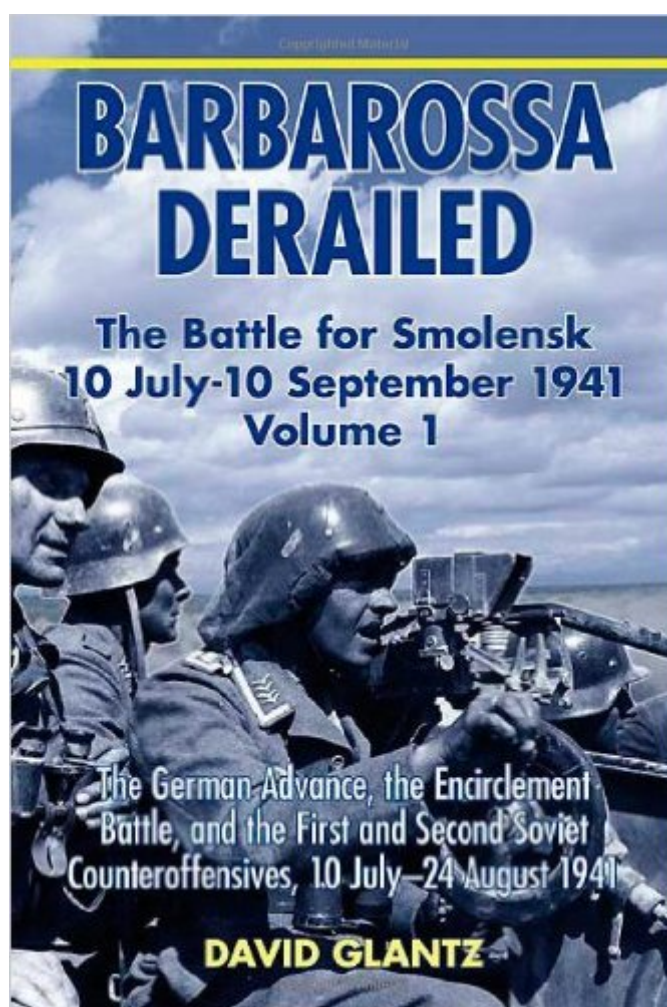


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# Barbarossa Derailed. Volume 1: The German Advance, The Encirclement Battle, And The First And Second Soviet Counteroffensives, 10 July - 24 August 1941



## Synopsis

At dawn on 10 July 1941, massed tanks and motorized infantry of German Army Group Center's Second and Third Panzer Groups crossed the Dnepr and Western Dvina Rivers, beginning what Adolf Hitler, the Führer of Germany's Third Reich, and most German officers and soldiers believed would be a triumphal march on Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union. Less than three weeks before, on 22 June Hitler had unleashed his Wehrmacht's [Armed Forces] massive invasion of the Soviet Union code-named Operation Barbarossa, which sought to defeat the Soviet Union's Red Army, conquer the country, and unseat its Communist ruler, Josef Stalin. Between 22 June and 10 July, the Wehrmacht advanced up to 500 kilometers into Soviet territory, killed or captured up to one million Red Army soldiers, and reached the western banks of the Western Dvina and Dnepr Rivers, by doing so satisfying the premier assumption of Plan Barbarossa that the Third Reich would emerge victorious if it could defeat and destroy the bulk of the Red Army before it withdrew to safely behind those two rivers. With the Red Army now shattered, Hitler and most Germans expected total victory in a matter of weeks. The ensuing battles in the Smolensk region frustrated German hopes for quick victory. Once across the Dvina and Dnepr Rivers, a surprised Wehrmacht encountered five fresh Soviet armies. Despite destroying two of these armies outright, severely damaging two others, and encircling the remnants of three of these armies in the Smolensk region, quick victory eluded the Germans. Instead, Soviet forces encircled in Mogilev and Smolensk stubbornly refused to surrender, and while they fought on, during July, August, and into early September, first five and then a total of seven newly-mobilized Soviet armies struck back viciously at the advancing Germans, conducting multiple counterattacks and counterstrokes, capped by two major counteroffensives that sapped German strength and will. Despite immense losses in men and materiel, these desperate Soviet actions derailed Operation Barbarossa. Smarting from countless wounds inflicted on his vaunted Wehrmacht, even before the fighting ended in the Smolensk region, Hitler postponed his march on Moscow and instead turned his forces southward to engage "softer targets" in the Kiev region. The 'derailment' of the Wehrmacht at Smolensk ultimately became the crucial turning point in Operation Barbarossa. This groundbreaking new study, now significantly expanded, exploits a wealth of Soviet and German archival materials, including the combat orders and operational of the German OKW, OKH, army groups, and armies and of the Soviet Stavka, the Red Army General Staff, the Western Main Direction Command, the Western, Central, Reserve, and Briansk Fronts, and their subordinate armies to present a detailed mosaic and definitive account of what took place, why, and how during the prolonged and complex battles in the Smolensk region from 10 July through 10 September 1941. The structure of the study is designed

