



**David M. Glantz.** *Stumbling Colossus: The Red Army on the Eve of World War.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998. xviii + 374 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7006-0879-9.

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## Failure and Success in the First Months of the Great Patriotic War

In this excellent institutional study of the Red Army in 1941, David Glantz discusses Soviet lack of preparation for Operation Barbarossa, and explains how the Soviets almost lost the Second World War that year. Glantz also argues that, because of Soviet military weakness in 1941, accusing Stalin of planning a preemptive strike on Nazi Germany that year is untenable. I enjoyed the book overall, but find his description of what happened to be stronger, partly unavoidably, than his argument about what could or could not have happened. The Soviet colossus was stumbling, but was it backward or forward? The answer seems to be "backward," but I had to look elsewhere for confirmation of that additional thesis.

This volume is an important addition to the author's other works on the Eastern Front in the Second World War. Familiarity with the themes of *Stumbling Colossus*, a book already well-received by a popular audience, also will be required at a minimum for military historians, for historians of Russia and the U.S.S.R., and for historians of Germany. In addition, military officers and cadets could do well to take heed from what, in many respects, is a manual on how to catastrophically lose a major war.[1]

## *Organization and General Themes*

Glantz divides his work into three main parts. The first part is general background (four chapters on forces, command and control, common soldiers, and planning and mobilization). The second part involves specific studies of readiness (three chapters on ground forces, support and rear services, and air forces). The last part reverts to the strategic picture in mid-year and later (two chapters on strategic reserves, and intelligence on the eve of the war).

The author's organization is appropriate for discussing the Soviet military milieu of 1941. The maps and tables are good, and the author discusses in the text many of the salient facts found there. Some of the writing can be dry or redundant (to distraction in the air forces chapter), although that conceivably lies in the nature of the topic, and Glantz notes the problem of how the literature previously has been faceless and impersonal. The index is user-friendly.

The four appendixes actually are quite important. Appendix A is the first Order of Battle (OB) for Soviet forces in Summer 1941 (June 22 and August 1) which has been printed in the West. Appendix B prints the extensive May 14 Soviet orders for the Special Baltic Military District, which are phrased mostly defensively in case of war. Appendixes C and D show some German relative ad-

vantages in information and forces before the attack, but also reveal crucial shortcomings in the aggressors' appreciation of Soviet reserves, of new Soviet armor formations, and of Soviet mobilization potential.

Glantz's use of Russian sources seems exhaustive for what is openly available to the public today. Most of his unique sources lie in "a category midway between what Westerners considered as primary and secondary source material," i.e. military journals, training materials and memoirs mostly published in periods of relative openness before or after Brezhnev (p.345). Most actual archives effectively remain closed. Thus (and Glantz does address this), this particular book is not a first-person archival exposition of the topic, but depends on works edited by Soviet officials.[2] Realistic planning, mobilization and logistics are necessary, though not sufficient, components of military victories. Presented here by the negative example of the Soviet case in 1941, their importance cannot be more stark. The picture which Glantz paints of Soviet unpreparedness in 1941 at once overwhelms the viewer with pathos, tragedy and irony. Russian backwardness and Communist dysfunction combine to nearly doom the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in the end Soviet resources and planning eventually overwhelm their German counterparts. This anomaly is worth remembering.

In terms of leadership, Glantz painfully and methodically explains the effect of the great purges on the Soviet military. Untold thousands (maybe millions, including civilians) more Soviets than necessary subsequently lost their lives in the war on account of command inexperience alone. Already in the mid-1920s to mid-1930s, 47,000 officers, most with combat experience, were forced from service. The prewar military expansion occurred simultaneously with the arrest and judicial murder of most of the country's best military leaders, including eighty to one hundred percent of key leaders at the division and higher levels. This

megalomaniacal and self-harming purge by Stalin, and his army's acceptance of it, seems unique in history. While the officer corps numbered nearly 107,000 in 1936, it experienced 39,090 promotions in the year of March 1, 1937-March 1, 1938 alone. The number of repressed officers (ranging from reprimands to being shot) between 1937 and 1941 reached 54,714. So, for instance, the 1937 class of the Voroshilov General Staff Academy was graduated early "to fill vacancies." "Of the 138-man class, 68 were assigned to key command and staff positions; another sixty were themselves purged and shot."

As a result, in June 1941, officers typically commanded at levels two higher than they should have, and held little to no experience in those. Their combat, administrative and academic inexperience held fatal potential for indecision or for simplistic mistakes.[3] What this meant for the Soviet Union was pathetic. It was self-inflicted, however, by Stalin (pp.27-31). The purges encouraged the German attack, and Stalin personally deserved worse than he got.

Glantz deflates a number of long-standing Stalinist myths about the Great Patriotic War, especially regarding frontier expansion and/or conflicts in Finland, the Baltic States, eastern Poland, and Bessarabia in 1939-40. These actions did not simply advance the glorious Soviet defenses hundreds of miles outward and gain only positive combat experience for the Soviet army. Instead, Stalin's aggressions in the time between the Nazi-Soviet Pact and Operation Barbarossa actually harmed Soviet defensive plans and partly-completed frontier fortifications of 1939, disrupting mobilization, domestic war preparation, and existing strategic plans (pp.88-89). They wore out aging military equipment as well (p.124). Further, they paradoxically convinced Hitler of Soviet weakness, perhaps reinforcing his will to attack.

