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## PREFACE

Given the reinforced library shelves already groaning under the weight of tomes dedicated to *Unternehmen* (Operation) Barbarossa, the obvious and reasonable question is why another study is required. The answer to this question is essentially one of source material. A large part of this study is based on a number of Soviet documents that were placed in the public domain as part of the declassification process that started in 1991 and continues, intermittently, to this day. The primary documentation I relied on can be found in the relevant volumes of *Organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* covering the second half of 1941 and the first half of 1942—*Nachalo 22 iyunia–31 avgusta 1941 goda* (2000), *Nachalo 1 sentiabria–31 dekabria 1941 goda* (2000), and *Krushenie “Blitzkriga” 1 ianvaria–30 iyunia 1942 goda* (2003)—and the two volumes of documents specifically relating to the period before and just after 22 June 1941 contained in *1941 god* (1998).

Although this material has been available to scholars for more than a decade, I am not aware of any study of the central problems associated with Barbarossa—Soviet intelligence assessments, German-Soviet diplomacy, and NKVD (People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs) operations—based on a systematic and detailed analysis of the material published in the aforementioned volumes. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 I seek to remedy this deficiency. Chapter 4 makes it quite clear that the Soviet intelligence agencies were doing a thorough and professional job, which makes Stalin’s failure to act in good time and in good order all the more perplexing. A detailed analysis of the documents raises other intelligence-related questions to which there are no clear answers. For example, is one to assume that the Soviet air force conducted no systematic reconnaissance flights at all over German-controlled territory in the period leading up to 22 June 1941?

German-Soviet diplomatic relations between 1939 and 1941 have been covered in detail by Gerhard Weinberg in *Germany and the Soviet Union, 1939–1941* (1954), although as the author acknowledges, “largely on the basis of German sources.”<sup>1</sup> Soviet documents available since 1998 permit certain lacunae that existed throughout the Cold War and beyond to be filled. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the author of one of the most recent studies of the Non-Aggression Pact, published in 2014, does not exploit the detailed

material in the two volumes of 1941 *god*.<sup>2</sup> Soviet documents published in 1941 *god* strongly suggest that both the German and the Soviet states were using trade agreements as a device not just to extract strategic and economic advantage but also to deceive each other. On balance, it seems to me that deception was the primary purpose. Thus, Weinberg's view that "during the period from 1939 to 1941 the dynamic element in German-Soviet relations is provided by Germany, while Soviet policy is essentially a reactive one which attempts to make the best of opportunities offered and avert the worst of the threatening dangers," requires some adjustment.<sup>3</sup>

German-Soviet diplomatic exchanges, along with other material, also hint that the Germans were aware of the mass murders of Poles at Katyn and other sites in 1940, carried out by the NKVD's murder squads. If so, the question arises whether knowledge of these murders played a part in the formulation of two of the most notorious orders that emerged from the offices of Hitler's planning staff: *Erlaß über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichtsbarkeit im Gebiet „Barbarossa“ und über besondere Maßnahmen der Truppe* (Decree Concerning the Implementation of Military Jurisdiction in the Barbarossa Zone and Concerning Special Measures for the Troops; hereafter, the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Decree), dated 13 May 1941, and *Richtlinien für die Behandlung politischer Kommissare* (Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars; hereafter, the Commissar Order), dated 6 June 1941. It can be argued that even if German planners had foreknowledge of the Katyn murders, this in no way diminishes the criminal nature of the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Decree and the Commissar Order. And if that is the case, one would have expected the Nürnberg prosecutors to pursue the question of responsibility for the Katyn murders with the same determination and dedication with which they looked into the origins, drafting, and execution of the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Decree and the Commissar Order. Unfortunately, they did nothing of the sort. As Robert Conquest has noted, the Katyn murders were examined by the judges at Nürnberg "in a derisory fashion."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Soviet fiction that the Katyn murders were the work of National Socialist (NS) death squads was upheld and unchallenged.

The Katyn murders are important for an examination of the Commissar Order because Soviet thinking behind the decision to murder Polish prisoners of war has much in common with Nazi thinking behind the decision to kill commissars. This is just one of several indices demonstrating the closeness of the two totalitarian regimes. In my opinion, this ideological propinquity of the Commissar Order and the earlier Katyn Memorandum—the theme

of chapter 2—undermines some of the conclusions of Felix Römer's *Der Kommissarbefehl: Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen an der Ostfront 1941/42* (2008). His impressive statistical analysis notwithstanding, he adopts what I can only describe as a system-immanent or text-immanent approach to the origins and execution of the Commissar Order, thus ignoring the very real objective and external influences on German planners that, as I argue, informed—and could not help but inform—their attitudes toward the ideological functionaries known as military commissars and the action to be taken against them and the Soviet state. This reluctance by some German historians to consider Soviet behavior and ideological influences on German planning for Barbarossa is nothing new. For example, of the nine research essays published in part II of *Unternehmen „Barbarossa“: Der deutsche Überfall auf die Sowjetunion 1941, Berichte, Analysen, Dokumente* (1984), none provide any insights into the rapacious nature of Soviet foreign policy or the Soviet Union's murderous internal policies in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>5</sup> This failure to document Soviet criminality creates a false picture that attributes all the horrors of the mid-twentieth century to the NS regime and implies that they can be understood only by examining the contents of a large black box with a red lid depicting a white circle circumscribing a satanic black *Hakenkreuz* (bent cross, i.e., Swastika).

