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Barbarossa Revisited: A Critical Reappraisal of the Opening Stages of the Russo-German Campaign (June–December 1941)

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In the Soviet Union in 1941, a complex, ill-understood play of events projected the German field armies in the east close to Moscow in the late autumn of the year, but ended with their ultimate defeat. The reigning Soviet interpretation of the campaign remains the one in which the natural strengths of the Russian motherland and the inspired leadership of the Communists predetermined a Soviet Russian triumph over the invading Germans. Western historians and writers also generally agree that Hitler subjected himself and the Germans to inevitable defeat by the invasion of the Soviet Union. However, critical reappraisal of the opening stages of the Russo-German campaign fails to support the present Soviet and western views of the war, showing rather that the German successes of the first four weeks virtually assured the seizure of Moscow—the rail, road, political, psychological, and demographic plexus of the USSR—in the late summer of 1941.

After the immensely successful opening stages of the campaign, the military dilettante Adolf Hitler sent the German armies into a series of gyrations and halts which cast the final battle for Moscow into the autumn of 1941. The magnitude of the initial German successes and the extraordinary procrastination of Hitler combine to support a view that chance, in the form of Hitler's personality, rather than the predetermined strengths of the Soviet Union, operated to effect Soviet survival in the summer of 1941. The Germans retained enough strength even later in the year to defeat the Soviet armies defending Moscow and seize the capital city and communications center of the Soviet Union, but only if the early winter weather remained mild enough not to interfere with offensive movement. Given the closely-run circumstances of the final battles before Moscow in October–December 1941, the issue of victory or defeat within the lingering framework of Barbarossa still hung on historical chance, specifically on the characteristics of the onset of the winter of 1941–1942.

In July 1940, Adolf Hitler issued his first instructions for an attack against the Soviet Union.¹ The German Armed Forces (*die Wehrmacht*) had defeated and partly occupied France and neutralized Britain by that time, and Hitler, who proved unwilling to risk failure in an invasion of Britain, had decided instead to deal with his powerful diplomatic partner in the east. The Soviet government had been bold and aggressive in its drive into eastern Europe toward the Baltic and had become an immediate threat to Rumania after June 28, 1940, especially as concerns the oil resources of that state. The strategic question of Germany fighting a war on two fronts was solved in 1941 by the neu-

¹ The grandeur and scope of the war in the east supports a large body of documents, books, articles, reports, etc. The most complete body of original documents is that contained in U. S. National Archives, *Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Virginia*, a catalogue of several thousand feet of shelf space of documents formerly held by the U. S. Government in warehouses at Alexandria, Virginia, but presently returned to the Federal German government. The U. S. Army carried out a broad study of the European war and the documents collected; those commissioned to be written can be found in U. S. Army European Command, *Guide to Foreign Military Studies, 1945-54*, Catalogue and Index (Headquarters, U. S. Army Europe, 1954). The catalogue contains numerous valuable unpublished manuscripts on the subject of the Russo-German campaign. The most impressive German historical works on the campaign include especially Klaus Reinhardt, *Die Wende vor Moskau* (Stuttgart, 1972) and A. Philippi and F. Heim, *Der Feldzug gegen Sowjetrußland 1941-1945* (Stuttgart, 1962). The finest German first-hand accounts of the war run the gamut from Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories* (Chicago, 1958) and Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (New York, 1954) through the extraordinary collection of first-hand accounts in Paul Carell, *Hitler Moves East* (New York, 1964) and his subsequent two volumes on the later years in the war. Important works of general scholarship available in English include the early volume of George E. Blau, *The German Campaign in Russia—Planning and Operations (1940-1942)* (Washington, D.C., 1955), which is based on German documents and conversations with German armed forces personnel (made available by the U. S. Army in the period 1945-1954), and the effective later accounts in Alan Clark, *Barbarossa* (New York, 1965) and Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War, 1941-45* (New York, 1970). German division and higher-level histories exist in growing numbers and uniformly high quality including army works like Wilhelm Meyer-Detring, *Die 137. Infanteriedivision im Mittelabschnitt der Ostfront* (Petzenkirchen, Austria, 1962) and the detailed material on the Waffen SS in Otto Weidinger, *Division "Das Reich," Der Weg der 2. SS—Panzer-Division "Das Reich," Die Geschichte der Sturmdivision der Waffen SS, Drei Bande* (Osnabrück, 1967, 1969, 1978). Journals which have published valuable articles on the Russo-German campaign include especially *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, and the French language *Revue de l'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*. Concerning the planning for Operation Barbarossa from the viewpoint of OKH, see *Generaloberst Franz Halder, Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 2 (1.7.1940-21.6.1941) ed. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Stuttgart, 1963).

tralization of British influence on the continent, and the essence of the matter was that only one major land front would exist during that year.² Hitler, who had a flair for grand strategy and a sure instinct for tactical openings, probably realized that the defeat of Britain would not be a decisive event.³ The United States and the British dominions would remain potential enemies of great strength, with the Soviet Union, the state whose destruction would assure the achievement of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, continuing to be the primary target for German expansion. The risks involved in the invasion of Britain (including the trauma of possible defeat) would also have had adverse internal effects in Germany and detrimentally affected a final reckoning with the Soviet Union.⁴ The delay in the final reckoning with the Soviet Union, which was inherent in Operation Sea Lion, would have ad-

² The Allies evacuated on June 8, 1940, the last of the 24,500 troops engaged in the siege of Narvik in northern Norway. In combination with the evacuation at Dunkirk, which was completed by June, 3, 1940, and the collapse of France signalled by the armistice of June 17, the Allied flight from Norway left the Germans with no active land fronts on the European continent. German troops were not committed to North Africa until February 1941, and then only in small numbers for the entire year. For the most authoritative account of the Norwegian operations based on German sources and available in English, see Earl F. Ziemke, *The German Northern Theater of Operations 1940-1945* (Washington D. C.: Department of the Army, 1959), pp. 1-112. See the recent estimate of the western Allied situation in Europe in 1941 in David Downing, *The Devil's Virtuosos: The German Generals at War 1940-5* (New York, 1977), p. 53, in which the author notes that "the spectre of a two-front war on *land* had been, for an indefinite period, removed" (italics in original). See also Clark, *Barbarossa*, pp. 26-27.

