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978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

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Kiev 1941

In just four weeks in the summer of 1941 the German Wehrmacht wrought unprecedented destruction on four Soviet armies, conquering central Ukraine and killing or capturing three-quarters of a million men. This was the battle of Kiev – one of the largest and most decisive battles of World War II and, for Hitler and Stalin, a battle of crucial importance. For the first time, David Stahel charts the battle's dramatic course and aftermath, uncovering the irreplaceable losses suffered by Germany's 'panzer groups' despite their battlefield gains, and the implications of these losses for the German war effort. He illuminates the inner workings of the German army as well as the experiences of ordinary soldiers, showing that with the Russian winter looming and Soviet resistance still unbroken, victory came at huge cost and confirmed the turning point in Germany's war in the east.

David Stahel is an independent researcher based in Berlin. His previous publications include *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East* (Cambridge, 2009).

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Frontmatter

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107014596

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First published 2012

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Stahel, David, 1975–

Kiev 1941 : Hitler's battle for supremacy in the East / David Stahel.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-01459-6 (hardback)

1. Kiev (Ukraine) – History – Siege, 1941. 2. World War, 1939–1945 – Campaigns – Ukraine – Kiev. 3. World War, 1939–1945 – Campaigns – Ukraine. 4. World War, 1939–1945 – Campaigns – Eastern Front. 5. Germany. Heer – Armored troops – History – 20th century. 6. Germany. Heer – History – World War, 1939–1945. I. Title.

D764.3.K5S73 2011

940.54'21777 – dc23 2011030300

ISBN 978-1-107-01459-6 Hardback

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CONTENTS

List of figures vi
List of tables viii
List of maps ix
Acknowledgements xi
Glossary of terms xii
Tables of military ranks and army structures xiv

Introduction i

1 The bulldog, the eagle and the bear 11
2 Germany's defeat in the east 48
3 The road to Kiev 99
4 War in the Ukraine 135
5 Ominous horizons 171
6 The battle of Kiev 206
7 Slaughter in the Ukraine 238
8 Visions of victory 274
9 The calm before the storm 303
10 Moscow in the crosshairs 332

Conclusion 345
Notes 355
Bibliography 432
Index 457

FIGURES

1	The Wehrmacht greeted by pictures of Stalin and Timoshenko. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-265-0035A-26A, Photographer: Bieling	<i>page 68</i>
2	The vast spaces of the Soviet Union. © bpk/Berlin, Arthur Grimm, 50108259	86
3	The German advance left behind many dead. Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1975-084-05A, Photographer: Erich Bauer	90
4	Panzer Group 1. © bpk/Berlin, Heinrich von der Becke, 30010997	97
5	Field Marshal Fedor von Bock. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1986-0226-500	106
6	An ill-advised attempt to cross a captured bridge. Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1994-009-33, Photographer: o.Ang.	123
7	Hitler and Mussolini visiting Army Group South. © bpk/Berlin, BSB, Heinrich Hoffmann, 50044076	137
8	Colonel-General Heinz Guderian. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-H15617, Photographer: o.Ang.	147
9	Heavy rains hampered the German advance. © bpk/Berlin, Herbert Hoffmann, 50108269	184
10	Execution of supposed Soviet partisans. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-212-0221-06, Photographer: Thiede	195
11	German-built corduroy roads. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-267-0143-29, Photographer: Böhmer	200

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vii / List of figures

12	Colonel-General Ewald von Kleist. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1986-0210-503, Photographer: Fritz Hartmann	218
13	Kleist's panzers broke out of the bridgehead at Kremenchug and raced north. © bpk/Berlin, 50108319	221
14	Combat strength of Panzer Group 2 on 14 September 1941. Franz Halder, KTB III, p. 231 (14 September 1941)	243
15	German soldiers requisition a captured Soviet vehicle. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-268-0157-31A, Photographer: Utecht	252
16	A German soldier guards Kiev's citadel. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-L20208, Photographer: Schmidt	257
17	Fires in Kiev set off by hidden explosives. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-B12190, Photographer: Kraagranger	259
18	Sign warning of the danger posed by Soviet partisans. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-007-2477-06, Photographer: Trautvetter	267
19	Burning tank and dead crewman exemplify heavy Soviet losses. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-020-1268-36, Photographer: Johannes Hähle	289
20	The aftermath of the battle of Kiev. ullstein bild.	299
21	Some of the hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war from the battle of Kiev. ullstein bild – Arthur Grimm	305

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TABLES

1	Strength of Panzer Group 2 and projected reinforcements on 27 September 1941	<i>page</i> 324
2	Army Group Centre order of battle on 2 October 1941 (Operation Typhoon)	340

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

MAPS

1	Dispositions of Panzer Group 1 on 24 June 1941	<i>page</i> 70
2	Dispositions of Panzer Group 1 on 27 June 1941	71
3	Dispositions of Panzer Group 1 on 1 July 1941	72
4	Dispositions of Army Group South, 7–14 July 1941	78
5	Dispositions of Army Group South, 15 July–11 August 1941	84
6	Dispositions of Army Group Centre on 24 August 1941	115
7	Dispositions of Army Group Centre on 1 September 1941	154
8	Dispositions of Army Group Centre on 6 September 1941	158
9	Dispositions of Army Group Centre on 10 September 1941	168
10	The battle for Kiev, 1–10 September 1941	210
11	The battle for Kiev, 11–15 September 1941	220
12	The battle for Kiev, 16–26 September 1941	261
13	The battle for Kiev (summary), 31 July–26 September 1941	262

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of researching and writing this book was enormously satisfying and the final product benefited from much help and advice. In the first place thanks must go to my old friend Jakob Graichen. He and his wife, Mariana, proved to be endless sources of support and inspiration for which I cannot thank them enough. Thanks also to Benjamin, Lea and Nadia for their welcome distractions. Florian Ehrendreich assisted in checking my translations, while Priscilla Petten-gell helped unravel some of my more complex sentences. My numerous research trips to Freiburg for the German military archive were made both comfortable and economical by the support of Gudrun and Rainer Graichen as well as Dr Irmela Gonser.