Experience in Spain and Finland induced the Soviets to modernize their air fleet and tactics, but another lesson of Finland seemed to be that the

Soviets should break up their tank corps into separate brigades and infantry-support units (p.185). No sooner had they done so in 1940 than the German experience in France led the Soviets to reverse this organizational mistake, which (unknown to the Germans) they were in the process of doing when war struck in 1941. In military terms, the Soviets occupied several small countries on their border, not vital and long-lost parts of their homeland. These operations may have harmed unit cohesion and exercises also (p.40).

Thus, Glantz disproves a key Stalinist argument-from-hindsight that measures how far the Germans advanced, then claims they would therefore have gone beyond Leningrad, Moscow and the Volga had the Red Army not started as far west as it did in 1941. The contradictory myth that the Russian army lured the Germans further in to be destroyed also is false.

In the German attack in mid-1941, the Soviet Union's initial war losses were staggering. To begin with, its forces immediately fielded represented under one-half of what was planned for a fully-mobilized U.S.S.R. in wartime (p.101; although more forces were streaming forward, so that mobilization on paper was at two-thirds). It lost at least 229 division equivalents in the fighting of 1941, of 447 division equivalents fielded by August 1.[4] On the Western Front alone, only three of one hundred sixty sapper battalions on or near the front lines on June 22 were still functional five days later (p.165). Loss of effective planes topped eighty percent in early July already. In one report, an infantry division with all of one hundred troops to its name goes over to the counterattack one last time, doubtless into oblivion.

The military planned on obtaining trucks, tractors and horses from the civilian economy in wartime, but in the event only small fractions of this transportation were available. The Soviet Union's 1941 economy ran on railroads, but forward military operations and mobility required huge quantities of other transport. For example,

only 200 of 10,000 vehicles needed by the mechanized corps of the Northwestern Front actually were delivered. By July 11, this Front's mechanized corps practically ceased to exist (p.127.) Given the lack of tractors, almost any tanks that broke down were lost to the enemy, who could run literal circles around many Russian units. For instance, the Soviet 10th Tank Division in the first three weeks of war lost ninety-nine percent of its combat-capable tanks, one-half of those due to "maintenance problems or an inability to evacuate" (p. 141). Ammunition and supply dumps tended to be placed either far too close to the front lines, or else too far back. Even when supplies were available in the rear, they often could not be brought forward, for lack of transport. Foot troops alone could not carry the needed quantities of mortars and ammunition. More trucks would do wonders.

In particular, this book brings out the double-edged nature of the secret Soviet partial mobilization that Chief of the General Staff Zhukov convinced Stalin to undertake before the war (p.43). The wheels needed to be set in motion to try to repel any German attack and to begin important inertia in developing new technology and military units. But cruelly and paradoxically, in many respects the Soviets were caught flat-footed and at the worst possible time, between one system and another. Grandiose and ignominiously failed plans are familiar to anyone studying the historical Communist campaign mentality, but arguably they also have been a Russian curse.

For instance, trying to expand army divisions from their normal peacetime complement of 6,000 men to their full complement of 12,000 meant, in Glantz's analysis, that unit cohesion troughed right at the time of the German attack. With perfect hindsight, preexisting divisions might have done better in June 1941 at their peacetime levels without having to integrate reinforcements, though the author does not assert this.[5] And the horrors awaiting the brand-new divisions that would make up the reinforcing strategic echelons

in 1941 are hinted at by reference to the new 251st Rifle division, formed from thousands of raw recruits, around a cadre of 400 NKVD (secret police) men. Especially with no material or rear support, life looked especially nasty, brutish and short for such a unit (p.220).

In fact, Glantz shows that the Soviets seemed to be caught with their pants down, all along the line. No central military communications system existed in peacetime. New radios and training were planned for the army but almost no old or new ones were in proper use, relegating the army to virtual nineteenth-century standards of using wires and couriers (p.125). Almost the same problem of old versus new existed for airplanes. Many Soviet planes were destroyed on the ground, caught in a transition. These planes were parked in rows on temporary airfields while more fields were being built or expanded (p.188). There also were pilot shortages and problems. One air division that received thirty-two new aircraft crashed seven the first day due to personnel inexperience or lack of training with the new models (p.225). Many new infantry units received no special weapons and only a fraction, if any, of the rifles and light machine guns needed by basic squads. And war plans at all levels continued to be in flux, so nothing was both practiced and ready. These deficiencies were not always large-scale in numbers, though they were in their effect. Missing several dozen men in key support services for an army division or an airfield, for instance, could spell disaster almost as well as missing the front-line pilots, soldiers or weapons.

However, the potential for Soviet victory also was apparent, even in 1941. In dizzying succession, the Soviets deployed not one, but four major successive echelons of divisions in 1941. Many of these divisions were improvised and under-strength. The first two lines were largely eliminated, but the last two used new Soviet reserves and equipment the Germans were unaware existed or could be procured. The divisional numbers moved

into the 400-series, and actually would be in the 500s if some numbers of totally destroyed units were not recycled. The old adage stands correct that the Germans destroyed in 1941 the entirety of what they thought the Soviet military was. But there was always more, while the Germans and their allies lacked any comparable deep reserves or potential. The Germans thought the Soviets could mobilize ten million men in the war (a war which really wouldn't last beyond 1941), but the Soviets actually mobilized twenty-nine million-plus, over four years. The fact that the Soviet military class of 1941 took over ninety percent losses was immaterial to the war's final outcome.