³ *Generalfeldmarschall* Eric von Manstein and *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian held both command and staff positions in the German army which brought them into close contact with Adolf Hitler at several of the most crucial junctures of the Second World War in Europe, e.g., Case Yellow planning and execution, Sea Lion planning, deflection of Barbarossa southward, Stalingrad, Kharkov (March 1943), Citadel, and the great defensive battles of 1944 in the east. Both officers emphasize that Hitler had substantial military capabilities, albeit counterbalanced by his tendency to panic at local crises and to meddle in details. See Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, pp. 92, 109-111, 117-119 for Hitler's strengths and, Manstein, *Lost Victories*, pp. 121, 125, 274-5, 282-3. See also the estimate of Hitler's capabilities with relation to the acceptance of the Manstein variant of *Fall Gelb* for the attack against France in Telford Taylor, *The March of Conquest, The German Victories in Western Europe 1940* (New York, 1958), pp. 166, 168, 171.

⁴ See Peter Fleming, *Operation Sea Lion* (New York, 1957), pp. 144-5, 229-41, 266-286, and Manstein, *Lost Victories*, pp. 164-5, for basic considerations in an amphibious attack on Britain in 1940. See also the first-hand account in Walter Görlitz, *Paulus and Stalingrad* (New York, 1963), pp. 87-96, and the German naval analysis in Anthony Martienssen, *Hitler and his Admirals* (New York, 1949), pp. 63-91.

versely affected the balance of ground strengths between the German and Soviet armies. Soviet armaments production was formidable at this time, probably exceeding German production of ground weapons by a significant margin.⁵ In tanks, the German army's most important weapon for continental warfare, there was little doubt that an extra year's production of the revolutionary Soviet T-34 tank might have given the Soviets an insuperable advantage in ground combat.⁶

The High Command of the army, *Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH)*, conducted War Game Barbarossa between November 29 and December 14, 1940, and included the basic assumption that an effective campaign against the USSR would have to be launched across the entire front extending from the Baltic to the Black Seas.⁷ The obstacle of the Pripjat Marshes, the largest permanent marshland in the world,⁸ would di-

⁵ Burton Klein, *Germany's Economic Preparations for War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 181–94, 208–210. The author was one of the directors of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which was a 208-volume report giving detailed insight into the German (and Japanese) war production efforts during the Second World War. Klein, in his more general Harvard work, reveals the extraordinary weakness of German armaments production in 1940–1941. British production alone of “armored vehicles” was greater than German in both years. Soviet production of tanks was also considerably greater than German during the same years and the Soviet tank force existing in 1941 proved to be approximately seven times larger than the German force employed in the attack. The Germans attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 with approximately 3200 tanks; the Soviets had approximately 24,000 tanks available for the defense of the state. See U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Diplomatic Papers, 1941, vol. i, p. 807, for Joseph Stalin's account to Harry Hopkins of the numbers of Soviet tanks.

⁶ Interviews in summer 1966, spring 1967, and spring 1972 with Walter J. Spielberger, presently residing in Munich, Germany, and holder of probably the largest private collection of data on German tanks and automotive vehicles of the Second World War. Spielberger, in the winter of 1941–42, was a young engineer on the German technical team which conducted in east Prussia the first detailed examination of a Soviet T-34 (variation A) tank. The armor, main cannon, engine, and certain details of the track and suspension system were superior to those on any German tank in existence in January 1942. See also Rudolf Steiger, *Panzertaktik im Spiegel Deutscher Kriegstagebücher 1939–1941* (Freiburg, 1973), an impressively documented work, where the thesis is advanced that the T-34 tank can perhaps be considered the “*Kriegsentscheidende*” weapon, or decisive weapon in the war in the east, responsible for saving the Soviets in the autumn of 1941, and swinging the entire war in their favor.

⁷ See Görlitz, *Paulus and Stalingrad*, pp. 98–120, which is based largely on a Paulus memorandum of August 13, 1946, and gives exceptional insight into *OKH* theoretical planning and the style of the German general staff in approaching the problem of a successful invasion of the Soviet Union.

⁸ George W. Hoffmann, ed. *A Geography of Europe Including Asiatic USSR*, Second Edition (New York, 1961), p. 125.

vide the front into two parts, thus resulting in the isolation of the northern and southern wings of the advance. In the south, the factor of isolation increased the importance of the complete neutralization of the various Balkan states. The relatively weak southern wing would be subject to defeat and the Germans had to assure that the Balkan states remained friendly, neutralized, or occupied. Another major concern of the *OKH* was the paucity of communications in southeastern Europe relative to the marshalling of an attack into the Ukraine. The isolated southern wing of the German advance was also subdivided in turn by the barrier of the Carpathian Mountains. Several brute factors of geography conspired therefore to limit the strength of the German southern wing and the same factors necessitated control of the Balkans prior to an attack.

In the actual event, the opening of Operation Barbarossa was delayed beyond the original date of May 15, 1941 for several weeks. Two factors contributed to the delay: first, severe winter and spring weather conditions which conspired to damage the thinly-developed road network in the east, thereby inhibiting the cross-country movement of tracked vehicles; and secondly, the political coup of March 26–28, 1941 in Yugoslavia, which brought to power an anti-German government. Historians and writers have placed much emphasis on this delay in the German attack, with the consensus that the Balkan campaign was a critical factor in the collapse of the German thrust against Moscow in the first week of December 1941, in the teeth of the Russian winter. Virtually every book, article, and report taking the opening of the Russian campaign as its major theme notes the Balkan war, relates it to a delay in the opening of Barbarossa, and often proceeds to link it with the collapse of a German offensive later in the campaign in December, close to Moscow. The subtle but important point, which is made in only a few of the more perceptive or knowledgeable German works and with startling candor in several Soviet works, is that *the* great offensive of June 22–July 16, 1941 had achieved all of the necessary preconditions for German victory over the Soviet Union. The question of importance then is not a delay in the opening of the campaign in June but the results achieved by July.

