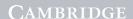


The Rattle for Moscow

In November 1941 Hitler ordered German forces to complete the final drive on the Soviet capital, then less than 100 km away. Army Group Centre was pressed into the attack for one last attempt to break Soviet resistance before the onset of winter. From the German perspective, the final drive on Moscow had all the ingredients of a dramatic final battle in the east, which, according to previous accounts, only failed at the gates of Moscow. David Stahel now challenges this well-established narrative by demonstrating that the last German offensive of 1941 was a forlorn effort, undermined by operational weakness, poor logistics, and driven forward by what he identifies as National Socialist military thinking. With unparalleled research from previously undocumented army files and soldiers' letters, Stahel takes a fresh look at the battle for Moscow, which, even before the Soviet winter offensive, threatened disaster for Germany's war in the east.

David Stahel is a lecturer at the University of New South Wales in Canberra. His previous publications include Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East (2009), Kiev 1941 (2011), Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941 (2012) and Operation Typhoon (2013).





The Battle for Moscow

David Stahel





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TABLE

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In Foucault's Pendulum Umberto Eco wrote: 'I believe that what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments, when they aren't trying to teach us. We are formed by little scraps of wisdom.' The day I was born I had an infant older brother and a mother who had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis during her pregnancy with me. In the months leading to my birth my mother had lost the use of her legs and eyes. Two years before my father had been a single young man with next to no responsibility and then, in 1975, he found himself with two infant sons and a severely disabled wife. Of course, growing up I hardly gave any of this much thought. My father just had a lot to do to take care of us all – and he never wavered in that commitment. Recalling those days and recounting the moments from which I might have gleaned little scraps of wisdom would probably fill a book in itself, but, since I am an historian and not a memoirist, this book will have to do. Happy dedication dad.

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GLOSSARY

BA-MA Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv

(German Military Archive)

Das Reich 2nd SS Division

Einsatzgruppen 'action groups' of the SD and Security

Police, used mainly for mass killings

Endsieg final victory

Erhaltungsegedanken conservation of strength and

preparation for winter

Grossdeutschland 'Greater Germany' Infantry

Regiment (later division)

Grosstransportraum 'large transport area'. Referring to

the transport regiment responsible for bridging the gap between front-

line divisions and railheads

KTB Kriegstagebuch (war diary)
Landser German infantry man

Lebensraum living space

Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler SS Regiment (later division)

Luftwaffe German Air Force

OKH Oberkommando des Heeres (High

Command of the Army)

OKW Oberkommando der Wehrmacht

(High Command of the Armed

Forces)

Ostheer Eastern Army
Pz. Div. Panzer Division



xiv / Glossary

rasputitsa 'quagmire season'; refers to the

biannual difficulties caused by heavy rains or melting snow in Russia,

Belarus and Ukraine

Reichsbahn German railways

SD Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service)

Sondermeldungen special news bulletins

SS Schutzstaffel (Protection Echelon)

StavkaSoviet High CommandVernichtungskriegWar of annihilationWehrmachtGerman Armed Forces

Wirkungsgedanken exploitation of all resources to

achieve maximum effect



TABLES OF MILITARY RANKS AND ARMY STRUCTURES

Table of equivalent ranks

German army/ Luftwaffe	Translation used in this study	Equivalent US army rank
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



xvi / Tables of military ranks and army structures

(cont.)

German army/ Luftwaffe	Translation used in this study	Equivalent US army rank
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.

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.