Glantz is writing to restore a Soviet perspective to decades of Eastern Front history dominated by German archives and memoirs. He builds on the earlier "Soviet school of war historiography in the west" (p.335) begun by Malcolm Mackintosh and John Erickson. This book's citations and bibliography seem to be entirely in Russian or in English, though Glantz is familiar with German works and describes in the bibliographical essay the German school of Eastern Front interpretation. However, I am surprised that he mentions little, outside strictly military-strategic errors, about how the Germans also contributed to renewed Soviet strength in 1941. Soviet long-term potential lay not only in reserves, planning and space on a scale unavailable to anyone else. It also amazingly lay in the moral sphere, being spurred on by the unique heinousness of German actions behind the lines. Large-scale murder of Jews and other groups hated by the Nazis did not immediately occur behind the combat lines in occupied territory during previous campaigns on the geographical and ideological peripheries of Hitler's fixations. Inhabitants of the border regions of the Soviet Union tended to greet the Germans as liberators until the Nazis proved they were even more hateful than was Stalin.[6]

Entwined with Stalin's complete sway is the matter of intelligence about the German attack.

Glantz shows that detailed and accurate intelligence of German plans and activities was given to Stalin. It is true that previous predictions of imminent German attack had proven false, and that Stalin remained deeply suspicious of the West and of many of his own intelligence sources. But I find particularly grotesque the simple fact that German forces moving east tied up the streets of Warsaw for ten days in mid-April 1941. In the paradigm that a defensive Stalin simply would not believe the attack was coming, it seems that any Polish civilian could predict the disaster, but not the dictator Stalin. In addition, in 1940-41 the Soviets detained hundreds of German agents reconnoitering what would become the main axes of attack inside the U.S.S.R. In June 1941, all German ships went home from the Baltic, as did nearly all key staff from the German embassy. In March and April, the number of German divisions on the eastern front increased by fifty-three percent (pp. 236-243). Incidentally, Glantz does not say so, but the German buildup was so large that in no way should it have been excused by Stalin as a diversion from a supposed upcoming Operation Sealion (invasion of Britain).

This would not be the first or last time that the Soviet leadership would short-circuit and/or ignore its own intelligence. Many of the intelligence organs were, as a result of the purges, disconnected from the army leadership. They reported only to Stalin. Nevertheless, Glantz rightly concludes that both the army leaders and Stalin received more than enough information to realize the practical certainty of attack (pp.255-257).

#### *The Question of Planning a Preemptive Strike in 1941*

*Stumbling Colossus* is not a diplomatic or a social-political history, or a history of what Stalin was thinking. It is first and foremost a military history. This is why the coverage given in the introduction, conclusion, and jacket to Viktor Suvorov's (pseudonym for Soviet military intelligence defector V.B. Rezun's) *Icebreaker: Who*

*Started the Second World War?* is unusual.[7]. It seems that Suvorov's thesis, that the German strike on the Soviet Union on June 22 was necessary to avert an imminent, and planned, Soviet attack on Germany on July 6, 1941, may have partially inspired Glantz to write *Stumbling Colossus*. However, there are independent and positive reasons for Glantz to write in detail on his topic. If Glantz is writing a contra-Suvorov book, which he states in the introduction and elsewhere, then he might refer to Suvorov's arguments in the details of the book, telling the reader in the text, notes and tables where Suvorov went wrong. Suvorov wrote *Icebreaker* largely using inductive reasoning, and certainly without the benefit of post-Soviet archives, but he also wrote about many specific units, places and plans.

In a way Glantz is mirroring Suvorov, because his evidence also is mainly inductive and military. Glantz says the Soviets were not prepared to successfully attack, so they wouldn't. (Isn't that what they were saying about the Germans?) But Suvorov says the Soviets needed to attack and their dispositions indicated they were planning to. On top of this reasoning, both authors add significant snippets of documentary evidence that support their views. Glantz may very well be right, but his point is difficult to prove without focusing his book on it.

There is a fantastic aspect to the Soviet contingency plans and dispositions for turning back an invader. Zhukov also requested permission from Stalin three times to launch a preemptive strike. The first two requests occurred in April 1941, and the most famous request on May 15—one day after the date on the defense plans Glantz publishes in his Appendix A. Glantz dismisses these attack requests as unrealistic. Other arguments that Zhukov merely was trying to get Stalin's attention wears a bit thin (in *Zhukov*, for example, Otto Chaney cites Leo Bezymensky as explaining, in 1991, that Zhukov must have been simply trying to startle Stalin into paying attention

about the German threat). Edvard Radzinsky, in his biography of Stalin, seconds Suvorov's interpretation of "defense" or "counterattack" in Soviet military jargon as euphemisms for attacking. If even these defense plans call for keeping foreigners from crossing the border, and launching vigorous counterattacks across the border, then they can be interpreted either defensively or offensively. Radzinsky quotes the Main Political Administration on May 15 as telling military units to be ready for the offense, and to recall that any Soviet war, not merely wars of defense, was just.[8]