The July results, which can be equated with the preconditions for German victory, include deep penetrations and successful encirclements with massive casualties and damage inflicted on the defending Soviet forces. The Germans had achieved their first operational objectives—the seizure of advanced terrain for the final advance to Leningrad and/or Moscow, the destruction of the Soviet armies on the frontiers north of the Pripyat Marshes, and a deep drive into the Ukraine, with the concomitant pinning down of Soviet armies in the south. The four

German Panzer groups moving far in advance of the infantry armies had fractured the Soviet defenses into three loosely-connected army groups incapable of coordinated operations. Very little remained to the Soviet high command for survival. The constituted operational armies of June 22, 1941 had been beaten, with nothing remaining to the Soviets but strong reserves of manpower and the potential for further ruthless expenditure of forces. But the pace of the German advance had been within a framework of operational agility which the Soviet command and staff were incapable of matching. The Soviets had not the time, space, weather, nor the military expertise to survive on July 16, 1941. Only the most desperate German error at the highest strategic level could save the Soviet Union.

With one notable exception, all of the important actors within *OKW*, *OKH*, and Army Group Center favored continuation of the German offensive with the objective to seize Moscow. The July–August 1941 consensus among actors as disparate as Jodl and Warlimont at *OKW*, Brauchitsch and Halder at *OKH*, and von Bock, Guderian, and Hoth at Army Group Center constitutes a powerful case in favor of the realism of Moscow as an attainable objective in the summer of 1941. Questions arise, nevertheless, on issues of logistics, morale, space, time, etc. The Germans had achieved astounding gains by mid-July 1941, but did they have the logistics system and the morale required to continue the attack?

Virtually all indicators support a view that the Germans were not restricted by logistics factors in the scope or direction of their operations from June to September 1941. At the highest level of consideration, the German economy had produced and stockpiled adequate quantities of food, ammunition, and fuel to support continued offensive operations across the entire front in the Soviet Union. The key logistics factor for the Germans was the transportation system in the occupied part of the Soviet Union and its ability to support continued movement of the German field armies toward Moscow. The premier problem, which the Germans had planned for and were well aware of, was the reconstruction and maintenance of a heavily-damaged Soviet rail system to conform with the narrower German standard-gauge track. The other problem was the development and maintenance of a primitive road system through difficult terrain comprising deep sand, dense forests, and extensive tracts of marshland.

Elements of Panzer Groups II and III arrived on July 15, 1941 in and around Smolensk, 700 kilometers into the Soviet Union from the 1939 border, but the commanders did not note significant logistics problems until two weeks later. At that time, the commanders mentioned shortages with the resupply of artillery ammunition, but corre-

lated them with the special conditions of positional warfare which had developed around Smolensk and Yelnya as the Germans paused to reduce the Smolensk cauldrons. The Germans required until approximately July 27, 1941 to bring the Smolensk battles to a close with the elimination of the encircled Soviet forces. On that date, the question may be asked fairly: After thirty-six days of almost-continuous marching or combat, were the Germans able to continue the move toward Moscow? From the viewpoint of morale and logistics, German statements from late July 1941 support a view that the divisions of Army Group Center could have attacked toward Moscow by approximately August 4, 1941.⁹ The strongest evidence in support of a timely capability to move toward Moscow is found in the German attack at Roslavl. With the end of the Smolensk battle late in July 1941, and notwithstanding Hitler's vacillation on the choice of tactics to continue the war, Headquarters, Army Group Center prepared for an attack against Moscow. Convinced that Hitler would give the green light for the final attack toward Moscow, Army Group Center in fact began the battle by reinforcing the newly-designated *Armeegruppe Guderian* and launching an attack involving five army corps. In the ensuing battle at Roslavl from August 1 to 8, 1941, Guderian's reinforced *Armeegruppe* fought a

⁹ Panzer A.O.K.2, *Anlagenband Nr. 40 zum K.T.B.Nr.1, von 22.6.1944 bis 31.2.1942*, Bundesarchiv, Freiburg, RH 21-2/v. 171, contains the "personnel and materiel standings" for two armored corps of *Panzer Gruppe 2* at the end of the Smolensk battle, i.e., the beginning of the originally-projected drive for Moscow. The estimates are those of the responsible commanders who would execute further offensive movement.

The commanding general of the *XXIV Pz.K.*, Freiherr von Geyr, summed up on July 26, 1941, the readiness of his corps for the anticipated drive to Moscow as follows: "I consider as necessary a pause for rest of about eight days for assuring the replacement of personnel and equipment and to make the divisions ready for further missions of all kinds." Geyr was saying essentially that his armored corps would be ready to resume the drive to the *east* by August 4, 1941, i.e., a month prior to the time it began its drive to the *south*. His corps comprised two Panzer and one motorized infantry divisions.

In the neighboring *XXXXVII Pz.K.*, the commanding generals of the Panzer and motorized infantry divisions expressed the readiness of their organizations for combat as follows:

1. *18.Pz.D* (July 28, 1941). "With the existing fighting troops and with due regard for the materiel situation of the tanks and trucks, the division can be signified as ready for a further 100-200 km. of movement in combat."

2. *17.Pz.D.* (July 28, 1941). "The division is ready [*bereit*] for insertion in further combat."

3. *29.I.D.* (mot.) (July 28, 1941). "The division is qualified for [*fähig*] insertion in further combat."

The estimates noted above include specific consideration of matters of morale, physical rest for the troops, fuel and ammunition resupply, casualty replacements, and vehicle maintenance.

tactical masterpiece which gave the Germans control over communications in the southern half of the sector of Army Group Center for a timely (i.e., approximately August 18, 1941) advance against Moscow. Both Guderian and Hermann Geyer, Commander of *IX. Armeekorps*, engaged in the battle and commented on the high morale of the troops; Guderian paints a vivid picture in his memoirs of a highly-charged psychological atmosphere comprising anticipation on the part of the German troops that they were on the threshold of the final attack toward Moscow.¹⁰

The attack at Roslavl was a strong victory, even by the standards of the eastern front. The Germans took 38,000 prisoners and captured 250 tanks in the clash, and near the end of the struggle on August 7, 1941, German reconnaissance units reported no Soviet forces for twenty-five miles to the southeast of Roslavl toward Bryansk. The battle supports a view that Army Group Center had the logistics capability and combat strength in the first half of August 1941 to have advanced on Moscow against Soviet forces capable of being mastered by the German field armies. Several days earlier, on August 4, 1941, the independently-minded commander of the largest German tank group in the Soviet Union had already directed his staff to prepare for an advance on Moscow "with point of main effort through Roslavl toward Viasma."¹¹ The Roslavl battle, the planning by the commander of *Panzer Gruppe II* for the resumption of the advance on Moscow, and his attitude that success of the offensive was axiomatic, together form a *prima facie* case in support of a German capability to move successfully against Moscow in mid-August 1941.