Social, ideological, and military manifestations such as the rise of NS Germany cannot be studied in isolation. In a similar vein, to understand the forces and trends that led to the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, one would have to examine the history of tsarist Russia and key events such as the Emancipation Edict of 1861, the influence of *Das Kapital* (1867, 1885, 1894), the failure of movements such as *Khozhdenie v narod* (Going to the People, 1874) and the consequent rise of revolutionary terrorism in the 1870s, the development of Marxism-Leninism, the various events of 1905, and the disastrous outcome of Russian involvement in World War I, which prepared the way for the Leninist coup d'état. In *Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus* (2014), Waitman Beorn at least shows some awareness (unlike Römer) that German fear and hatred of Bolshevism were not without substance and could not be solely ascribed to specific features of NS ideology or Hitler's psychopathy: "Generals and enlisted men alike," he notes, "many of them shocked and horrified by the anarchic Weimar years and the associated Bolshevik terror, saw the Soviet Union as a very real threat to Germany's survival." Beorn also realizes the importance of "long and short term historical trends."<sup>6</sup>

These long- and short-term trends are indispensable for understanding

not just the origins and evolution of the NS regime and the way it behaved but also the nature of the Soviet regime and its actions and thus why German planners felt compelled to pursue some of the policies they did. Before 22 June 1941 the Soviet regime enjoyed an unrivaled record for the use of terror (mass, arbitrary, and selective), genocide, judicial murder, annexation, forced labor, and deportation. Thanks to the introduction of a system of censorship unique in human history, the Soviet regime was able to hide a great deal of its murderous activity from the outside world. For example, the existence of Order № 00447, signed by Nikolai Ezhov on 30 July 1937 and providing for the execution of tens of thousands of so-called enemies of the people (*vragi naroda*) and automatic sentences of ten years' hard labor—in effect, death sentences—for thousands more came to light only after the end of the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Only in the last months of the Soviet Union's existence did its officials finally acknowledge NKVD responsibility for the mass murders of Polish prisoners of war at Katyn and other sites in 1940 (considered by the Polish government to be genocide).<sup>8</sup> Up until this moment of truth, Soviet officials had issued one fanatical denial after another, insisting that the Katyn murders were the work of the German occupation forces and that any assertions to the contrary were simply anti-Soviet Cold War propaganda. Likewise, when confronted with the publication of the secret protocol annexed to the Non-Aggression Pact just after the end of World War II, Soviet commentators denounced it as a forgery. In fact, as Roger Moorhouse reminds us, Viacheslav Molotov, Stalin's foreign minister and the man who actually signed the document, stubbornly maintained to the day he died that no such secret protocol existed.<sup>9</sup>

Soviet censorship could not, however, hide everything. Western states, including Germany, knew a great deal about the Red Terror, the genocide in Ukraine (Holodomor), the purges, and the forced labor camps. Despite the best efforts of Soviet fellow travelers such as Walter Duranty, the *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow, to mislead Westerners, the scale of the genocide in Ukraine could not be hidden from those who wanted to know the truth. I propose to readers of this book that it is implausible (to put it mildly) to believe that knowledge of this monstrous crime and others committed by the Soviet state did not shape German attitudes toward that state, never mind the attitudes of fanatical Nazis. And it was here that objective, veracious, and verifiable evidence of Soviet criminality combined with Hitler's psychopathic hatred of Jews to form a fateful and utterly catastrophic union. It is undoubtedly true that the NS regime exploited the truth about

the Soviet regime to justify the Holocaust, and knowledge of Soviet (NKVD) crimes, disseminated by the NS propaganda apparatus, made it easier for the Wehrmacht to become an accomplice to NS crimes.

If by propaganda one means organized lying and an attempt to change people's attitudes by the methods used in a Maoist reeducation camp, then propaganda alone could not have achieved Wehrmacht complicity. This point, it seems to me, is the flaw in Omer Bartov's interpretation of German behavior in *The Eastern Front 1941–45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (1985). In his view, the Germans' actions overwhelmingly arose from, and can be explained by, NS ideology and propaganda. Thus, according to Bartov: "When Hitler came to power, all the resources of the new Reich were mobilised in an attempt to produce a massive and incessant stream of propaganda aimed at brainwashing the public into a 'blind belief' in the Führer and a complete and uncritical acceptance of the tenets of National Socialism."<sup>10</sup> Bartov effectively describes the cult of Stalin that was initiated in the Soviet Union in 1929 and lasted until Stalin's death in 1953. Furthermore, the belief in Hitler was not compelled only by propaganda; it arose from internal and foreign policy successes that convinced large numbers of Germans that Hitler was a great leader who would bring Germany out of the wilderness of Weimar. Propaganda film masterpieces such as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* (1935) helped create and project images of power, modernity, and success, as did the autobahns and the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Propaganda and success reinforced each other, whereas the cult of Stalin was based on extreme ideological coercion and terror. Boris Pasternak, the author of *Doktor Zhivago* (1957), has argued that one aim of the physical and psychological terror unleashed by Stalin in the 1930s was to obliterate the memory of the genocide in Ukraine and to compel people to accept the picture of Soviet society being generated and imposed by Soviet mass media (radio, press, and cinema) and the Soviet agitprop network.<sup>11</sup>

