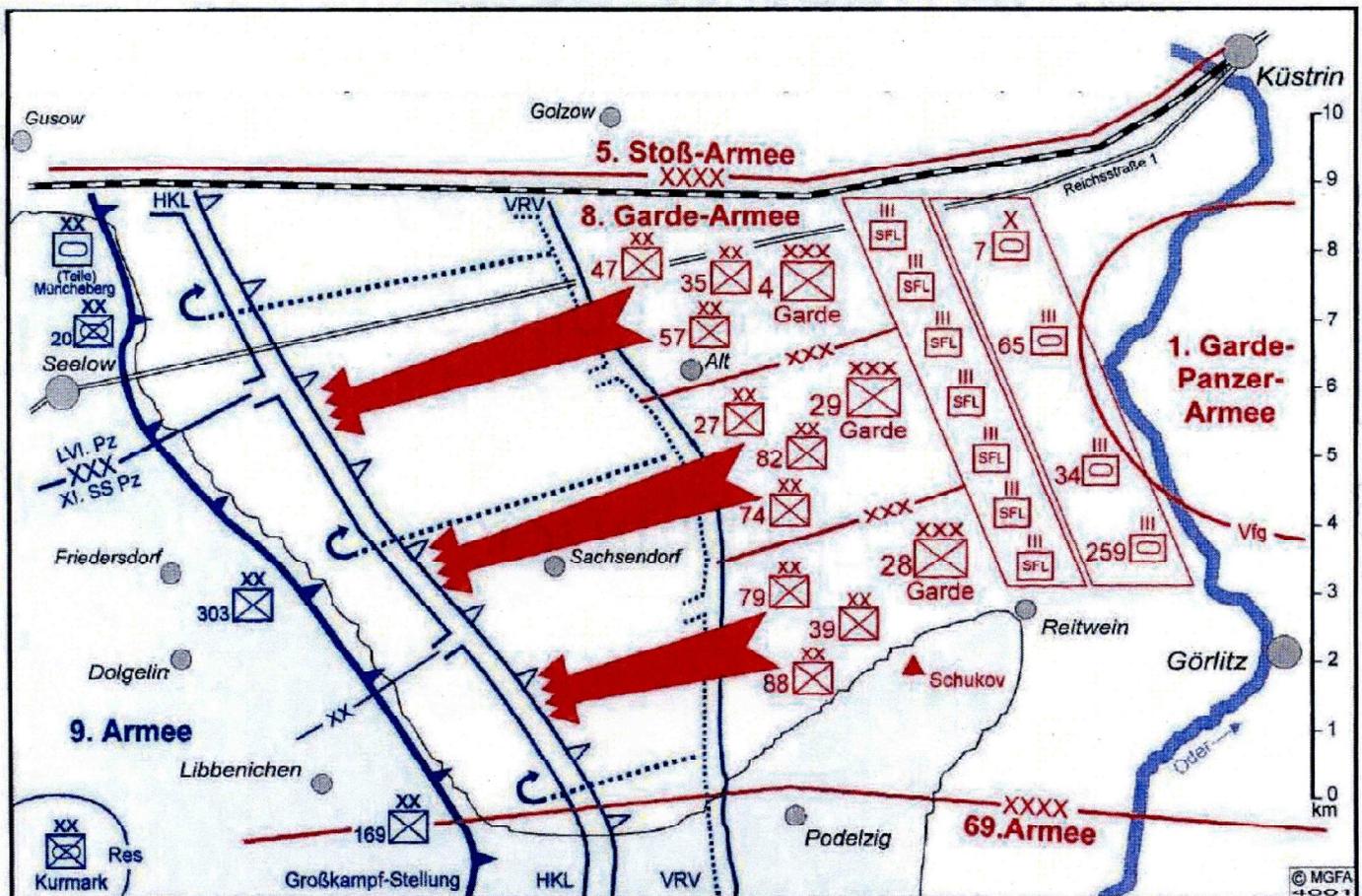
- Binden Feind aus erreichten Stg
- nachführen Art in den Raum TUCHEBAND – HACKENOW
- fortsetzen Angriff nach erneuter ArtVorb (20min) auf erkannte FdStg

Entschluss Shukow (1. Beloruss. Front)