Most anti-Suvorov writers now hold that Stalin did see Zhukov's requests, and angrily denied them. But few have tried to explain why the Soviet dispositions and activities in June 1941 would be exactly what they were unless they were aggressive. The best explanation may be by P.N. Bobylev, who notes the great stock that Stalin placed in the January 1941 Soviet staff war games. The games were rigged. On paper, Soviet counterattacks versus Germans worked, because the games simply began ten days after an assumed German attack, with unrealistically low Soviet military or territorial losses assigned as having occurred beforehand. All Soviet military plans were offensive; but Bobylev seems to be able to explain this without resorting to Suvorov's conspiracy theory.[9]

Glantz argues that the Soviet army in 1941, like the US army, was a conscript and mostly inexperienced one that had to mobilize before it could deploy. I found this insightful in that the Soviet army lacked the experience of Hitler's legions. Suvorov does remind us that the Soviets invaded or occupied six European countries or parts of countries during their "neutral" period of 1939-40 (Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina), and victoriously fought major engagements with Japan inside Mongolia. So, the Soviets endured far more combat deaths at "peace" than the Germans did at war in the same time. Intimidating or bludgeoning small countries, resistance movements and popu-

lations is not the same as defeating major ones (with Japan perhaps falling between these categories), but it is a form of military experience. Stalin had his own standards of reason, so who could predict what he would do? Zhukov seemed to think that attack would be better than defense, [10] but changed his mind later. Glantz's point is that the Red Army was failing to learn quickly enough from these earlier conflicts.

If serious Soviet offensive planning occurred in the context of a real Nazi threat, it need not connote Soviet guilt. In fact, we should step back a moment and redefine what this debate, especially about 1941 but even about the 1930s, does not do. It does not make someone a Nazi to question whether Stalin planned to attack Hitler, just as saying Stalin was not going to attack in 1941 does not make Glantz a Stalinist (he is democratic and anti-totalitarian). Besides, we know full well that the attack Hitler historically launched was planned for his own political and ideological reasons since the fall of 1940—not in response to any Soviet plan.[11] If Hitler and Nazism violated nearly everyone's interests, including Soviet, then why not attack him before he could attack you? This was Zhukov's argument. It is possible to hypothesize both dictators planning to attack each other eventually. Suvorov's thesis that Stalin helped Hitler attain power and pushed him into conflict with the West is a separate question, is dealt with by other authors, and is not spun out of thin air. (Besides, Glantz grants Suvorov's evidence all the way to June, 1940 anyway.)[12]

To entertain the Soviet preemptive war thesis regarding 1941, we need not be so fixated as Suvorov is on Stalin, and think that Hitler merely responded to Stalin. Suvorov virtually ignores Hitler and the Nazis as autonomous actors. He acts as though Hitler had no interests in 1941 except destroying those already at war with him, and preventing a surprise Soviet attack. He almost acts as though Hitler had no interest in starting a war against anyone anywhere, except that Stalin

drove him to it. Hitler's special ideological and racial program of exterminating Jews and Communists, enslaving Slavs, and creating *Lebensraum* in the east is left out of Suvorov.

But in reality, this debate should not be a black and white one, in which if one side proves to be bad, then the other must be good. This seems to be the approach Glantz is taking in his introduction, as though there were not enough blame to spread to more than one party. But most people historically simply have seen Nazi genocide and nationalism as a worse, or at least more immediate, threat than Stalin's crimes.[13] That conclusion was justified in 1939-1945, and is still justified today. This discussion need not challenge or change that conclusion per se, even if Suvorov himself is too one-sided.

Like the aspect of German responsibility, Western responsibility for the war or for its course also is left out of Suvorov. It need not be. Suvorov paints Stalin a dark Machiavellian, as he was, regardless of the specifics of any one plan. And the Anglo-Americans made no Stalinist habit of deliberately murdering millions of people. However, beyond appeasement, some of the logic that applies to Stalin's calculations might also apply to the Westerners'. If Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov's and Winston Churchill's opinions were followed, the West and the Soviet Union would have combined to contain Hitler, their greatest threat. In this sense of geography and obnoxiousness, Hitler did hold a losing hand. Instead, Litvinov's successor Molotov, and Stalin on the one hand; and Chamberlain on the other, unfortunately could not trust each other for basic survival. They assumed the other would try to turn Hitler against their side. So they hoped to turn him the other way themselves. Perhaps this is a more fair assessment of Stalin's actions throughout the 1930s than of Chamberlain's. Here again, Suvorov's conspiratorial approach reminiscent of A. J. P. Taylor potentially saves both Stalin and Chamberlain from some of the traditional historical judgment of

sheer stupidity, of animals frozen in headlights, in facing Hitler. (A moral judgment may be more differentiated and complex.)