The attitude of the civilian populace toward the invading Germans was also a significant factor in the campaign. The consensus in historical writing, indeed, is that a more enlightened German occupation policy—stressing cooperation among the German people and the various ethnic groups in Soviet Russia, reestablishment and encouragement of individual peasant landholding, and destruction of the Communist bureaucracy, etc.—could have swung the war in favor of the Germans. During the initial onslaught, the Germans were greeted as liberators by the Baltic peoples and favorably received in many areas in the Ukraine. Even in White Russia and the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Re-

¹⁰ Hermann Geyer, *Das IX. Armeekorps im Ostfeldzug 1941* (Neckargemünd, 1969), pp. 67, 68, 70, 75, 77, comments on the high state of German morale during the period June 22–July 25, 1941, the solvency of the logistics situation, and the necessity for the Germans to strike singlemindedly toward Moscow. He specifically notes that his three infantry divisions lived off the land "50 to 100 percent" as concerns rations, and used almost exclusively captured stocks of Soviet fuel for the motor vehicles of the divisions.

¹¹ Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 192–194.

public, many Russian communities greeted the advancing Germans as potential friends and liberators during the first three months of Barbarossa. It took the civilian National Socialist *Reich Kommissars* following the field armies several months to alienate the Ukrainian and Russian populace. A German offensive toward Moscow in mid-August 1941 would have been increased in effectiveness by the lingering friendliness and quiescence of the Russian population on the central front.

The success of the Blitz phase of the campaign in the east has not been awarded an accurate appreciation largely because of the way in which the Barbarossa Plan has become clouded by the years of war which followed its opening stage. It can be said with restraint, and supported in detail, that the Soviets required four years and massive assistance from the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and the British Commonwealth states overseas, to recover from the first four weeks of the war. Accurate *OKH* casualty figures for the German armies in the east show losses from June 22 to July 16, 1941, in killed, wounded, and missing at 102,588 men, substantially fewer than for the campaign in the west for a similar operational time of approximately four weeks.¹² One cannot state Soviet losses during the opening stages of Barbarossa with similar certainty, but they can be considered as approximately 1,169,000 in killed, wounded, and captured, predominantly on the central front before Moscow.¹³ In the middle of July 1941, the German armies stood intact with one-third

¹² See Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 2, p. 95.

¹³ The Soviet figure is based on the following synthesis: (1) for prisoners, German claims of Soviet prisoners taken in the frontier battles in the center at Bialystok-Minsk (324,000) and Smolensk (310,000), and in the north (35,000), and the south (150,000); and (2) for killed and wounded, Soviet losses presented in *Soobshcheniia*, 1941, 1:375, reevaluated and compared with German losses for the same period. The assumptions have been made for Soviet killed and wounded that the admitted Soviet losses are reasonably accurate but low. The further assumption has been made that the Soviet losses are greater than the accurate German figures for Germans killed and wounded. Soviet casualties are assumed to be greater than the figure of 102,588 for Germans killed, wounded, and missing, and probably are greater than the Soviet figure of approximately 288,000 extrapolated directly from the Soviet admission of 1,602,000 killed, wounded, and missing for the period June 22–Nov. 26, 1941. Using a larger total of 350,000 Soviet killed and wounded based on the high intensity of the frontier battles and the probability of low Soviet estimates, the following balance of casualties can be made for the period of combat extending from June 22 to July 20, 1941:

Soviet Losses			German Losses		
a.	KIA & WIA	350,000	a.	KIA & WIA	97,253
b.	POW	819,000	b.	MIA	5,335
Total		1,169,000	Total		102,588

fewer casualties than were suffered by German forces in France during a similar period of combat. The *OKH* looked forward to two to three weeks of physical rest and mechanical rehabilitation for the eastern armies and then to concentration of the recuperated capabilities of the armies on the seizure of Moscow.

Hitler vacillated in the middle of July 1941, with victory in the east comfortably at his fingertips, and then made the most significant decision of the Second World War in Europe—to deflect elements of Army Group Center into the Ukraine.¹⁴ The resulting thrust by the reinforced Second Panzer Group and Second Army won the Germans their most substantial victory in the entire eastern campaign but was heavily exhausting. The great oblique maneuver entailed the deflection of half the combat elements of Army Group Center 300 miles south into the Ukraine. For the final strike at Moscow later in the year, the same German forces had to be redeployed an average of about 200 miles to the north. The superiority of the German armies, which was demonstrated conclusively in the frontier battles and the great Kiev cauldron, supports several generalizations. First, the motorized elements of the German armies had the mobility and striking power to have taken Moscow if seizure of the city had been the main effort of the Germans, instead of the drive east of Kiev. Time was a crucial factor and had Hitler, for example, assigned the armies in the east the task of attacking Moscow on approximately August 7, 1941, it seems probable, in the absence of prepared positions and constituted reserves, and in the presence of weather favorable to the Germans, that Moscow would have fallen by approximately August 28, 1941. Second, the factor of space figured in, as the German field armies showed their tactical superiority to maximum advantage in the vast space and gentle terrain of the Central Ukraine; the defending Soviet armies could neither move fast enough to escape nor stand and fight the Germans effectively enough to defeat them in the summer of 1941.¹⁵

¹⁴ See the perceptive and similarly-styled accounts in Downing, *Devil's Virtuosos*, pp. 70–79, and Clark, *Barbarossa*, 98–113, and the solid comments in Blau, *German Campaign in Russia*, pp. 69, 70, 89 (para. C). First-hand accounts of Hitler's dispersal of German strengths in August 1941 include especially Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, pp. 175–177, 192–195; Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, pp. 189–202; and U.S. Army, European Command, Historical Division, *General der Infanterie Hans von Greiffenberg et al., Die Schlacht von Moskau, Heeresgruppe Mitte*, Winter 1941/42 (n.d.), pp. 8–38.