specifically to appeal to both general readers and specialists by a detailed two-volume chronological narrative of the course of operations, accompanied by a third volume, and perhaps a fourth, containing archival maps and an extensive collection of specific orders and reports translated verbatim from Russian. The maps, archival and archival-based, detail every stage of the battle. Within the context of a fresh appreciation of Hitler's Plan Barbarossa, this volume reviews the first two weeks of Operation Barbarossa and then describes in unprecedented detail Plan Barbarossa, Opposing Forces, and the Border Battles, 22 June-1 July 1941; Army Group Center's Advance to the Western Dvina and Dnepr Rivers and the Western Front's Counterstroke at Lepel' 2-9 July 1941; Army Group Center's Advance to Smolensk and the Timoshenko "Counteroffensive," 13-15 July 1941; Army Group Center's Encirclement Battle at Smolensk, 16 July-6 August 1941; The First Soviet Counteroffensive, 23-31 July 1941; The Battles on the Flanks (Velikie Luki and Rogachev-Zhlobin), 16-31 July 1941; The Siege of Mogilev, 16-28 July 1941; Armeegruppe Guderian's Destruction of Group Kachalov, 31 July-6 August 1941; Armeegruppe Guderian's and Second Army's Southward March and the Fall of Gomel', 8-21 August 1941; The Second Soviet Counteroffensive: The Western Front's Dukhovshchina Offensive, 6-24 August 1941 and the Reserve Front's El'nia Offensive, 8-24 August 1941; The Struggle for Velikie Luki, 8-24 August 1941. Based on the analysis of the vast mass of documentary materials exploited by this study, David Glantz presents a number of important new findings, notably: Soviet resistance to Army Group Center's advance into the Smolensk region was far stronger and more active than the Germans anticipated and historians have previously described; The military strategy Stalin, the Stavka, and Western Main Direction Command pursued was far more sophisticated than previously believed; Stalin, the Stavka, and Timoshenko's Western Main Direction Command employed a strategy of attrition designed to weaken advancing German forces; This attrition strategy inflicted far greater damage on Army Group Center than previously thought and, ultimately, contributed significantly to the Western and Kalinin Fronts' victories over Army Group Center in December 1941. Quite simply, this series breaks new ground in World War II Eastern Front and Soviet military studies.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

"BARBAROSSA DERAILED: THE BATTLE FOR SMOLENSK 10 JULY-10 SEPTEMBER 1941 VOLUME 1: The German Advance, The Encirclement Battle, and the First and Second Soviet Counteroffensives, 10 July-24 August 1941", by historian David Glantz, is his latest work on the eastern front, this time covering the complex battles in and around Smolensk. This is the first volume of a planned four volume effort, with volume two to cover the German offensives on the flanks and the third Soviet counteroffensive from 25 August-10 September 1941. Volume 3 will be literal translations of specific orders and reports, while volume 4, if published, will consist of maps, archival and otherwise, with hopefully some in color. The study begins by briefly covering the fighting on the Eastern Front up to 10 July and providing the strategic plans for both sides. The detailed coverage basically begins on 10 July, with the Germans advancing towards Smolensk. As the campaign progresses, and in addition to describing and analyzing the on-going combat and tactical situation for both sides, Mr Glantz provides actual orders, communiqués, and unit diary entries down to the divisional level (sometimes paraphrased) to show what the units and commanders were actually thinking, what their morale was, what orders they gave/received, and how they played out. This adds greatly to one's understanding of the complete picture of the campaign, but it also adds a lot of complexity to the book. But nothing in life comes free. Volume one also includes a lot of maps, and using them as you read along is critical to understanding what is happening. Some of the maps are almost too small or "smudged" to be readable, but they're generally adequate for their purpose. (Hopefully bigger and better maps will be included in volume four.) Volume one basically takes you up 24 August 1941, which is where volume 2 should begin. If you're never read a book by Mr Glantz and are not a somewhat serious World War II buff, this probably isn't the book you should start with. In his preface, Mr Glantz says that this work should be studied and read, which is the right way to approach this book. Mr Glantz is "the" foremost expert on the Soviet side of World War II, and is probably first and foremost a serious historian and secondarily a writer, so his books typically