If even a fraction of Suvorov's evidence for his thesis of a planned Soviet strike remains, we should ponder the implications. On the one hand, Glantz's picture of Soviet unpreparedness in June 1941 does seem complete. And Suvorov palpably exaggerates tank numbers and some second-echelon troop numbers by looking at the paper requirements of some units, not their real holdings. But on the other hand, Suvorov's logic about Stalin's troop dispositions, comments and plans seems to be his strongest argument. Suvorov, too easily, purports to provide a possible answer for nearly everything. (On German provocations, for instance: Wouldn't desperate Germans want to get aggressive Soviets to move back from offensive positions? Better stay the course, Stalin would think, if one is attacking anyway.) Thus, Suvorov asserts what Soviet intentions were, and his guess of Soviet capabilities. Glantz relates what actually happened, and Soviet capabilities at that point. Obviously they must clash on the "why" of their facts. Conspiracy theories usually are too neat. But let's do some comparing.

Under both accounts of Stalin's war planning, conflicting interpretations of the same evidence is usually possible. We have seen this regarding defense orders and contingency plans. It also is true of the secret, partial mobilization. Glantz shows this woefully below full mobilization, but Suvorov says it was meant to be partial, to build to a crescendo yet still try to catch the Germans napping.[14] It would be true of equipment and some training: incompetent in many units on June 22, but improved in new planes and tanks two weeks later, if given the chance. And communications--backward, but avoiding new bursts of radio traffic. It also would be true of the forward deployment of most high-quality first-echelon Soviet units, complete with their headquarters--either lo-

gistical incompetence and lack of good options, or else preparation for an offensive.

Conflicting interpretations exist for the Soviets being caught flat-footed, and why so many supplies were located far forward. In fact, that last information could explain why so many soldiers lacked uniforms or weapons in the rear—if they were supposed to pick them up at the frontier. Glantz's example of sapper losses also stands out. What were all of one hundred sixty battalions of sappers doing on or immediately behind the front lines June 22, on one Front alone? Not laying mines, according to Suvorov, in which case some ought to be further back anyway. But combat engineers also travel in front to clear enemy obstacles for attacking troops.

Additionally, Suvorov asserts that much of the Soviet army was on the rails when the Germans attacked. Suvorov says that on June 22 this amounted to 1,320 railroad cars, possibly up to 60,000 or more vehicles, untold numbers of tanks and men, and 100,000 tons of fuel (this last number representing what was waiting at frontier stations, not off-loaded to individual units already). He says 4,200 ammunition cars wagons were destroyed on the Western Front (of five military Fronts) in 1941 alone (he does not factor out late June; see pp.212-216 for these figures). Obviously, materials or units destroyed in transit would not show up on Glantz's tables of unit organizations. Suvorov avers that, two weeks before, the German army, though smaller, more compact and more experienced, could have looked something like the Soviet one: headquarters, supplies, and rear services separated from their units in transit, etc.

In fact, Soviet reconnaissance planes (which he claims also flew extensively over the future enemy without being shot at, as did the Germans') found the same higgledy-piggledy supply conditions immediately on the German side of the frontier (p.259). Some Suvorov supporters believe the Soviet offensive date was brought forward from August/September (post-harvest) to July, to try to

preempt Hitler. Detractors explain the reinforcements instead as a tardy response to overwhelming Western and Soviet intelligence about the imminent German attack.[15] Tellingly however, Suvorov does not say where these statistics come from, so we cannot easily check them. Does anyone else have a reliable estimate of what the Soviet material losses in transit were when war caught up with the U.S.S.R., or of Soviet infractions of German-controlled airspace? It appears that the troops on the rails were the second strategic echelon moving forward to their positions, where they were to be ready by July.

Glantz does not respond to other aspects of Suvorov's book. Old Soviet defenses and partisan formations were being disbanded. Stalin, partly against Hitler's will, had destroyed all the buffer states between himself and Hitler, and wounded Finland. If Stalin was interested in meeting Hitler in mid-May, 1941, as some say, this does not fully explain his lack of proper defense, either before or after that month.[16] It is Suvorov who raises interesting explanations for Politburo meetings and for changes in the Soviet propaganda line.[17] And Politburo documents form one collection researchers need full access to in order to evaluate this thesis. When the German attack came, no "Implement defense plan X" order went out, despite the reams of documents in higher-level safes, and the untold man-years of planning that had occurred since Hitler's first conquests. Many Soviet units did respond with preset plans, which were to attack (e.g., the marines across and up the Danube into Romania; the army into parts of East Prussia).[18] Stalin, who shunned official state responsibilities and risks before, had made himself head of state in May. And there were all those new rails stacked at the railheads on the Soviet side of the new frontier, and roads being built up to it. Perhaps Stalin was implementing his understanding of Shaposhnikov's view that Russia in the First World War needed a strong central military authority figure; and perhaps the rails merely were for expanding Soviet tracks at the frontier. It

would be good to have these things addressed and explained.