For historical matters I have been uniquely served by some of the best minds in the field. Professor Rolf-Dieter Müller and Colonel David Glantz both gave freely of their time, reading drafts, answering questions and offering advice. Colonel Glantz also agreed to the publication of his own privately produced maps.

Dr Eleanor Hancock, Dr Jeff Rutherford, Dr Adrian Wettstein, Dr Alexander Hill and my editor, Michael Watson, all read drafts and provided invaluable feedback. Dr Alex J. Kay helped with some of the source material and proved to be a vital sounding board for many of my ideas. To all these historians I owe my deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks.

Finally, for all his support over the years and for the wonderful person that he is, this book is lovingly dedicated to my brother Andrew.

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David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BA-MA	<i>Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv</i> (German Military Archive)
CSIR	<i>Corpo di Sedizione Italiano in Russia</i> (Italian Expeditionary Corps in Russia)
<i>Das Reich</i>	2nd SS Division
<i>Einsatzgruppen</i>	'action groups' of the SD and Security Police, used mainly for mass killings
<i>Endkampf</i>	final battle
FHQ	<i>Führerhauptquartier</i> (Führer Headquarters)
<i>Gestapo</i>	<i>Geheime Staatspolizei</i> (Secret State Police)
<i>Grossdeutschland</i>	Infantry Regiment (later Division)
<i>Grosstransportraum</i>	'large transport area', referring to the transport regiment responsible for bridging the gap between front-line divisions and railheads
<i>Hiwis</i>	<i>Hilfswilliger</i> (willing helpers)
KTB	<i>Kriegstagebuch</i> (War Diary)
<i>Landser</i>	German infantry man
<i>Lebensraum</i>	living space
<i>Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler</i>	SS Regiment (later Division)
LH	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
Luftwaffe	German air force

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiii / Glossary of terms

MGFA	<i>Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt</i> (Military History Research Institute)
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del</i> (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
OKH	Oberkommando des Heers (High Command of the Army)
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
<i>Ostheer</i>	Eastern Army
POW	prisoner of war
Pz. Div.	Panzer Division
RAF	Royal Air Force
<i>rasputitsa</i>	'quagmire season', refers to the biannual difficulties caused by heavy rains or melting snow in Russia, Belorussia and the Ukraine
<i>Reichsbahn</i>	German railways
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> (Security Service)
<i>Sondermeldungen</i>	special news bulletins
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> (Protection Echelon)
<i>Stavka</i>	Soviet High Command
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<i>Untermensch</i>	subhuman
<i>Vernichtungskrieg</i>	war of annihilation
Wehrmacht	German armed forces

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[More information](#)

TABLES OF MILITARY RANKS AND ARMY STRUCTURES

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xv / Tables of military ranks and army structures

Table of equivalent ranks

German army/Luftwaffe	Translation used in this study	Equivalent US army ranks
Officer ranks		
Generalfeldmarschall	Field Marshal	General of the Army
Generaloberst	Colonel-General	General
General	General	Lieutenant General
der Infanterie	of Infantry	
der Artillerie	of Artillery	
der Flakartillerie	of Flak Artillery	
der Flieger	of Aviation	
der Kavallerie	of Cavalry	
der Luftwaffe	of the Luftwaffe	
der Panzertruppe	of Panzer Troops	
der Pioniere	of Engineers	
Generalleutnant	Lieutenant-General	Major General
Generalmajor	Major-General	Brigadier General
Oberst	Colonel	Colonel
Oberstleutnant	Lieutenant-Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
Major	Major	Major
Hauptmann	Captain	Captain
Oberleutnant	1st Lieutenant	1st Lieutenant
Leutnant	Lieutenant	2nd Lieutenant
Enlisted ranks		
Stabsfeldwebel	Master Sergeant	Master Sergeant
Oberfeldwebel	Technical Sergeant	Technical Sergeant
Feldwebel	Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant
Unterfeldwebel	Sergeant	Sergeant
Unteroffizier	Corporal	Corporal
Gefreiter	Private	Private 1st Class
Soldat	Private	Private 2nd Class

Source: Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend. The 1940 Campaign in the West* (Annapolis, 2005) p. 355.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01459-6 - Kiev 1941: Hitler's Battle for Supremacy in the East

David Stahel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi / Tables of military ranks and army structures

Structure and size of the German army

Germany army formation	English translation	Number of subordinate units	Average number of personnel ^a
Heeresgruppe	Army Group	Two or more armies	100,000 to more than a million
Armee	Army	Two or more corps	60,000–250,000
Korps	Corps	Two or more divisions	40,000–70,000
Division	Division	Two or more brigades	12,000–18,000
Brigade	Brigade	Two or more regiments	5,000–7,000
Regiment	Regiment	Two or more battalions	2,000–6,000
Bataillon	Battalion	Two or more companies	500–1,000
Kompanie	Company	Two or more platoons	100–200
Zug	Platoon		30–40

Note: ^a Wide variations of these figures occurred especially after 1941.

Source: Author's own records.