- sofort Einführung 2.GdPzA im GefStr 5.StA sowie
- 1.GdPzA im GefStr 8.GdA in einer Staffel mit 3 Korps nebeneinander

Lageentwicklung

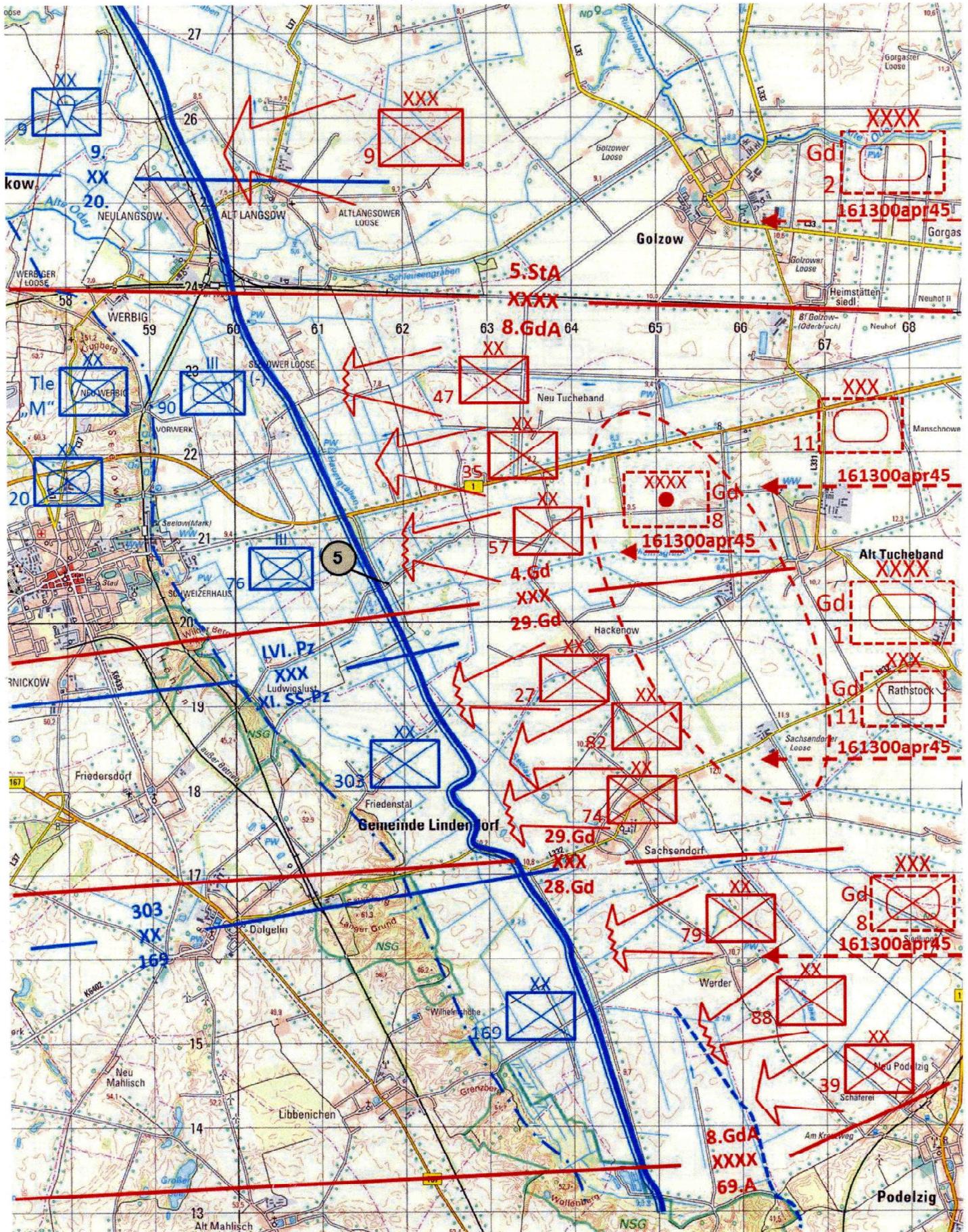
- Chaos, erliegen jedweder Bewegung
- Verlust von 361 Pz (sowj. Angabe) durch PzAbwWa