According to Bartov, German soldiers were not expected to understand National Socialism; they were merely expected to believe in it. But that claim is thoroughly erroneous, since it portrays German soldiers as unthinking robots. If the Wehrmacht had comprised automatons, it would not have been such a fearful and highly effective war machine. Moreover, belief that is coerced by the threat of violence is nothing but psychological terrorism, such as that used by the NKVD against German prisoners of war, by the Chinese in the Korean War, and against enemies of the people during Mao's Red Terror to purge their minds of politically incorrect thoughts. Belief that

emerges from satisfying the psychological, cultural, political, historical, emotional, and intellectual requirements of would-be or potential believers leads to acceptance and conviction. Such conviction, when combined with first-class military training and a military tradition that stresses personal initiative (*Auftragstaktik*) in battle, enhances the chance of success and, as the Western Allies and the Red Army both discovered after the fall of North Africa and Stalingrad, produces soldiers who stand fast in the face of defeat.<sup>12</sup> NS slogans alone could not have produced such an outcome, either in victory or in looming defeat; rather, those slogans were characteristics of belief, not its catalysts. Some of the ideas exploited in NS ideology predate the rise of Hitler, as Bartov acknowledges. However, ideas and cultural norms that were peculiar to Wilhelmine Germany cannot, on their own, explain the rapid rise and appeal of National Socialism. Utterly decisive was the seizure of power by Lenin in Russia in 1917 and the consequences of the emergence of this totalitarian state, a new type of state for Germany (and others).

Lenin, for example, had no doubt that a new type of state was emerging from the revolution. As far as Lenin was concerned, this new type of state also meant that the war being waged by the Soviet regime and its proletariat was unique. Wars between slaves and slave owners have occurred throughout history, Lenin acknowledged, “but wars of state power against the bourgeoisie of its own country and against the united bourgeoisie of all countries: such a war as this has never occurred before.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the war of the proletariat against the hated bourgeoisie within and beyond the borders of the Soviet state was a war that would determine not just the survival of that state but whether the global revolution would succeed; it would be a war of unprecedented ruthlessness and bitter hatred. Victory would be all that mattered, and to that end, everything must be sacrificed. Such was Lenin’s position.

Regarding NS ideological influence on German troops, Bartov addresses two questions: whether soldiers were affected by the barrage of propaganda directed at them, and whether events on the Eastern Front in World War II were “essentially different from numerous other brutal and barbarous military confrontations.”<sup>14</sup> On one obvious criterion—scale—the war on the Eastern Front was unique. However, the war’s ideological, quasi-religious aspects were not unique to the Eastern Front. There is no doubt that German soldiers were subjected to NS indoctrination and propaganda, but this was also the norm in the Red Army from its inception. This explains the role of military commissars and *politruks* (political instructors) and the

large, ubiquitous, invasive network of volunteer and professional agitators that penetrated all levels of the Soviet state. The other World War II army to which Bartov's thesis is germane is the Imperial Japanese Army. Discipline was harsh and atrocities were common before and during the war, one of the worst being the rape and sacking of Nanking from December 1937 to January 1938 in the second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>15</sup> Japanese treatment of Allied prisoners of war was also abominable. While committed Nazis admired Hitler, and Soviet citizens were coerced into accepting Stalin as some kind of father-figure genius, Japanese soldiers worshipped their emperor and considered him a god. In all three states the leadership cult encouraged atrocities. Moreover, the ideological fanaticism that justifies unspeakable atrocities, including genocide, in the eyes of the perpetrator was certainly not unique to the Soviet Union and NS Germany. It was present in Mao's China and Cambodia, and it exists today in North Korea, where the grotesque leadership cult is a mixture of the black comedy in *Team America: World Police* (2004) and the paranoia-inspired violence of Stalin and Mao. The leaders of various fanatical Islamic groups and their disciples also believe, like Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, that any abomination is justified in pursuit of their ideocratic ambitions.

Bartov seems reluctant to consider the question of Soviet behavior when examining the Wehrmacht's behavior in the Soviet Union. Concerning the Red Army, he notes that "it is often claimed that the Red Army was just as brutal as the Wehrmacht, a particularly convenient assumption for those who say that in Russia one had to behave like the Russians."<sup>16</sup> The claim of Red Army brutality is certainly not baseless, but the real problem was the existence of the NKVD (references to which are entirely absent from Bartov's study). The NKVD, with Red Army complicity, was responsible for the genocide in Ukraine; the NKVD executed enemies of the people in the tens of thousands; the NKVD was responsible for mass deportations and administration of the forced labor camps; and the NKVD murdered Polish prisoners of war.

Red Army and NKVD collusion in genocide and state-directed terror clearly anticipates the same sort of collusion between the Wehrmacht and the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) and *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) in expediting the "final solution" in the occupied territories. Again, it may well be true that claims of Red Army (and NKVD) brutality are a "convenient assumption," but that changes nothing because, first, the assumption of Red Army (and NKVD) brutality is fully justified and verifiable, and second, one must consider the

question of how any armed forces, not just the Wehrmacht, would behave when confronted with the brutality of the Red Army (and the NKVD). The mass death of Soviet prisoners of war in German camps—what I call the *Höllengal* (see chapter 1)—was indisputably a dreadful crime, but the very high Soviet combat losses relative to those of the German invader were attributable more to the Red Army's battlefield incompetence. Ultimate responsibility for the number of Red Army soldiers killed, wounded, and captured rests with Stalin, who murdered his senior commanders. It also suited Stalin that Red Army soldiers, whose lives meant nothing to him, perished in German camps, since it could be used for propaganda purposes. Order № 270 (16 August 1941) removes all doubt about what the Great Benefactor and Father of the Soviet People really thought about his soldiers and their grieving mothers.