¹⁵ See in Manstein, *Lost Victories*, pp. 217–220, where the German 11th Army, with neither tanks nor tactical air support, is constrained by the accidents of geography to assault Soviet troops superior in number defending the narrow Isthmus of Ishun—the gate to the Crimea. In spite of Soviet strategical concern in retaining the Crimea, Manstein's divisions broke through the defending Soviets and proceeded to the siege of Sevastopol. The contrasting situ-

TABLE 1
OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED BY THE SECOND PANZER GROUP
JUNE TO DECEMBER, 1941

TIME	ROUTE OR AREA	DIRECTION	DISTANCE
June 22–July 16 (25 days)	Brest to Smolensk	east	400 miles
July 17–August 24 (39 days)	Yelnya (static)	----	0 miles
August 25–September 22 (29 days)	Roslavl to Lochvitz	south	300 miles
September 23–October 1 (9 days)	Lochvitz to Yanopol	north	200 miles
October 2–December 5 (35 days)	Yanopol to Skopin	east	300 miles

The German armies consolidating the Moscow area would have been carried well to the east of the city,¹⁶ and with the advantage of the rail communications radiating from the Russian capital, could have carried out operations against the dangling and isolated flanks of the physically disconnected Soviet armies defending the northern area associated with Leningrad, Murmansk, and Archangel, and the southern area of Kharkov, Voronezh, and Rostov. The consolidation of the Moscow area is plausible, as borne out by the combat mobility of the Second Panzer Group, Army Group Center. *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian's Panzer, motorized, and hard-marching infantry divisions achieved the objectives delineated in Table 1 on a remarkably close timetable.

The Second Panzer Group moved approximately 1200 miles through the Soviet Union in spite of the extraordinary self-enforced halt of thirty-nine days around Smolensk and Yelnya. Analyzed in slightly different fashion, Guderian's achievement (*after* having attained the Yelnya area in twenty-five days of movement and combat) consisted of continuing more than 800 miles farther through the Soviet Union. The distances listed are direct line values; the actual road travel is con-

ation in which adequate space and open terrain favored mobile operation and the Soviets were literally unable to keep up with the Germans is shown in September in the Ukraine in the great Kiev cauldron. See Munzel, *Panzer Taktik*, pp. 96–101; Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, pp. 202–226, and Clark, *Barbarossa*, pp. 132–139.

¹⁶ Although the statement is conjectural, units of the twenty-ninth Motorized Infantry Division, Second Panzer Army, Army Group Center, actually stood beyond Skopin, approximately ninety miles east of Moscow late in November 1941. See Greiffenberg, *Schlacht von Moskau*, Anlage B, p. 216, where reconnaissance toward Skopin is mentioned and Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, p. 255, in which Skopin is specifically noted as being evacuated on November 29, 1941.

siderably greater. For a grasp of the offensive capabilities of the German army in 1941, it is important to note that for 600 miles the offensive was conducted against armed resistance. It is instructive to note—in the sense of the human achievement involved—that the German infantry divisions of the accompanying infantry armies, never far behind the Second Panzer Group, covered much of the distance marching on foot. A potential conclusion based on the fact of 600 miles of movement against resistance is the following: had Guderian's Second Panzer Army moved directly east from Yelnya the distance it proved capable of moving in its tortuous gyration toward Moscow from the southwest, it would have attained the area centered in Gorki, 300 miles *east* of Moscow. This conjecture casts new light on the balance of military strength between Germany and Russia in 1941. Historians have come generally to consider Hitler's optimism about a swift conclusion to the Russian campaign as being tinged with the Führer's special brand of hyperbolicism, but the optimism was securely buttressed by the actual achievements of the Second Panzer Group.

Few historical factors in modern military studies have been more abused than that of Russian space. The latter item has been assigned high priority among the general factors which contributed to the defeat of the Swedes (1709), French (1812), and Germans (ultimately in 1945). Historians and commentators have persistently linked Russian space with other natural factors summarized under the heading of "Generals Winter and Mud" (i.e., Russian winters, spring thaws, and autumn rains) and also with the human virtues associated with patriotism in the defense of the motherland.¹⁷ An historical cliché has emerged in generalizing about the causes of the German defeat which can be represented under the heading of "trading space for time." The implication of the cliché for the Second World War is that the Red Army with malice and forethought lured the German army deep into Russia. Having carefully husbanded its own strength, the Red Army was then supposed to have launched a powerful counterthrust supported by weather favorable for the less polished Soviet mode of fighting, based on reserves massed for the occasion and drawn from the huge reservoir of Russian manpower.

But enticing as the thesis of trading space for time may appear on the surface, it fails to correspond with the realities of the year 1941. "Just before the war broke out," for example, the Soviets transferred

¹⁷ For the basics from the German side, see Erhard Raus, *Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia*, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-291 (Washington D.C., 1952). The principal author is a German army officer who commanded in succession a Panzer division, Panzer army, and army group on the eastern front from 1941 to 1945.

five armies into those “frontier districts” determined to resist strongly as far to the west as possible.¹⁸ The essence of German military success in the Second World War, furthermore, lay in the excellence of the German army in terms of the mobility of its striking forces and the flexible operational methods of the commanders and staffs. Possibly the most challenging problem which the German army faced in its attack in western Europe, for example, was the lack of space in which to exert its superior mobility.¹⁹ On the one hand, German Panzer and motorized equipment were geared for swift movement; indeed, the major weakness of the German armored force until late 1942 was the extraordinary debility of its tanks in terms of armored protection and gun power.²⁰ On the other hand, German superiority in coordination of arms, flexibility in the formation of ad hoc battle groups, and swift-ness of command reaction to the fluid conditions of modern battle gave the German army decisive advantages over the Red Army in warfare of maneuver.

The most popular view of the German defeat in Russia is the one in which Hitler, the *OKH*, and the German field commanders are presented as underrating the Soviet military strength and being caught by the legendary Russian winter short of Moscow. However, the part of the view in which Hitler and the German military leaders underestimated the Soviet Russian military challenge is open to criticism from several

¹⁸ S. M. Shtemenko, *The Soviet General Staff at War 1941–1945* (Moscow, 1970), p. 30.

¹⁹ The Germans were faced with the following strategical quandary in the planning for the attack against France: where in the limited space and difficult terrain of the geographical region from the Swiss border to the English Channel could a successful advance be realized? Two basics of geography—space and terrain—favored the potential defenders. The author of the German plan used in the attack exhibited consummate virtuosity in grand tactics and strategy by uncovering an area in which a decisive attack by mobile forces could take place.