Kartenausschnitt FISCHERBRÜCKE

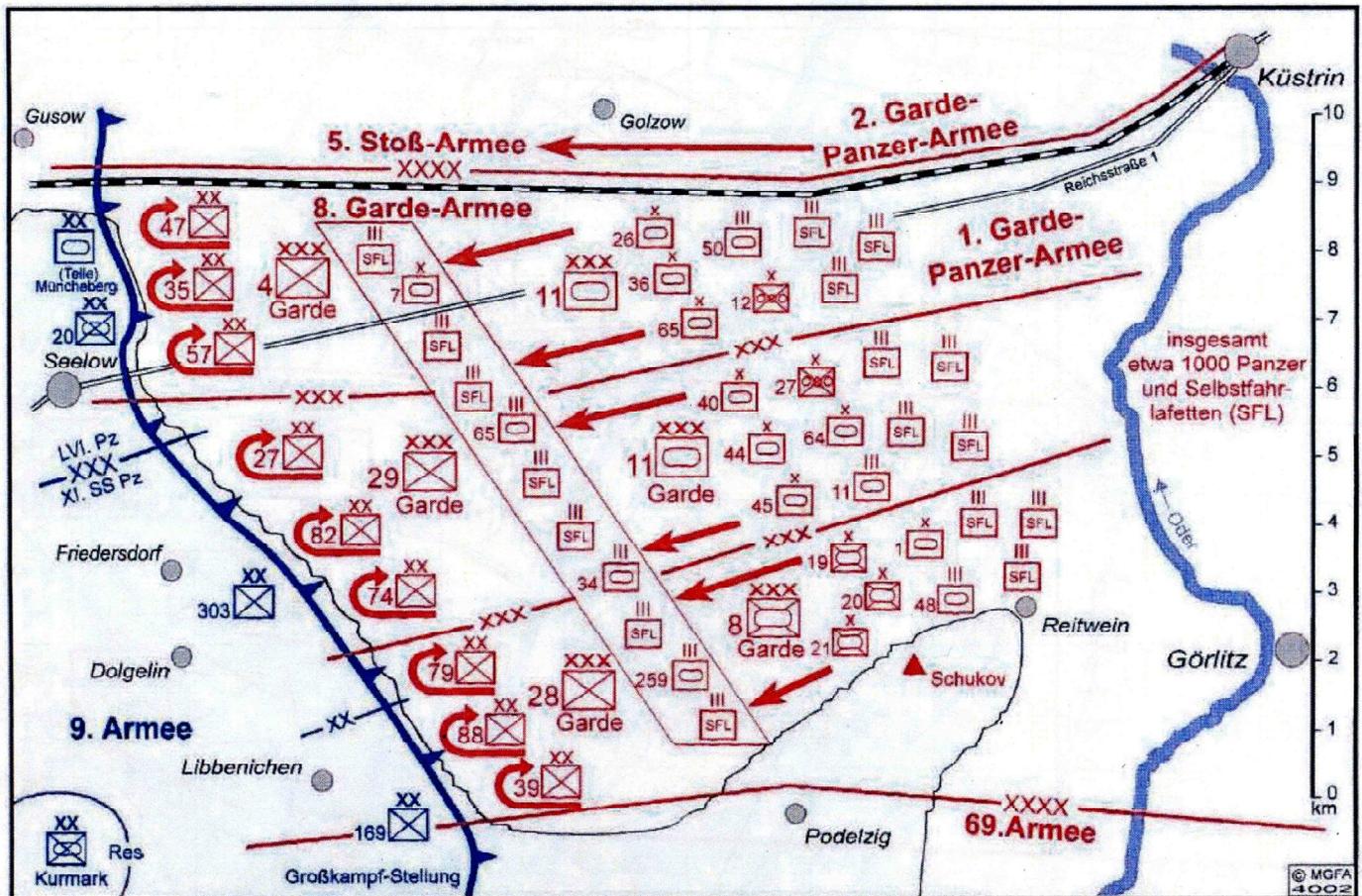