Bartov argues, not unconvincingly, that although other wars—the Thirty Years' War and Japan's war in China—"had a strong element of racial or religious fanaticism, they do not appear to have been conducted with the single-minded intention of exterminating whole peoples as was the 'war of ideologies' unleashed by Germany in the East."<sup>17</sup> The first objection to this claim is that it was the Soviet state that unleashed the "war of ideologies" with its commitment to incite revolution and class war. From its inception, the Soviet state regarded itself as being in a permanent state of war: war against internal enemies of all kinds, including whole populations,<sup>18</sup> and a cold war against Western states (Britain, United States, France, and Germany). This cold war, which started with the Allied intervention after 1918, ended when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. The Soviet state's prosecution of this cold war was based on class fanaticism, and it envisaged the extermination of millions of class enemies. The ideology of class war and class hatred led directly to genocide in Ukraine during the 1930s, when some 6 million peasants were exterminated by a deliberate and utterly cruel policy of starvation. The entire weight of the Soviet agitprop apparatus was also turned against the so-called kulaks. The dehumanization and demonization of the kulaks foreshadows the same process against the Jews in NS Germany and in the eastern occupied territories. Kulaks were portrayed as greedy and unscrupulous usurers, bloodsuckers, and parasites who exploited others. Here, there is a striking parallel between the Soviet propagandistic exploitation of the economic motive to demonize the kulaks and the Jews' demonization as an exploitative and parasitic group in NS ideology. In fact, when one examines the various motives that have inspired

other mass murders and genocides, the real or imagined superiority of one group in financial matters and the envy it arouses are consistent features.

Although Lenin was not the first demagogue to incite hatred of the rich, he once again blazed a distinctive ideological trail for Hitler. Lenin's writings on how to deal with the rich, with capitalists, or with any other class enemy demonstrate and adumbrate the psychopathic, irrational, and ineffably insane hatred with which Hitler would later target Jews. In an address written in January 1918 but not published until 20 January 1929, Lenin directed revolutionary mobs to dispossess and kill the rich. Using the same kind of language Hitler would use to dehumanize Jews—"parasites," "the dregs of humanity," "hopelessly rotten," "contagion," "plague," and "scum"<sup>19</sup>—Lenin let it be known that the main aim of registration and control was "the cleansing of the Russian lands from all kinds of harmful insects, from petty thieving fleas, from the rich bedbugs and so on and so on."<sup>20</sup> Of all the actions Lenin goads these mobs to take against the class enemy—including immediate incarceration, public humiliation (cleaning toilets), and arbitrary execution—two catch the historian's eye. The first is Lenin's insistence that the class enemy be subjected to registration and control so that none can escape the retribution of the proletariat. The second is Lenin's demand that those victims being dragged off to prison cells for "correction" (*ispravlenie*) must wear the same yellow cards given to prostitutes so that, in Lenin's words, "all the people, can keep them under observation as harmful people."<sup>21</sup> Registration and control—perhaps it would be more accurate to say registration *in order to control*—were the same bureaucratic methods later adopted by the Nazis to target and isolate Jews in Germany and then by the German occupation forces in the east (registration of Jews was essential for *Einsatzgruppen* operations). Furthermore, compelling so-called class enemies to wear distinctive forms of identification in public, with the express intention of humiliating them as a prelude to their being executed or being sent to forced-labor camps, was one of the most widely known and certainly one of the defining features of Hitler's persecution of Jews: Jews were made to wear armbands or badges identifying them as Jews in public—the same psychological terror tactic advocated by Lenin as early as 1918 (well before the NS regime adopted the same method), with the aim of socially isolating a specific group and concentrating public hatred on its members.

Although Lenin's war of ideological fanaticism bears some resemblance to the fanaticism engendered by the Thirty Years' War, that war's savagery ended when the war did. Ideological war, once started, cannot end until

the enemy has been defeated; thus, the formal boundary between war and peace that belongs to the Western understanding of war was not accepted as binding by the Soviet state. Treaties of any kind were weapons of war and subterfuge, as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. Lenin's war of ideologies was total war that embraced all elements of the state and mandated totalitarian control.

The Western view is that wars have a beginning and an end and that what occurs in between is called peace. This view distorts the study of German war crimes unless, in the case of the war on the Eastern Front, it acknowledges that the total ideological war pioneered by Lenin was a new way of waging war that led to the crimes committed by the Soviet Union before June 1941. Since the Soviet Union was not involved in war with Germany before 22 June 1941, these Soviet crimes were regarded as an internal Soviet matter and did not constitute war crimes in any established Western understanding of that term. They could therefore be dismissed as irrelevant with regard to the genesis and consideration of NS war crimes, a position maintained to this day. This lack of interest in Soviet criminality as a factor in German war planning was clearly demonstrated during the Nürnberg trials, when the origins of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, its rise to power, and its various domestic policies were examined in detail. Since no such scrutiny of the origins of the Soviet state and the rise of Stalin and his policies took place (or was not permitted to occur), the inevitable conclusion was that the Soviet Union was an innocent victim of monstrous Nazi aggression on 22 June 1941, not that both states were vying for the totalitarian domination of Europe.