In particular, the incredible Soviet strength set opposite Romania in 1941 dwarfed not only any Romanian but also any German potential on that front. Stalin could have created better units for defense. He was not deployed for defense, as the ensuing debacle, and inspection of unit types, shows. According to Suvorov, Stalin's army, navy, amphibious troops and air force had performed the requisite reconnaissance and exercises for invading Romania. Glantz does not explain what the 9th independent army (present on his OB in something approximating the condition Suvorov alleges) was doing down there, or why they were the only "independent" Soviet army. Suvorov asks where these soldiers, especially in their frontier concentrations, were going to stay for the winter, or even train further for soldiering. What were they going to eat? He alleges the most aggressive and experienced officers in the Far East and the interior of the country secretly were showing up in the 9th independent army or the paratroop units. He says command secretly was split between most frontier military districts and the armies in them (necessary if their armies advanced out of the district; unnecessary if they remain stationary, or retreat out of the district). The veracity of this last point in particular is something anti-Suvorov writers should research. Redundancy, a hallmark of Russian attack plans, is evident in the deployment and alleged plan opposite Romania. If he in fact had attacked, Stalin might have eliminated the German oil supply from Ploesti, and long-term war-making potential with it, in any one of six independent ways, substantially reinforcing any found successful: bombing Ploesti (Suvorov says Stalin did cut the supply this way nearly by half temporarily after June 26, without benefit of surprise--p.340); paratroop occupation; ground advance and occupation by the 9th independent army; advancing on Ploesti with river-based marines and/or an amphibious invasion from the Black Sea; or cutting the line in one

of two places north of Ploesti with two corps of mountain troops.

Hindsight today assumes that if Germany lost the oil of Ploesti, time would be on the side of the allies in the war. This may be wrong for 1941, given that an attacking Russia could have lost even more men in exposed forward positions, before the German oil ran out. It was the preservation of the Russian army itself, not any one geographical objective, which eventually proved key to defeating Germany in eastern Europe. But what other explanation is there for the Soviet deployment in the south, since the front-loaded lines manifestly were not designed to defend in depth against panzer encirclement of a German attack from north of the Romanian border, as historically occurred?

Suvorov lists the Soviets as having five paratroop formations (air assault corps of three brigades each)--more than the rest of the world's paratroops combined. Coupling this with forward deployment of the first echelon, and lack of Soviet defenses (even extensive or connected trenches), does sound suspicious. Naturally, given Soviet incompetence in Finland a year-and-a-half before, even a Soviet spoiling attack on Germany and/or Romania, with new equipment and additional formations and training, would entail a horrific bloodletting. It probably would involve the loss of most, in many cases effectively all, of the paratroops and first echelon of tanks and infantry. Suvorov says Stalin would go ahead anyway if he felt this attack would save the Soviet Union, preempt a German attack, and/or make him a continent-wide leader of Socialism in Lenin's wake.

But what if we grant the military refutation of Suvorov's thesis, at least for grandiose scope and/or for 1941? The larger issues driving the debate remain unstated. Did Stalin wish for Hitler and the West to destroy each other? Did he specifically have this in mind when agreeing to the Pact with Hitler in 1939? Would Stalin not somehow have capitalized on German-Western gridlock and mu-

tual destruction if a Great War-type scenario had unfolded in the west, or simply if Hitler were busy in Britain, Gibraltar, Turkey, or on a larger scale in the Middle East? Could he have attacked later in an alternate 1941, then? Or might he have attacked in the otherwise-historical 1942 or 1943 given one change, that Hitler had not attacked him first (and possibly was re-involved fighting the Anglo-Americans somewhere)?[19]

Moreover, doesn't Soviet production, and the other evidence discussed, including Stalin's own speeches, point to Stalin's ability and proclivity to attack in 1942 if the war had gone the way he thought it would, and to hurried improvisation in late 1940-1941 when the German threat suddenly materialized and was much stronger than he could have foreseen?[20] Didn't Stalin state publicly to his graduating cadets in May, 1941 that he would attack Hitler the next year? Certainly Stalin wasn't going to just sit around until not only continental Western Europe, but also Britain and/or its nearer colonies, was defeated by the Wehrmacht, which would free up German troops to attack him? Was he before, during or after the war interested in any form of "Drang nach Westen" significantly beyond the former imperial borders of Russia?[21] In short, weren't the two great dictatorships going to collide eventually? Didn't the romantic Communist side of Stalin wish to establish Communism in other areas of Europe outside of the Soviet Union? Wasn't the nationalist Stalin interested in expanding Russian power further as well? Those are some of the broader revisionist questions about Stalin's intentions before the war.

Essentially, asking if Stalin had decided to attack Germany and advance to the English Channel, and had set a date of July 6, 1941, phrases the revisionist issue narrowly, although Glantz is not wrong to address this question per se, since Suvorov also did. Glantz basically claims what most of us have assumed: Stalin usually was not overly militarily aggressive vis-a-vis other great powers. However, whether Stalin was cautiously expan-

sionistic, or simply the victim of his former ally Hitler and others, is not addressed. In fact, in this book Glantz does not discuss Stalin's military leadership or reaction directly, although he briefly does so in his prior survey. I would have liked more coverage of these points, granting that they are problematic. According to Suvorov, Stalin's actions irritating other powers before and during the war parallel those following the war. Fortunately for the world, he and his successors finally decided to take Litvinov's approach when the common enemy of nuclear war reared its head in Hitler's place: They, and Western leaders, found ways to get along without ultimate warfare.

If Suvorov's clever thesis is incorrect, that eliminates one easy answer to the dilemma of how Stalin and his generals, who all worked feverishly on Soviet security from the end of the great purges in 1938 until the German attack in 1941, could have appeared so unprepared and incompetent. Historical Communism was dysfunctional, but wasn't Stalinism good even at the heavy industry and war preparations everything else was sacrificed for? This question has bedeviled the Russian people ever since. Apart from the question of weaponry, how many trenches and anti-tank ditches could Europe's largest army dig in three years? These questions seem to have provoked as many denials as the Katyn massacre of 10,000-15,000 Polish officers by the Soviets in 1940, and the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939.