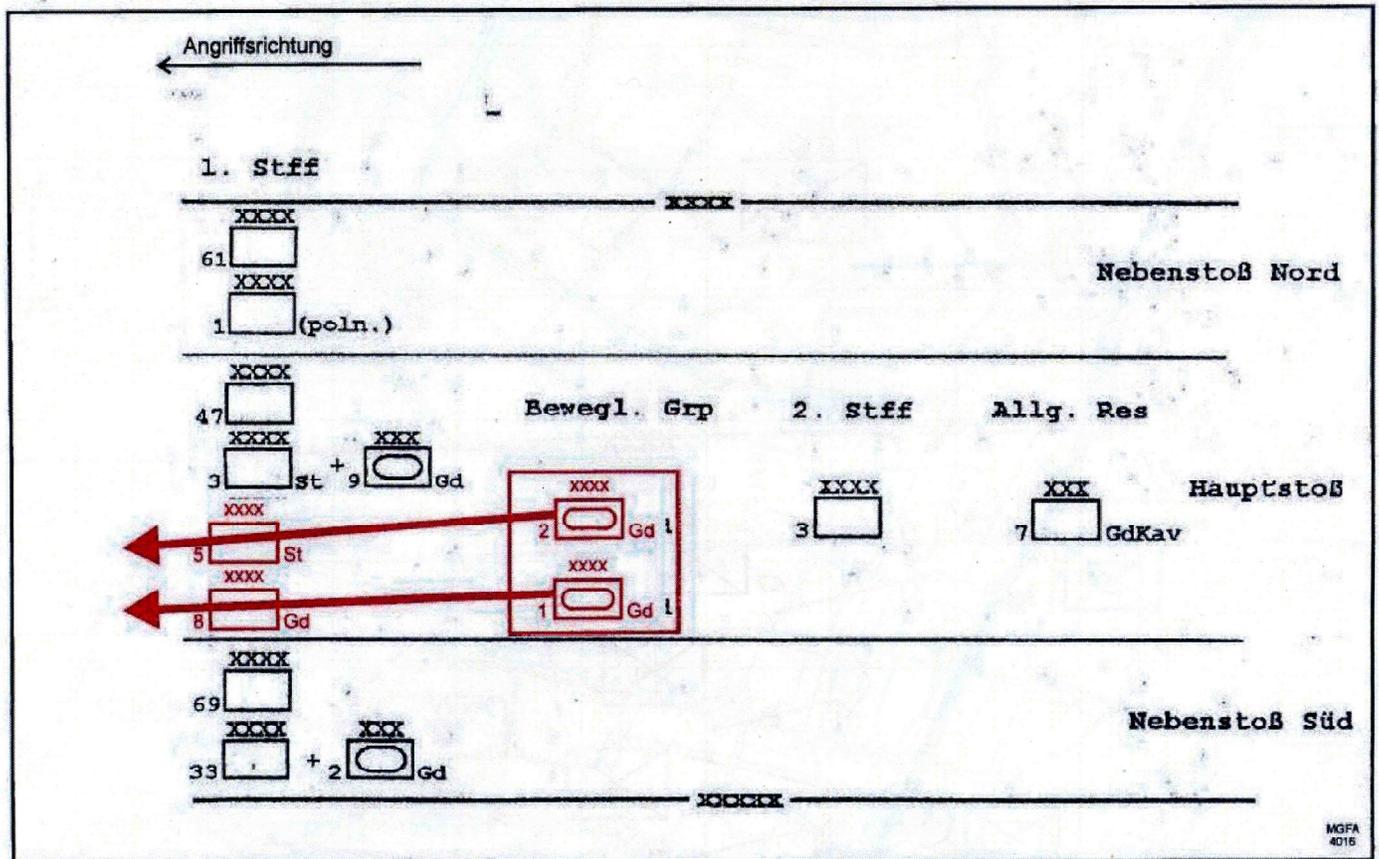
taktisch 161300apr45