One obvious consequence of this failure to take into account the Soviet state's criminality was that the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Decree, the Commissar Order, and, above all, the Holocaust appear to be unique crimes, whereas Soviet criminality before 22 June 1941—the Red Terror, Holodomor, the Great Terror, mass deportations, Order № 00447, and Katyn—was tantamount to NS crimes. The fact that Germany more or less observed the requirements of the Hague and Geneva Conventions with regard to Western prisoners of war but not Soviet prisoners of war was not based solely on Nazi racial theories; it was based on the view that the Soviet state was fully committed to a war of ideology in which everything was permitted. Committed to a doctrine of war in which the Soviet state reserved the right to behave as it wished, Soviet ideologues had no grounds for complaining that Hitler attacked the Soviet Union without any formal declaration of war.

Both NS Germany and the Soviet state were committed to a war without rules and with no respect for the customs and laws of war. This posed hideously complicated (if not insuperable) legal, moral, and intellectual problems for the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg. Max Hastings grasps part of the problem when he notes: “If the law had been enforced against all Germans who committed crimes against humanity in the countries occupied by Hitler, post-war executions on a Soviet scale would have been necessary.”<sup>22</sup> According to this view, many Nazi murderers escaped justice—which they undoubtedly did—but Soviet crimes against humanity before, during, and after World War II were not condemned as such and have remained unpunished. The Soviet Union’s responsibility for crimes as ghastly as anything perpetrated by the NS regime undoubtedly left an ugly stain on the postwar trials, but it does not totally invalidate them. Some form of retribution, however flawed and imperfect, was essential, and even though the Soviet Union was not in the dock with its totalitarian rival in 1946, the evidence of Soviet criminality is there for those who wish to see it.

Christian Hartmann exhibits a far greater awareness of the ideological as well as the external and objective factors influencing NS planning for Barbarossa in *Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg: Front und militärisches Hinterland* (2010). He examines the key moments on the Eastern Front—the invasion, the Commissar Order, the early battles, the beginnings of the Holocaust, the failure of the Blitzkrieg, the onset of partisan warfare, the nature of the rear areas, and the dreadful fate of Soviet prisoners of war—primarily through the files of five Wehrmacht divisions: 45th Infantry Division, 296th Infantry Division, 4th Panzer Division, 221st Security Division, and Kommandant/Kommandantur des Rückwärtigen Armeegebiets 580 (Commandant/Command of the Rear Area of Army Region 580, abbreviated Korück 580). Adding value to Hartmann’s book is the fact that he harbors no illusions about the Soviet regime and makes a number of compelling comparisons between it and its NS rival. Further comparisons between the two totalitarian regimes can be found in Hartmann’s *Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany’s War in the East, 1941–1945* (2013).<sup>23</sup> The mere statement of these comparisons indicates that Hartmann is asserting not only that NS and Soviet totalitarianism can be compared and analyzed but also, and more importantly, that failing to do so provides an incomplete picture of what took place between 1939 and 1945.

Hartmann’s many comparisons between NS Germany and the Soviet state recall the *Historikerstreit* (historians’ dispute) that erupted in 1986 and led to the publication of a series of arguments and counterarguments in Germany.

The key element in this bitter dispute was whether the final solution—the Holocaust—was unique and therefore whether any comparisons with genocide and mass murder by the Soviet regime were morally, intellectually, and historically reasonable. The key proponents of the view that the crimes of the two regimes were comparable were Ernst Nolte, Michael Stürmer, and Andreas Hillgruber. Opposition to these historians was initiated largely by Jürgen Habermas.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike Römer, Hartmann is willing to consider the reasons why German planners and soldiers were so obsessed with the threat posed by military commissars. First, Hartmann acknowledges the highly influential role of commissars in the Red Army, their distinct administrative infrastructure, the fact that they “closely cooperated with the Special Section that the NKVD had established in each division,” and their role in setting up blocking detachments. Second, he recognizes “that no group in the Red Army was ideologically indoctrinated to such a degree as the commissars” and that the “Soviet commissars and functionaries were no ordinary group of victims.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, they were not; together with the NKVD, they were representatives of a regime that had always been fully committed to the use of terror and the physical extermination of class enemies. Furthermore, this ideological and enforcement role was well known to German planners. The fact that commissars formed an ideological elite indoctrinated in the worldview of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism and that they represented the Communist Party’s interests clearly shows that the Red Army was always intended to be a new type of army—one that was committed to a specific ideological worldview and bound first and foremost by Soviet ideological tenets.

World War I also provides critical insights into the origins of NS (and Soviet) policies, since behavior that tends to be seen as unique to the totalitarian states of NS Germany and the Soviet Union was, in fact, common during World War I, especially on the Eastern Front. Ruthless countermeasures against partisans and armed civilians (*francs tireurs*)—including arbitrary shootings and the imposition of collective punishment—mass deportations, policies aimed at maintaining or facilitating racial unity, pitiless measures to ensure food security, appropriation of private property, scorched-earth policies, and a selective approach to the provisions of international law can all be demonstrated and are well documented. Yet these policies are not as firmly associated with World War I as they are with the World War II. One reason, perhaps, is that there were no major war crimes trials after the armistice.

The tsarist army, for example, employed mass deportation as an effective device to enhance its own security, to break resistance, and to weaken Germany's war economy. Anticipating the Soviet NKVD, it deported hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans from the border zones and left them in the Volga region or between it and the Urals, where these people endured untold misery and suffering. Moreover, as the Russians were forced out by the German army, they engaged in a scorched-earth policy and deported some 3.3 million civilians along with them. Alexander Watson records the effect on German soldiers: "Advancing into the deliberately devastated landscape, encountering scattered, desperate and dispossessed inhabitants, German soldiers could be left in no doubt that they faced an evil empire."<sup>26</sup> Memories among Germans were long lasting. It is difficult to see how German officers and civilian functionaries who later assumed important positions in the Third Reich could not have been profoundly affected by what they saw in the east. That this experience shaped planning for Barbarossa strikes me as a given.