Adverse geographical factors limited the mobility of the German army in almost all of Europe (e.g., Norway, France, the Lowlands, the Balkans, etc.). Only in the Soviet Union was enough space available for the German army to outmaneuver, encircle, and disintegrate its powerfully equipped, but ponderously inefficient opponent.

²⁰ “Gun power” is admittedly an emotive, vague term, but refers to the fact that until late 1942, the Germans continued to have inferior light vehicles like the German 9.9-ton Panzer II and Czech TNHP-38 tanks in significant numbers in combat. They also continued to arm the heavier German Panzer III and IV vehicles with the feeble 50mm. KwK L/42 and 75mm. KwK L/24 weapons. For the tank situation in the Battle of France, see the detailed account in R. H. S. Stolfi, “Equipment for Victory in France, 1940,” *History* (Oxford), 56 (January, 1970): 1–20, in which the high technical qualities, superior numbers, and advanced organization of the French tank force are presented.

directions. Commentators on Barbarossa consistently point to the German eight-to-ten-week timetable for victory as evidence that the Germans underestimated the Red Army, basing their contention significantly on the fact that the war dragged on for almost four years. Yet commentators on the earlier Schlieffen plan, which as a grand strategic plan for the opening attack of a war is similar to Barbarossa, do not point out the German anticipation of victory in six weeks as evidence of a similar underestimation of the French army, even though the First World War lasted for more than four years. In the case of the Schlieffen Plan, historians have effectively analyzed factors such as the weakening of the German right flank in the initial deployment of attacking forces, the lack of aggressive, forward leadership by the younger Moltke, etc. as crucial in the miscarriage of an operation which, nevertheless, came close to achieving a quick victory for the Germans in the west. In stark contrast, writers commenting on Barbarossa commonly emphasize the questionable point that once the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, there lay before them only a rocky and downhill path to certain defeat.²¹ Examination of the details

²¹ The more prestigious works on the Russo-German campaign by American and British authors, and hence those readily available in English describe both Hitler and the German army as underestimating the powers of resistance of the Red Army and thereby foredooming themselves to certain defeat. The view is unhistorical, i.e., unrealistic, based significantly as it is on the assumptions that (1) the historical act was predetermined in its outcome, and (2) the tendency of the view to base itself on the known result that the Germans, albeit in 1945, in fact, lost the war, rather than on the merits of the actual historical situation in the period July 1940–December 1941. See, for example, Blau, *German Campaign in Russia*, pp. 88, 89, and Clark, *Barbarossa*, pp. 41–43. Steiger, *Panzer-taktik in Kriegstagebuchern*, pp. 24–26, 28, 29, is a recent, well-documented German work which emphasizes German underestimation of Russia and the Red Army. Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (New York, 1962), pp. 333–339, in refreshing contrast, even though it is a general account and dependent upon the more detailed specific works, only partly supports the common view of German underestimation of the difficulties of a campaign in the east. Walter Kerr, in *The Secret of Stalingrad* (Garden City, N.Y., 1978), p. 23, a recent work, presents a caricature of German underestimation of the Russians in 1941 which detracts from an otherwise valuable contribution to the understanding of Soviet success at Stalingrad in late 1942. German military writings on the subject are consistent in the position taken or implied that Moscow could have been seized before the autumn rains and the seizure accompanied by a decisive defeat of the Red Army and the Soviet government. Soviet writings exist which are consistent in their broad implication that the Germans had the clear opportunity and requisite strength in the summer of 1941 to have defeated the Soviet Union. See, for example, S. M. Shtemenko, *The Soviet General Staff at War, 1941–1945* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 26, 30, 31, 32–36, 38, 40. For the magnitude of the summer disaster as reported by the Soviets, see *Soobshcheniia Sovetskogo Informbiuro*, V.I. iun'—dekabr' 1941 goda. (Sovinformbiuro, Moskva, 1944), pp. 374, 375, in which the Soviet Information Bureau

of the German attack in 1941—in the more effective manner of the commentators on the Schlieffen Plan—shows that the Germans in fact came close to achieving a quick victory in the east.²²

The widely-held view that Hitler greatly underestimated the military capabilities of the Soviets must be accepted with caution, because his armies stood poised with victory at their fingertips in Smolensk on July 16, 1941, and in Khimki, a northwest suburb of Moscow, in late November 1941. The astounding victories of the Germans from June to November 1941 do not fit comfortably within the picture of Hitler's underestimating Soviet military strength. The answer to the quandary is probably found in the seldom-made analysis that Hitler also underestimated the offensive strength of the attacking German armored force. Such an analysis is supported by his comments and actions within the Polish, western, and North African campaigns and the first several months of the war against Russia, although it is also contradicted by Hitler's assignment of unrealistic objectives to the central and southern armies in late autumn 1941.²³ The part of the general view of the Ger-

presents exaggerated losses for the Germans in the period June 22–November 26, 1941, contrasting them somewhat naively with substantially lower Soviet losses. The Soviets admit the loss in the five-month period of 2,122,000 men, 7,900 tanks, 6,400 aircraft, and 12,900 guns, disastrous figures even for the expansive standards of the eastern front.

²² Unlike the situation in 1812 where the relatively small and lightly-armed Russian armies avoided battle with the French and retreated beyond Moscow, "a modern force of 100 divisions could not simply abandon its sources of supply." See Blau, *German Campaign in Russia*, p. 7, in which *Generalmajor* Erich Marcks makes the point in his August 5, 1940 plan of attack on the Soviet Union that times had changed since 1812, and the Soviet high command would be forced to commit itself decisively to the defense of the industrial and communications center of the state. See also Carell, *Hitler Moves East*, p. 172, in which the author presents the following statement as being made in July 1941 by Stalin to Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's personal representative and Kremlin visitor: "If Moscow falls, the Red Army will have to give up the whole of Russia west of the Volga." For the plainly desperate nature of the Soviet position, see U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, *Translations on USSR Military Affairs No. 1364* (Springfield, Virginia, July 18, 1978), p. 61, where Marshal Alexander Vasilevskiy notes the following question in October 1941 by Stalin to General Gregory Zhukov: "Are you sure that we will hold Moscow? I'm asking you this with an aching heart. Tell me honestly, as a Communist."