Operativer Kräfteansatz nach Entschluss Shukows

Prinzipiskizze Angriff 8. GdA und 1. GdPzA ab 161300apr45



Militärhistorische
Exkursion /
Battlefield Tour

„SEELOW 1945“

Übersichtspunkt 6 /
Overview Point 6

„SEELOW“



Lage 20.PzGrenDiv:

- li Nachbar 9.FschDiv 162400apr zsl,
- 9.SchtzKoprs setzt Angr nach umgl 301.SchtzDiv unter Einführung 248.SchtzDiv (2. Stff) N SEELOW fort
- bis 162400apr45 Einbruch bei 20.PzGrenDiv (PzGrenRgt 90)

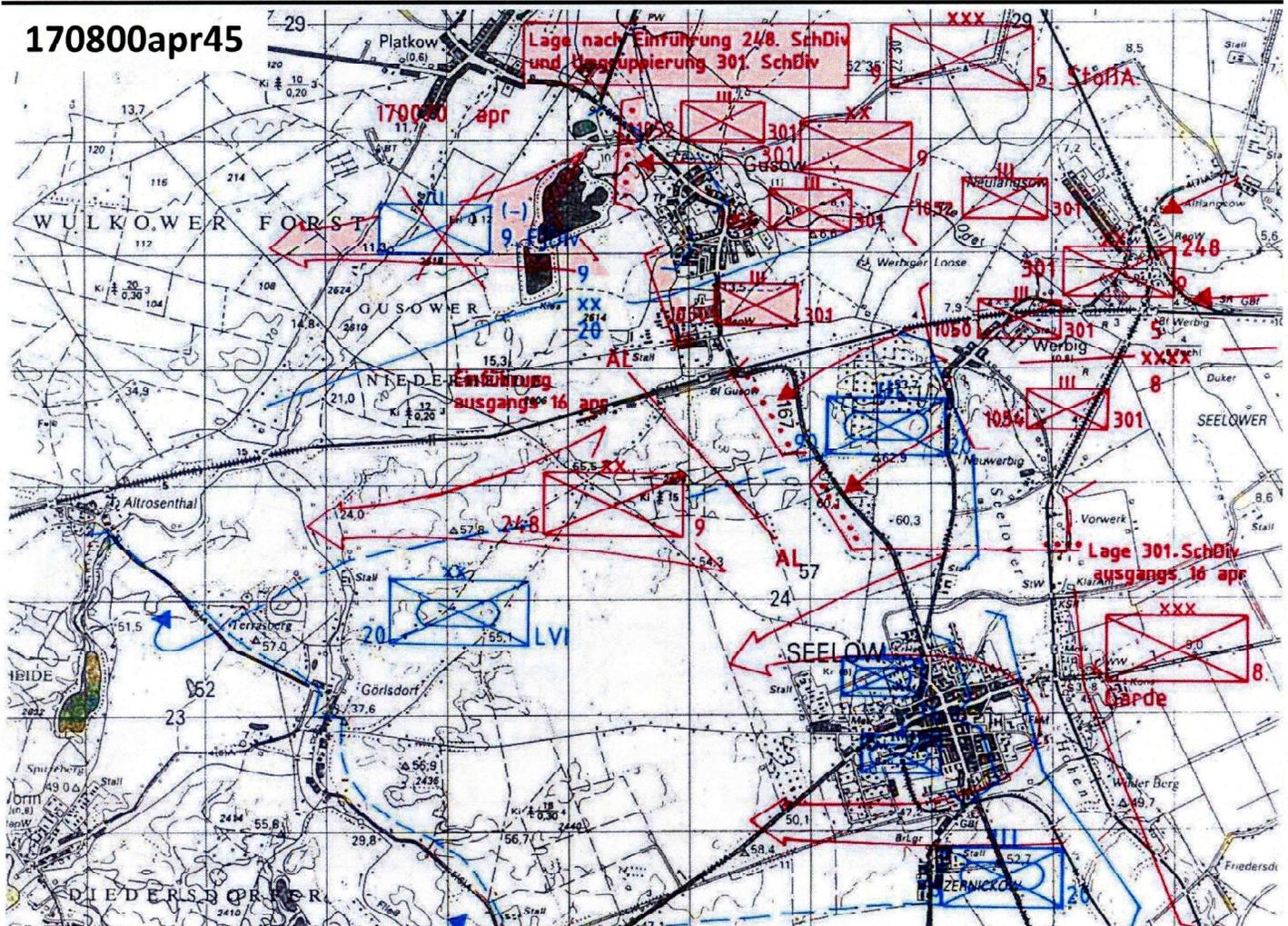
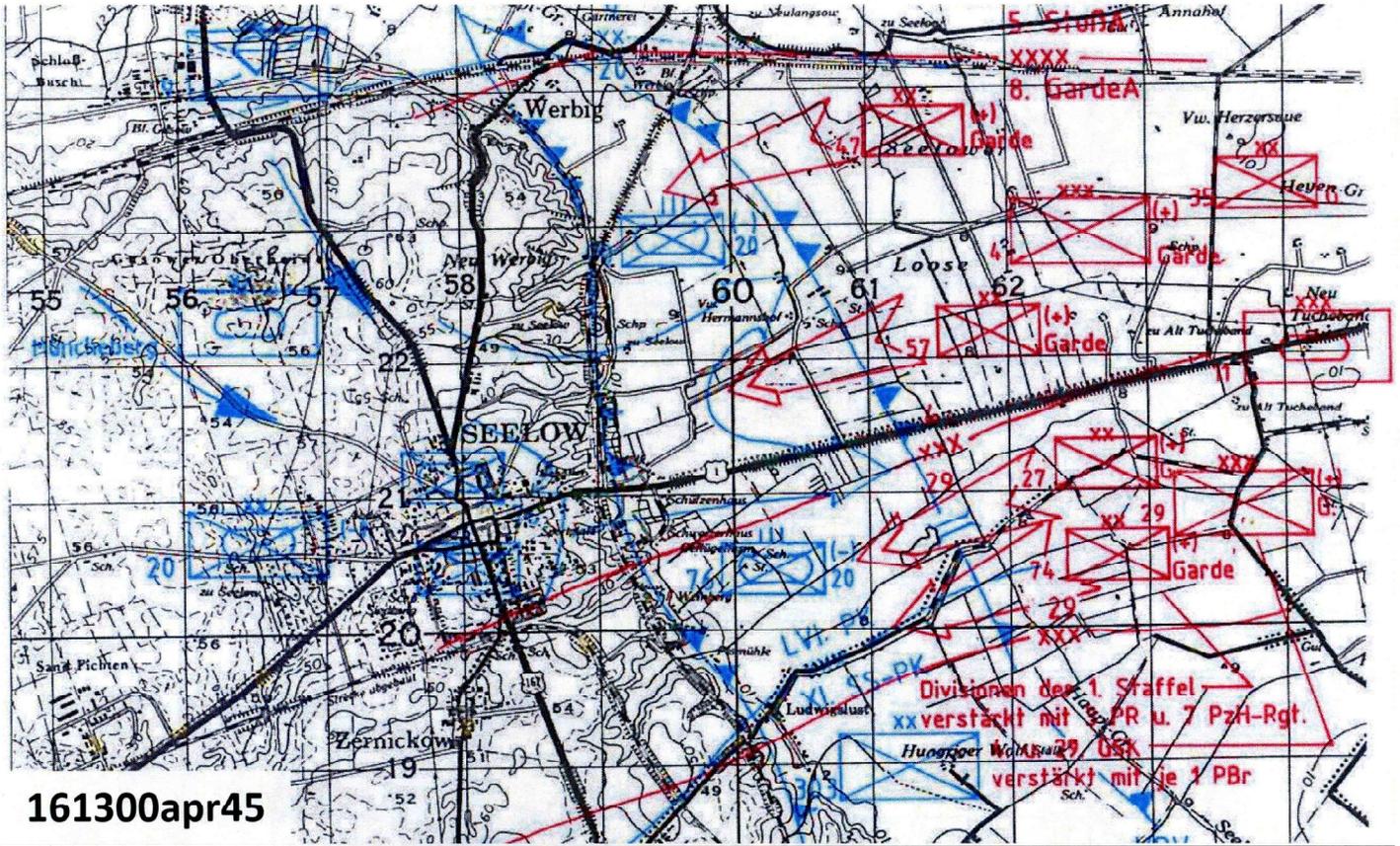
Lageentwicklung:

- 4.GdSchtzKorps dringt mit 47.GdSchtzDiv u. 57.GdSchtzDiv nach SEELOW ein
- 29.GdSchtzKorps u. 28.GdSchtzKorps setzen Angr mit Ustg 11.GdPzKorps u. 8.MechGdSchtzKorps fort und nehmen Höhengelände S SEELOW
- re Nachbarn 303.InfDiv u. 169.InfDiv spätestens am 172400apr45 zsl
- 4.GdSchtzDiv nimmt SEELOW bis 172400apr45
- ausw RestTle 20.PzGrenDiv auf 3.Stg 2.VtgStr DIEDERSDORF ab 171200apr





Lage der 20.PzGrenDiv bei SEELOW





Operationsverlauf bis 192400apr45

Der sowjetische Angriff an der Oderfront bis zum 19. April 1945