World War I and the major conflict that preceded it, the Franco-Prussian War, also provided plenty of precedents for ruthless and summary measures against those deemed to be operating outside the conventions of war, at least as understood by the Germans. *Francs tireurs* were seen as the main illegal enemy, and twenty-two years later, detestation of them was easily transferred to partisans, commissars, and other Soviet political functionaries during the planning for Barbarossa. In World War I the total number of civilians killed by the Germans in Belgium as suspected *francs tireurs* was 6,427,<sup>27</sup> comparable to the number of Red Army commissars—a far more ruthless enemy—killed in accordance with the Commissar Order. I am of the opinion (unlike Watson) that the killing of *francs tireurs* and the policy of so-called active deterrence point the way to events in World War II, especially with regard to the drafting of the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Decree and the Commissar Order. Nor was hatred of the *franc tireur* confined to the Germans. The reaction of the Habsburg officer corps to the threat posed by Serbian irregulars, the *Komitadjis*, was just as brutal: because they were deemed to be outside international law, there were no qualms about eliminating them. Obsessed by spy mania and convinced of the ubiquity of German fifth columnists, the tsarist army behaved every bit as ruthlessly in the east.

Facing starvation because of the British naval blockade—which, Watson convincingly argues, was a violation of international law—the Germans took various measures to guarantee food security in the east during World War I.

The Germans identified two areas as critical for meeting their agricultural needs: Lithuania and Courland, referred to as *Ober Ost*. The later Nazi plan drawn up by Herbert Backe, under Göring's supervision, for the agricultural exploitation of Soviet territory bears more than a passing resemblance to that drawn up for *Ober Ost*, although to be fair to Ludendorff and other German administrators in World War I, there were no plans to starve people to death. From Backe's plan, however, it is clear that the British starvation blockade aimed primarily against Germany in World War I played a major part in inspiring NS policies of mass exploitation of Soviet territories in World War II and a willingness to countenance mass starvation among the indigenous population if that was the price to be paid for meeting Germany's needs.

The data and the documentary evidence presented and examined in Watson's *Ring of Steel* show that, in terms of planning and execution, many of the policies pursued by NS Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II were not new, although they were implemented on a much greater scale than those carried out by Germany, Austria-Hungary, and tsarist Russia in the east during World War I. They were derived from obvious templates and precedents that Soviet and NS planners were able to modify. Moreover, in 1915 the feasibility of genocide, using war as a cover, had been clearly demonstrated with the killing of some 1.5 million Armenians by the Turkish regime. This genocide, the first in the twentieth century, is now known as the Armenian genocide or, among Armenians, as the Great Crime (*Medz yeghern*). The Soviet Union and later NS Germany perfected the techniques of genocide pioneered by the Turks in World War I, taking organized and systematic mass killing, and organized lying about such killing, to new levels, as evidenced by the Holodomor in Ukraine and the Holocaust in the German-occupied territories in the east.

A systematic and detailed analysis of the documentation pertaining to the NKVD reveals the critical role played by this feared organization. Very much like the SS in NS Germany, the NKVD operated as a state within a state. It assumed responsibility for imposing *revoliutsionnyi poriadok* (revolutionary order), uncovering spies, intercepting and filtrating *okruzhentsy* (soldiers from encircled units) and deserters, ensuring the security of the rail network and industrial plant, disrupting the operations of German airborne units, and executing and deporting Soviet citizens deemed likely to collaborate with the German invaders. In the first half of 1941 the main victims were Finns and Germans, but later in the war this policy was applied to other Soviet ethnic groups, including the Chechens, Tartars, and Kalmyks. After the

mass deportation of Germans from the Volga region, Lavrentii Beria, head of the NKVD, boasted that the region had been *cleansed*. Beria's language matches that found in SS documents (e.g., *judenrein* or *judenfrei*) to characterize areas from which Jews had been deported or where they had been murdered en masse. Once again, this confirms the close affinity between the terror agencies of the NS state and the Soviet Union.

The systematic analysis of previously available material can yield new insights, but it is especially gratifying to come across new and valuable documents that enrich the subject. Such is the diary of Gefreiter Hans Caspar von Wiedebach-Nostitz, who served in the 20th Panzer Division. My translation of this diary is the first time it has been published in any language (see chapter 6). It starts just before the launch of Barbarossa on 17 June 1941 and ends on 17 February 1942, and although there are gaps, it is an almost daily account of the campaign, including the dangers and frustrations faced by German troops. The diary was made available to me by von Wiedebach-Nostitz's widow, and I would like to thank her and her family for allowing me the honor and privilege of studying the diary and other material.