Seven possible theses can answer this question of Soviet unpreparedness for the German attack in the east. Suvorov's thesis is one answer. In this case, Stalin simply couldn't move fast enough. A second answer says the Soviets actually believed that absorbing a blitzkrieg in the teeth, then counterattacking straight into it, could create popular uprisings behind Nazi lines.[22] A third answer could be that Soviet aggressiveness or weakness was somehow intended to deliver a message, to intimidate or pacify Hitler. Some will say the Soviets

expected ten to fifteen days' intelligence about full German mobilization, which is when they would prepare their defenses. Again, why would they set up aggressively and give themselves only that time to set up defenses? A fourth explanation is that the Soviets planned aggressive war plans as a response to invasion, but rehearsed only beginning with their own counterattack, thus minimizing any realistic result of a German attack. A fifth explanation, which does not work, is that the Soviets actually implemented a defense in depth from day one,[23] rather than improvising later.

Until recently, the only other explanation is the traditional one of unspeakable Russian, Soviet and authoritarian incompetence. This, sixth explanation, basically is what Glantz is presenting and modifying, with updated caveats about the limiting effects of the purges in the army and about the depth provided by partial mobilization, allowing us to share the horror of Soviet military leaders. A seventh possible theory is expounded by Gabriel Gorodetsky, saying that Stalin thought Hitler wanted peace and in any case would warn him otherwise with an ultimatum, while Stalin thought the German army wanted war. This unfortunate set of assumptions on Stalin's part might explain his wish to avoid provoking the Germans or responding to provocations by them. However, I still wonder about the suicidal deployments in terms of defense. I also remain curious how it could account for aggressive Soviet training. As we have seen in this review, some of these theses are complementary, while others are mutually exclusive.

Criticisms aside, *Stumbling Colossus* remains a welcome book and an important contribution to an ongoing debate that is slowly filling a relative void in historical knowledge. Glantz's work is authoritative on the negative and positive readings of Soviet military strength given what occurred in 1941. It is appropriate for graduate and undergraduate libraries. It is the best English-language source available on the topic of the military

events in the Soviet Union in 1941, and may remain so until more "raw" Soviet archives open up to the public. If and when that happens, the new information could be so daunting or contradictory, that Glantz's book will remain a classic.

Notes:

[1]. David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); and Glantz, ed., *The Initial Period of War on the Eastern Front: 22 June-August 1941* (London: Frank Cass, 1993) are but two in over a dozen titles by Glantz, four of them from 1999 alone.

[2]. Glantz should, however, name his Russian sources in the text proportionately as often as he names his western sources. This is a problem for everyone doing Communist-era history, but even official historians, like Soviet soldiers, had names and faces.

[3]. Otto Preston Chaney's *Zhukov*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), p. 96, explains that almost no brigade or division commanders possessed requisite academic training, to say nothing of combat experience, at the beginning of the war. In fact, only seven percent of Soviet officers in 1941 had any higher education at all: R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p.109.

[4]. Of a total equivalent of what would be 821 division-sized formations formed through December 31, 1941 inclusive, keeping in mind that the mobilized Soviet divisional equivalents were about half the strength "of their more experienced German counterparts" (Glantz, p.17). The troops never were all simultaneously integrated into specific divisional formations.

[5]. Thus: "About 60 percent of the enlisted personnel had joined the Army in May 1941, and none had any general or specialized training" (p.142). This alone raises doubts about any Soviet plan for a July 6, 1941 attack.

[6]. Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims*, 2 vols. (New York: Norton, 1973-1974); Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr M. Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present*, tran. Phyllis B. Carlos (New York: Summit Books, 1986), pp.393-399; Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won, 1995* (New York and London: Norton, 1996), pp.282-330; and Overy, *Russia's War: Blood upon the Snow* (New York: TV Books, 1997), pp. 159-189,382-391. None of the works in this note, or in notes 8, 10-11, 15, 21 or 23 below, are included in Glantz's select bibliography. Some of these works are off of his topic, and most are in English, but others are on his topic, including some in Russian. He does apparently choose in the select bibliography to focus on listing Russian-language works that scholars would not be familiar with in the West.

[7]. Viktor Suvorov, *Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?* trans. Thomas B. Beattie (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990).

[8]. Edvard Radzinsky, *Stalin: The First In-Depth Biography Based on Explosive New Documents from Russia's Secret Archives*, trans. H.T. Willetts (New York: Anchor Books, 1996). Radzinsky quotes Meretskov, Leningrad military commander, about the attack on Finland: 'If Finland should strike, various counteractions were open to us. I was made responsible for drawing up a plan to protect the frontier from aggression, and to plan a counterattack against the Finnish armed forces' (p.446). Radzinsky discusses the German scenario on pp.448-459. Most unfortunately, Radzinsky lists his archival sources briefly at the end, but not in any notes. He can be forgiven for not trusting Stalin when Stalin used defensive vocabulary to plan assaults on his neighbors. Now it does seem that Stalin learned from the political fallout over Finland, and/or simply hesitated to attack such a great power as Nazi Germany.