contain very little "I was there" sort of anecdotes, and are not easy reads. I own the majority of Mr Glantz's books. A criticism of some of his earlier works was that he relied too much on Soviet sources, and that by relying primarily on Soviet sources, some of his facts and analysis could have the same type of inaccuracies as those works that relied primarily on German sources. However, Mr Glantz has incorporated more and more German sources into his books, and his more recent works contain large (or should I say massive) amounts of archival data from both sides. While in my opinion Mr Glantz remains slightly skewed toward the Soviet point of view, much the way that most American Civil War authors marginally favor either the North or the South position, I do not feel this mild bias impacts his presentation and expert analysis. (Most, if not all, World War II authors also do the same.) This is a very hard book to rate. Mr Glantz provides information, data, and analysis that you cannot get anywhere else, and his access to and utilization of the former Soviet archives is literally second to none. If you're a serious World War II history buff, you must have his books on your shelf regardless of whether or not you agree with his analysis and conclusions. However, you'll often have to work hard for what you get. I have to admit that while I own most of Mr Glantz's books, I haven't finished all of them, as sometimes his writing is too dry or takes too much effort for what to me is just a pleasurable hobby. However his books are indispensable in getting a clear view of operations from the Soviet side, and I'll keep buying them as long as he keeps writing them. I give the book four stars, and highly recommend it to the grognards among us.

This is the first of a two part series covering the strategically important battles for control of the Dvina-Dnepr River defense zone which includes Smolensk, the important communication center and gateway to Moscow. Smolensk, on the Dnepr, and the surrounding area that is bracketed by Velikie Luki / Toropets to the north and Krichev / Roslavl to the south is the primary battle zone. This is the area Stalin, with the help of his new reserve armies, wanted to stop and destroy AGC led by Guderian's 2nd PzG and Hoth's 3rd PzG and supported by the 9th, 4th and 2nd Armies. Though having greater manpower, the Red Army had fewer modern tanks to stop the panzers but the lack of T-34s was compensated for by effective artillery. Involved with their fragmented defense and the eventual counter offensives would be the Western, Reserve, Bryansk and Central Fronts. Along with the above background info, Mr Glantz describes prewar doctrine, the plans for Operation Barbarossa, lists opposing forces, casualties to date, and the disadvantages the Germans would face in Russia then highlights the phenomenal advance of the Panzer Groups in the first weeks of war before starting the battle action. Stalin's plans to stop the Germans at the Rivers with his reserves is then discussed. This preamble is not only interesting but an imperative for most of us. In

addition to the big picture, the ebb and flow of the daily sometimes hourly maneuverings will be presented through sitreps with the thoughts, concerns and reactions of the key commanders as they counter the enemy's advance. I find this coverage of this micro planning process most engaging, making the battle more real, personal but the author takes this practice to the limit. Any more of these reports and it would overpower his own narrative. The main coverage begins on July 10th as the Germans were advancing on the key towns of Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev near the Dnepr River and will continue until August 24th. By that time the city of Smolensk and parts of the surrounding area had been captured but there is much left to do to secure the surrounding areas around the important towns of Yartsevo, Yelnya, Roslavl as well as liquidating the surviving pockets before diverting to Kiev. The tactical description is very good. Units of both sides are included as is the impact of terrain and weather conditions, logistics or if artillery was involved. The author will show in his usual competent style, backed by diary entries and situation reports of all levels the operational details, usually down to division level, of these horrific battles that would cost both sides severely. Especially noteworthy is the coverage of the siege of Mogilev, closing the Smolensk pocket and the fanatical fighting in the Solovevo corridor. Also important is the Velikie Luki Counter, the assault on Geyr's 24th PzC, the Timoshenko's Offensive of 7/23, the Counter at Yelnya and the Dukhovshchina Offensive in mid August to name just a few. The Russians made little gains for their trouble but inflicted high casualties and demoralized the German forces. It gave Stalin time to form more armies to protect Moscow. The Russian resistance was so severe, it persuaded Hitler to go after easier prey on the flanks and had AGC slow the offensive in the center (Directives 33, 34) and sent Hoth north and Guderian to Kiev to help AGS. Besides good coverage of the command decisions of Hoth and Guderian, the author also discusses Kluge, Bock, Weichs and Strauss as well as Timoshenko, Rokossovsky, Zhukov, Lukin, Kachalov, Kurochkin, Yeremenko and Konev on the Soviet side. Prior to the actual battle, the author presents the plans of the offensive giving the reader a better understanding of how the battle is to be prosecuted. Using communiques from dictators to the battlefield, Stalin's obsession to always attack and Hitler's impatience, indecision and changes in objectives is well covered. Its interesting to watch Hitler and Halder go from highly confident to seriously concern as the German war machine gets shredded. Hitler realizes the Soviets were far from vanquished and at a time when his panzer strength was at its lowest level and their supply lines the longest. In addition to the extensive ground coverage, Mr Glantz also provides poignant analysis and conclusions throughout the book to help the reader gain a fuller appreciation of the battle action and the ramifications that will emerge from those battles. Some of his conclusions are: the Germans had tactical momentum but the price they were paying for their gains was too high and