The first phase of the German invasion figures prominently in the work of large numbers of Soviet-Russian authors (see chapter 7). On its face, an analysis of the portrayal of the invasion in novels may seem out of place in a study of Barbarossa. But given the way literature was intended to function in the Soviet state, the role allocated to writers, and the censorship apparatus, it is my opinion that published works are important historical documents and primary source material in their own right. Because of the unique ideological conditions and restrictions under which Soviet writers had to function, Soviet-Russian war novels provide a record of what themes mattered to the censors and their party controllers. They are not just novels in the normal sense of the word; they are documents that reveal how the Soviet state insisted that its view of the Great Fatherland War be presented. Soviet-Russian war novels are, therefore, literary, historical, and political-ideological documents in a way that Western war novels are not. The critical distinction is not that Western war novels cannot have political significance—clearly, they can—but that the Soviet state demanded political and ideological significance (and orthodoxy) from its writers. That is, Soviet writers were not permitted to operate independently of the state; they were required to serve the Soviet state and support its Marxist-Leninist *Weltanschauung*. Those who dissented, succumbing to *politicheskaiia nepravil'nost'*

(political incorrectness), suffered severe penalties: arrest, incarceration, expulsion from the Union of Writers, deportation, and execution.

It is important to note that the restrictions imposed on the writing of the history of World War II in the Soviet Union were not applicable to German postwar writing. This distinction is not fully recognized even now, when so much is known about the destructive impact of Soviet censorship on literature, history, and all forms of intellectual endeavor. Thus, Geoffrey Megargee takes a rather dim view of postwar German memoirs and insists that, “for reasons both innocent and insidious, their accounts constitute a mix of truth, half-truth, omission, and outright lies that has been difficult to untangle.”<sup>28</sup> Even if these authors chose to bypass certain themes, memoirs written by, for example, Heinz Guderian and Erich von Manstein have much to commend them; Guderian’s for his insights into the origins and development of the German panzer formations, and von Manstein’s—possibly the most outstanding general on any side in World War II—for his tactical and strategic insights. In any case, Megargee’s comments are far more applicable to Soviet memoirs, war literature, and official histories and statements. If von Manstein and others sought to mislead German readers about the war, they did so of their own volition, not because they were compelled to relate history in a certain way. Nor did they have to be concerned about being arrested and imprisoned for challenging the Bonn government’s views on World War II. The main obstacle to getting a truthful account of the war on the Eastern Front has been not German memoirists but the massive Soviet censorship apparatus, which was abolished only in 1990. In fact, a quarter century after the collapse of the Soviet regime, there are renewed signs that the government of the Russian Federation is taking steps to block access to archives.

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This study begins with Hitler’s conundrum: attack Britain or the Soviet Union? All aspects of German planning for Barbarossa are covered. Here, the value of returning to source material that has long been in the public domain—in this case, the forty-two volumes of *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal Nuremberg*, the so-called Blue Series, and the fifteen volumes constituting the Green Series, dealing, *inter alia*, with the High Command case and the *Einsatzgruppen* case—is evident. These documents were downloaded from the Library of Congress website, and I am duty bound to express my gratitude to the librarians and archivists of that august institution for their diligence and dedication. Returning to this huge

collection of documents with the benefit of modern research casts new light on German agricultural policy for the occupied territories. The penultimate chapter of this book is dedicated to a detailed analysis of Viktor Suvorov's book *Ledokol: Kto nachal vtoruiu mirovuiu voynu?* (Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War? [1992]). Suvorov is a talented maverick whose views on the origins of World War II have to be taken seriously in order to rebut them.

Each chapter in this book is a discrete analysis. Taken together, they form a corpus of new material and close analysis of *Unternehmen Barbarossa* that I hope historians, especially those without access to Russian and German source material, will find valuable.

Transliteration conforms to that used by the Library of Congress, with some exceptions. Most notably, I use *Alexander* instead of *Aleksandr*. According to the Library of Congress, *SMERSH* is the correct transliteration, but I prefer *SMERSH*: it looks, appropriately, more sinister. Since *Belorussia* and *Belorussian* pertain to the period in question, I use them instead of the current *Belarus* and *Belarusian*. There are also variations on the name of the German city that hosted the International Military Tribunal. When quoting sources that use the anglicized transliterations *Nuremberg* or sometimes *Nuremburg*, I retain such usage. In all other instances I use the German spelling: *Nürnberg*. Since the German word *Panzer* is so well known among military-historical scholars, I treat it like an English word, lowercase and in roman type. Unless otherwise stated or indicated, all translations from all languages are mine. Likewise, all errors and interpretations contained in this book are mine.

Finally, so that my interpretation of *Unternehmen Barbarossa* is not misconstrued, I would like to point out that my view of the German campaign undoubtedly represents, in part, something of a challenge—even a disorienting and threatening one—to the scholarly consensus, especially that which has emerged since the end of the 1970s. This is often an inherent part of writing about history, and for this I make no apologies. However, I hope it is obvious that in highlighting and criticizing aspects of Soviet behavior before, during, and after the war and reexamining the way it has been interpreted, I am not providing an alibi for Hitler and his regime. I merely wish to explain and draw attention to some aspects of *Barbarossa* that, in my opinion, have not been properly examined. *Nihil obstat, imprimatur!*

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The thirteen-part Russian television series *Shtrafbat* (The Penal Battalion), which was first shown in the autumn of 2004, begins with German wartime

footage of Soviet soldiers being taken prisoner by German troops. The footage ends with the profoundly moving scene of a captured Red Army soldier. He is sitting and sobbing in his moment of abject misery and humiliation. I dedicate this book to that unknown Red Army soldier, in the fervent hope that he returned from hell.

Frank Ellis

Ampleforth, North Yorkshire, England, 2014



University Press of Kansas

# Barbarossa 1941





## 1 ***Unternehmen Barbarossa*** **Conception, Planning, and Execution**

If, then, civilized nations do not put their prisoners to death or devastate cities and countries, it is because intelligence plays a larger part in their methods of warfare and has taught them more effective ways of using force than the crude expression of instinct.