[9]. P[avel] N[ikitich] Bobylev, "For What Kind of War was the Red Army General Staff Preparing

in 1941?" *Russian Studies in History* 36:3 (Winter 1997-98), pp.47-75.

[10]. Jonathan Haslam cites V.Anfilov in 1995 saying Zhukov did speak to Stalin about the request to attack, only to be turned down: "Soviet-German Relations and the Origins of the Second World War: The Jury is Still Out," *Journal of Modern History* 69 (December 1997): 785-797; this point is on p.797. Haslam thus disagrees with Suvorov about Stalin; and in the last months from the current writing, various new revelations of materials from and interviews with Zhukov support this point.

[11]. Also a point made by Bernd Wegner in his introduction (pp.1-8) to Wegner, ed., *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941*, (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn, 1997), p.4.

[12]. Thus: "His [Rezun's] documentary evidence was sufficient to defend his thesis regarding Stalin's strategic intent prior to June 1940, but he presented considerably less evidence to support his more radical contentions concerning Stalin's war plans for 1941" (Glantz, p.4).

[13]. Glantz buttresses his introductory argument by saying Nuremberg was a legal process which established German war guilt. I partially agree, but Stalin knew that this process only punished war criminals among the losers (see Davies, p.110). I do not think the guilt question will undermine peace today, as Glantz fears. For one thing, the unstated precedent--the First World War's aftermath--involved ongoing reparations, then world economic depression, all with no European Community or nuclear deterrent. history will upset people should be immaterial to the analytical process.

[14]. Suvorov quotes official Soviet strategy at the time as saying 'mobilization, concentration, operational deployment and mounting the first operations are all parts of one and the same single uninterrupted process' (*Icebreaker*, p.260).

[15]. See Joachim Hoffmann, "The Soviet Union's Offensive Preparations in 1941," in Wegner, ed., *From Peace to War*, pp.361-380; timing discussed on p.378; and Gabriel Gorodetsky, "Stalin and Hitler's Attack on the Soviet Union" in *Ibid.*, pp.343-359, especially p.359.

[16]. Gabriel Gorodetsky raises this point, about Stalin wanting to meet Hitler, in his *Grand Illusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). According to Gorodetsky, Stalin was a realist replaying the nineteenth-century "great game," but was deluded in thinking that only the German army wanted war (as opposed to Hitler), and that Hitler in general would follow reasonable paths himself. Gorodetsky says he has read thousands of Soviet archival sources on the matter, none supporting Suvorov's thesis.

[17]. R.C. Raack, "Stalin's Role in the Coming of World War II: The International Debate Goes On," *World Affairs* 159:2 (Fall 1996): 47-54. Suvorov also wrote two follow-up books to *Icebreaker*, fleshing out his thesis and responding to criticism. They are *Den'-M: 6iiulia 1941* [M-Day: 6 July 1941] (Moscow: Vse Dlia Vas, 1994); and *Poslednaia respublika* [The Final Republic] (Moscow: AST, 1996). German authors following his thesis include Joachim Hoffmann, *Stalins Vernichtungskrieg 1941-1945* (Munich, 1995); Walter Post, *Unternehmen Barbarossa: Deutsche und Sowjetische Angriffspläne 1940/41* (second ed. Hamburg, 1996); and Werner Maser, *Der Wortbruch: Hitler, Stalin und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1994). These authors agree with Suvorov, at least that Stalin planned a Summer 1941 attack. Of these Glantz lists *Day-M*.

[18]. Hoffmann mentions that the Germans found thousands of high-quality maps, some exclusively of German territory from the border to Cracow, in Soviet military headquarters inside the U.S.S.R., along with German- and Polish-language leaflets for distribution by the Red Army to civilians ("The Soviet Union's Offensive Preparations," pp.373, 376).

[19]. In his conclusion Glantz says that other powers "such as Germany could scarcely ignore the ultimate consequences should Red Army reforms succeed" (p.259). Historically it was Hitler, then, who both assumed conflict was inevitable in the near future, and seized the ill-fated initiative in the east. Perhaps we can never answer to everyone's satisfaction the broad counterfactual of whether Stalin would only have defended had he gained time to build the mightiest military in the world—although if more foreigners clambered for access to archives, this could add weight to domestic voices demanding openness inside Russia.

[20]. Zhukov says that after Hitler invaded Yugoslavia, troops in the Kiev military district were ordered to the front lines, denuding the rear of necessary reinforcements; and that Hitler "was in a hurry [to attack the Soviet Union], and not without reason, too." See *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1971), pp. 217-219.

[21]. See, for instance, R.C. Raack, *Stalin's Drive to the West, 1938-1945: The Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford University Press, 1995); Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation* (Stanford University Press, 1995) says the Soviets essentially established Stalinism by default, since this was the only way purge survivors and officers brought up in the Soviet Union could be expected to think.

[22]. This is a Day-M detail Raack discusses in "Stalin's Role," p.50. Hoffmann ("The Soviet Union's Offensive Preparations," p.367), citing Volkogonov and Soviet period literature, mentions the same theory.

[23]. The view of Bryan I. Fugate and Lev Dvoretzky in *Thunder on the Dnepr: Zhukov-Stalin*

*and the Defeat of Hitler's Blitzkrieg* (Novato, California: Presidio, 1997).

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