was unsustainable. Besides the lengthy delay and high casualties, supplies were exhausted, the panzers and trucks that remain were worn out and in need of major repairs. These shortages so early in the war would not bode well as the war stretches beyond the limits of Barbarossa. Both 3rd and 2nd PzGs, besides needing time to refit, had been delayed in redeploying to the flanks to help take Leningrad and Kiev respectively. As AGC moved further east the front line expanded, placing greater strain on its forces not to mention the ever growing supply lines. The German command were arguing terribly and losing cohesion among themselves over the current battle and the plans for Moscow regarding diverting to Kiev. The German Command was clearly irrational, desperate; their forces were exhausted and poorly supplied, machinery poorly maintained and the rainy season and then winter fast approaching. Hitler and his generals were well aware of how Napoleon lost his Army in 1812 but they ignored all logic and history and pursued the impossible dream: Moscow. It also pointed out that by August with German over-extension and with panzer divisions at less than half strength if Timoshenko had better communications, coordination and logistics with his armies, the German losses would have been greater. With Mr Glantz's level of detail and insight, the ramifications of this battle was having on both sides is clearly spelled out. In the final concise "Conclusion" chapter, the author hints at what is to come in the second volume due to Hitler's decision to move his armor to the flanks. The many maps show the daily progress of the German pincers slowly, hypnotically closing around the Soviet armies near Smolensk. Maps for August show the little progress at the line that includes Yartsevo, Yelnya and Roslavl. The key cities and rivers are shown and will be handy landmarks from which you'll be able to follow the action. These maps will be essential in following the densely packed narrative and are spread out throughout the book so that the proper map is always near. Map pointers are given to show the relevant map. Some of the maps are recent creations and cover the sector while smaller area maps are original German maps. The newer maps have better clarity but less detail, not showing all the locations in the narrative. A few maps are slightly darken or blurred and are harder to study. Some maps have text typed over the map that blocks out features. A number of sector maps were missing Army boundary lines. There are also 28 photos of the key commanders; many photos are only thumbnail in size. There are extensive Endnotes that provides additional ancillary info and an Bibliography if further study is desired. Knowing German or Russian will help. Within the Appendix and throughout the book, there are abbreviated Orders of Battle for both sides. These OBs are an excellent reference if needed. A useful Index is also provided that break down commanders, units, battles, cities and rivers. This critical sector saw some of the harshest, complicated series of attacks, counterattacks and pocket liquidations that were sending troops in every direction, making an

operational nightmare for the officers in 1941 but Mr Glantz does an excellent job of simplifying these complexities and with the use of the many maps and tables an interested reader will be able to follow the action and gain a true appreciation of this strategically critical struggle that saw the Soviets, despite the costs, succeed in slowing the German advance and eliminate the ability of Germany to win the war in 1941. This book nearly rivals the author's "Armageddon" for comprehensiveness and definition but for those who enjoyed it should still like this one as well. If you're new to reading Glantz, you should be warned that this book is technically challenging requiring your full attention and with little anecdotal experiences may be considered dry. In providing a few aspects of the battle, I've tried to show the potential reader a glimpse of how much information the author has researched and choreographed into his book. Though it must also be said that the Russian side dominates this book and while the German side is not overlooked there were times throughout the book when, I felt, there could have been more to the German side. A prime example concerns the assault on Mogilev. While the details of the Russian garrison to hold the city and the relief attempts to free that garrison was comprehensive, the German maneuvers to take the city were clearly lacking. You had to see some of the German assault vicariously through Russian eyes. In a few instances confirming data was thin. This is the area where "Armageddon" has the edge. Despite the minor criticism, the volume of info presented is far above anything I've read before, making this book five stars. From my perspective and despite the criticism, I recognize and appreciate the author's huge effort and time invested in providing the history of this pivotal campaign and for anyone who is seriously interested in the eastern front, this is a must read book and is highly recommended.

This is the latest offering in Glantz's study of the war in the east during WWII. This, and most of his other selections, is not for the faint of heart - it is clearly aimed at the scholar of the era who already has a familiarity with the course of events. He focuses on bringing us the facts contained in the primary sources - the records from the army headquarters on each side. In conjunction with period maps (badly photo copied) and rough top level original maps (with little detail other than place names and rivers), he attempts to give us a factual accounting devoid of the biased reporting produced in the immediate post war period of what occurred. It takes a lot of effort even for the astute student to keep up with the discourse - this is not a narrative telling and really is best viewed as a source book than anything else. That said, this is VERY valuable work - just take it for what it is - a serious scholarly study, not an entertaining narrative.

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