²³ See Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, pp. 92, 109, 110, 117, 130, 183, 190, in which, on the last page cited, Hitler comments to the author: "If I had known that the figures for Russian tank strength [10,000] which you gave in your book [of 1937] were . . . the true ones, I would not—I believe—ever have started this war." The comment by Hitler is one of the most decisive in establishing by direct admission his underestimation of the Red Army. In the other cited pages, Hitler displays a counterbalancing underestimate of the strategical capabilities of the German armored force. The combined effect of the two misjudgments was for each to cancel the other, i.e., as Barbarossa unfolded, the

man defeat in the east, finally, which presents the Germans as being caught by the legendary Russian winter short of Moscow, contains the implication that the Germans drove in one continuous effort toward the capital. The view as such is misleading and can be accepted only with the caveat that the collapse at Moscow was part of a discontinuous attack on the part of the Germans which included eleven weeks of procrastination and misdirection of effort by Hitler away from Moscow.

The German armies in the east—with the plan, the military leadership, the arms, and the men to defeat the Soviet Union—were mishandled by the supreme command in terms of halts, alarms, and extraneous excursions. The mishandling was practically identical with that exhibited by Hitler from May to June 1940, during the campaign in the west but muted by the circumstance of victory. In the western case, having exhibited the strategical perception to embrace the campaign plan of *Generalmajor* Erich von Manstein, Chief of Staff, Army Group A, Hitler intervened heavily in the military details of the campaign. It has become widely known that Hitler ordered the German units which had broken through to the sea south of Dunkirk to halt, thus contributing decisively to the British success in extracting the part of the British Expeditionary Force which remained in Belgium. It has remained less well known that Hitler, earlier in the campaign on May 17, 1940, ordered a halt which had far greater potential consequences for the campaign.²⁴ On the earlier date, he halted the Panzer columns of the XIX Panzer Corps of *General der Panzertruppen* Heinz Guderian in the vicinity of Marle and Dercy, far from the English Channel.²⁵ The

underestimated German armored force operated on schedule with devastating effect against the underestimated Red Army.

²⁴ Hitler and the commander and staff of Army Group A grew increasingly concerned in the period May 15–17, 1940 about the threat to the southern flank of the great penetration which developed out of the Sedan bridgehead toward the channel coast. In contrast, the Commander and the Chief of Staff of the German army considered that the French would prove unable to mount an attack from the south. Hitler, in particular, lost his nerve at this point in the campaign, i.e., roughly May 15–19, 1940, but lost the battle of wills with the Chief of Staff, *General der Artillerie* Franz Halder, in *OKH*, and *General der Panzertruppen* Heinz Guderian close to the front at Soize. The details of the situation are discussed from a variety of directions in Taylor, *March of Conquest*, pp. 228–233; Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, pp. 109–112; Ulrich Liss, *Westfront 1939/40, Erinnerungen der Feind bearbeiters im OKH* (Neckargemünd, 1959), pp. 165–175; Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 1, pp. 299–322, and Warlimont, *Hitler's Headquarters*, pp. 94–99.

²⁵ Guderian had been halted previously by the nervousness of Headquarters, *Panzergruppe Kleist*, and Army Group A on the evening of May 15, 1941. With immense will power, he personally contacted *General der Kavallerie* Ewald von Kleist, and after a nasty telephone scene in which he reminded Kleist of the

halt gave the opportunity to the slowly-reacting Allied armies in the Lowlands to recover from the breakthrough at Sedan, stabilize the front, and block the units of German Army Group A from reaching the English Channel.

The psychological framework within which Hitler was operating at this time remains unclear. He ordered his field armies to halt on two occasions, however, providing support for a view that he did not feel that the armies could successfully continue their attack through to Dunkirk in the one case and the English Channel in the other. The evidence of his two momentous orders to halt suggests that generically Hitler underestimated the capabilities of the armies which (1) it is conceded by historians probably would have taken Dunkirk before the British arrived there in strength, and (2) armies which, it is historically verifiable, possessed the strength to break through to the Channel.²⁶ In the opening stages of the campaign in the east in 1941, Hitler demonstrated a similar pattern of indecision. He enforced a halt in the advance of Army Group Center for a period of thirty-nine irretrievable days of favorable campaigning weather, thereby also allowing time for deepening of the disintegrating shock resulting from the literal annihilation of the Soviet armies west of the Dnieper River on the central front, which was evidenced by the unstructured, desperate attempts of the Soviets to set up adequate defenses between Smolensk and Moscow.²⁷ In September in the north, Hitler made another famed seaport decision. He ordered Army Group North under *Generalfeldmarschall* Ritter von Leeb, which had broken into the outskirts of Leningrad, to halt outside the city and to effect what geographical circumstance would dictate to be an incomplete encirclement of that important industrial area.²⁸

1914 Hentzsch Mission and resulting "Miracle of the Marne," temporarily regained freedom of movement. See Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, p. 107.

²⁶ See George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS, Hitler's Elite Guard at War 1939-1945* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London, 1966), p. 71, and Charles Sydnor, *Soldiers of Destruction* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 97-99, in which *Waffen SS* units breach the Allies' canal positions screening Dunkirk on May 24, 1940, disregarding the directive to halt.

²⁷ See in Shtemenko, *Soviet General Staff*, pp. 34-38, in the few pages allotted to the disasters of June-July 1941, the fact that both the general staff and the front commanders faced major problems of locating, let alone controlling, their troops. Shtemenko states, for example, that "it was not our fault but our misfortune that we did not always have sufficiently detailed information about the disposition of our troops" and "there were other complications. One day it became known that for losing control of [his] troops D. G. Pavlov, Commander of the Western Front, . . . had been removed from [his] post."

²⁸ See the first-hand account in Kurt von Zydowitz, *Die Geschichte der 58. Infanterie-Division, 1939-1945* (Kiel, 1952), pp. 37-39. *Oberleutnants* Müller and

The historical point is that in the French case, Hitler shook off the doubts and paralysis of May 17–19, 1940, in time to allow the soldiers to continue the attack successfully. In the Russian case, Hitler stretched out the delay in resumption of the advance from the forty-eight hours of the French case to thirty-nine days. In the face of professional military rejection of his view that the wings should be the objectives of the campaign, and to the suspicious astonishment of the Soviet government, Hitler ordered the attack of Army Group Center into the Ukraine.²⁹ The advance against Moscow did not resume until October 2, 1941, delayed by procrastination and secondary targets for the extravagantly long time of seventy-eight days from the seizure of Smolensk. The result was that the Soviet government was presented with the same seventy-eight days to recover from the first four weeks of the campaign. To place the Russian predicament within the framework of the analogous French situation, one might ask the question: How would the French campaign have turned out if the German high command had halted the XIX Panzer Corps of *General der Panzertruppen* Guderian at Marle and Dercy in northern France for thirty-nine days while Hitler procrastinated about the next move for the armies and then made the decision to clean up the situation on the wings of the advance, thus not resuming the drive to the Channel for seventy-eight days? The analogy is suggested as a reasonable one to bring into focus more clearly than heretofore the extraordinary delays and obliquities in the German campaign in Soviet Russia in 1941.

Because of Hitler's procrastination in ordering the move southward, and the time involved in bringing the southern movement to a success-

Schwenson of II./I.R. 209 (Second Battalion, 209th Infantry Regiment) and elements of the battalion seized the Uritzk rail station on the evening of September 15, 1941, and stood in the midst of a disintegrating adversary. The author writes: "the enemy was surprised and confused. It remains incomprehensible that this position was not exploited further."

²⁹ See in Warlimont, *Hitler's Headquarters*, pp. 181–193, the view inside *OKW* of the struggle for a decisive course of action in the Soviet Union after July 16, 1941. Warlimont makes it clear that the *OKH* responded consistently in favor of the "central strategy around which the whole eastern campaign had been planned," i.e., the seizure of Moscow. Halder makes it abundantly clear in his contemporary *Kriegstagebuch* and Guderian in his postwar memoirs that Moscow should have been the central objective of the German field armies. Suspicious resentment of such views exists in the western historical profession based on the alleged tendency of the German generals of the Second World War to make Hitler the scapegoat for German military defeat. In the case of the July–August 1941 crisis over the focus for operations in Soviet Russia, however, evidence is overwhelming that "Hitler overrode all his advisors—except Keitel" and imposed a dispersion of forces into the Ukraine. See Blau, *German Campaign*, pp. 59–70.

ful conclusion, the German armies began to face overriding problems of weather satisfactory for the continuation of offensive operations. The Germans did not open Operation Typhoon, the offensive against Moscow, until October 2, 1941, well into the Russian autumn.³⁰ Added to the problem of the deteriorating weather, Army Group Center had to contend with the exhaustion of its southern wing after the advance into the Ukraine. Because of the Ukrainian interlude, the question of German victory at Moscow in 1941 began to develop into a most closely run thing. German mobility and offensive momentum were significantly dependent upon basic geographic factors like the rains of October, which could severely inhibit motorized movement along the primitive Soviet road network.³¹ The questions of autumn rain and the onset of winter in late 1941 began to assume critical importance.

By October 9, 1941—within a week after the opening of the autumn offensive against Moscow—the German field armies had achieved a grand tactical victory on the scale of the Kiev battle. The Germans encircled two massive Soviet forces, one near Viasma and the other near Bryansk, neither of which was capable of breaking free. By October 17, 1941, Army Group Center had cleared the great pockets of Soviet troops, capturing approximately 660,000 prisoners from among the roughly 1,500,000 Soviet troops massed during the great seventy-eight-day hiatus in German activity on the central front. Panic broke out among the civilians in Moscow, and the Soviet authorities found it difficult to allay popular fears, because they themselves were forced to begin the evacuation of the national government. The German field armies seemed destined to seize Moscow and force the Soviets east of the Volga River and out of the war. The German eastern armies, in spite of strong and varied challenges, which had included the epic procrastination of Hitler, the introduction of the Soviet T-34 tank, the ruthless expenditure of Russian riflemen by the Soviet leadership, and the oblique excursion of Army Group Center into the Ukraine, had de-

³⁰ Hoth, *Panzer Operationen*, p. 136, notes that the first snow on the central front fell on October 7, 1941, "the day the ring around Viasma was closed." Buercky (p. 15) comments on the first fall of snow four days later in the Ukraine near Romny on October 11, 1941 (*Generalmajor* Heinrich Buercky, "Advance in Action of an Infantry Regiment from 22 June 1941–January 1942; Recollections and Experiences" [n.d.]. U. S. Army, European Command, History Division, MS no. D-140).

³¹ See, for example, Erhard Raus, *Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia*, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-291 (Washington, D.C., 1942), pp. 30, 33-34; Munzel, *Panzer Taktik*, pp. 105-108; Wagener, *Moskau*, pp. 79-105; Carell, *Hitler Moves East*, 156-162; and Walter Chales de Beaulieu, *Generaloberst Erich Hoepner* (Neckargemünd, pp. 195-213), for the adverse impact of the autumn rains on German offensive operations.

feated the Soviet forces defending Moscow. They had only a short distance to advance to complete the disintegration of the Soviet army and occupy the communications center of European Russia.

By mid-October, however, rains in conjunction with cooler autumn temperatures, shorter overcast days, and reduced evaporation had become common and turned the unpaved roads of Russia and the surrounding countryside into impassable barriers for wheeled vehicles. The Germans successfully reduced the Viasma and Bryansk pockets, but their progress toward Moscow was stalled by the disintegration of the Soviet road system. Offered yet a third opportunity for survival, the Soviet government built up a new defensive front which included Moscow itself in late October and early November 1941. Historical overgeneralization runs rampant at this juncture, with the weight of interpretation agreeing that Russian space had exhausted the Germans, who had run out of time by November 1941 in their efforts to seize Moscow. Under reappraisal, however, Russian space must be noted as a mixed blessing for the Soviets and a factor which largely favored the Germans. One must also note in reappraisal that the Germans ran out of time near Moscow not through necessity but by choice. Months before the November crisis, the army leaders had demanded and the front soldiers had expected a drive on Moscow. Hitler, for reasons which remain only partly comprehensible, determined instead to seize the resources of the Ukraine and by that aberrant stroke throw the Moscow battle to the mercy of climatological chance in the late autumn of 1941.