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

The vast area must, of course, be pacified as quickly as possible. The best way for this to happen is that any person who so much as looks askance is shot dead.

Adolf Hitler, 16 July 1941

Planning for Barbarossa was set in motion by Adolf Hitler's *Weisung* (Directive) Nr. 21 and began in earnest in December 1940. Every significant agency in the National Socialist (NS) state was involved. Experts in economics, diplomacy, agriculture, meteorology, and metallurgy worked alongside ethnologists, military planners, lawyers, and propagandists. Dreaming of personal empires and estates, future administrators maneuvered for appointments as *Reichskommissare* and *Gauleiter*. Meanwhile, in the nether regions of this planning, the mass murderers of the SS and *Einsatzgruppen* were preparing for the day when the vast areas behind the German front line would be turned into an experimental killing laboratory where the theories of Hitler, Alfred Rosenberg, and Heinrich Himmler would be translated into genocidal reality by efficient technocrats and willing, obedient, or indifferent executioners. Once these rear areas had been formed, German civilian agencies became part of the occupation administration;

these agencies included the Todt Organization, the Reich Work Service, the National Socialist Vehicle Corps, the Reich Railway, the Reich Postal Service, the German Red Cross, the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization, and the National Socialist Women's Organization.<sup>1</sup> The aim of Barbarossa was the swift destruction of the Soviet state apparatus, which would pave the way for German occupation of the vast territories of the east, to Germany's long-term advantage. Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians would form a new class of helots, and the huge reservoir of Jewish populations would be exterminated. This chapter examines the considerations confronting the multifarious planners, the doctrinal and operational changes that had made the Wehrmacht so formidable by 1941, and some of the problems facing its Soviet opponent.

### Introduction

They planned, they invaded, they conquered: the French were defeated, the British were ejected from the European continent, 1918 was avenged. So whither now Germany's victorious legions? Would the Germans undertake an all-out assault on southern England to complete the task in the west? Or could Britain be contained until Germany's remaining continental adversary, the Soviet Union, had been vanquished in another lightning campaign? These were the options facing Hitler and his generals as they enjoyed their moment of triumph and pondered the future in the summer of 1940.

The decision whether to launch an invasion of Britain (*Unternehmen Seelöwe*, or Operation Sea Lion) had all kinds of consequences for the outcome of Barbarossa. Defeating the British in the late summer of 1940 would have transformed the entire strategic situation in Europe and beyond: there would have been no air campaign against Germany, no resistance movements controlled and equipped from across the English Channel, no reason to allocate vast resources to a large U-boat fleet, no British troops in the Mediterranean, no need to raise Rommel's Afrika Korps, and no Anglo-American second front; in addition, with Britain out of the war, Germany might have developed an atomic bomb ahead of the United States. For the Soviet Union, the consequences of Britain's defeat would have been dire: no Lend-Lease; no access to British secrets derived from ULTRA; and the full weight of the German armed forces, now bolstered by the advanced industrial economies of western Europe, deployed against the Red Army. That the invasion of Britain would have entailed enormous risks is a given, but considering the astonishing advantages accruing to Germany in the event of success, the

attempt now seems justified. The Germans' recent successes in Poland, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, and France further support this view.

In fact, the invasion of France—the Germans' main focus in the late spring and summer of 1940—ended with the rapid collapse of French arms and the exit of the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) in disarray from the European continent. It is considered one of the most immaculate operations in military history. In nearly every aspect of this campaign, the German commanders and their technical support staffs introduced major innovations and, crucially, pioneered a new way of waging war that became known as *Blitzkrieg*. This fast-moving combined-arms doctrine was prefigured in the deployment of German mechanized forces in the *Anschluß* and the occupation of Czechoslovakia; it was fully implemented for the first time in the Polish campaign and was demonstrated again on a much larger scale in the summer of 1940.

The potential of airborne and glider forces had been appreciated before 1940, as demonstrated by the Italians and the Red Army, but it was left to the Germans to show what could be done with genuinely elite troops and bold leadership. British irregulars, such as T. E. Lawrence, had ably assisted the pursuit of British goals in the Middle East a generation earlier. Yet it fell to the *Abwehr*, combining the thorough training of the regular soldier with the ethos of the irregular, to come up with the *Brandenburg zur besonderen Verwendung* (zbV). These Brandenburg 800 units—the precursor of modern special forces—inspired the British to raise commando units and to form the Special Operations Executive (SOE). They also corroborated the views of British officers such as Colonels Mayne and Stirling that the Special Air Service (SAS) and similar units could wreak havoc behind the German lines in North Africa, as they did indeed in 1942 and 1943.

To defeat Britain, a proper plan was required to exploit German military excellence, but no such strategy existed. Hitler's hopes were pinned on the expectation that after Dunkirk, the British would be prepared to reach some kind of accommodation. Rebuffed by Winston Churchill, Hitler had to think seriously about the risks and opportunities of an invasion of Britain. Erich von Manstein's thoughts on the impasse immediately after Dunkirk, set out in his 1955 autobiography *Verlorene Siege* (Lost Victories), provide detailed insight into German military thinking at this juncture in the war. Paying full tribute to the leadership of Churchill and the tenacity of the British, he nevertheless argues that in pursuing its determined opposition to Hitler and the NS regime, Britain failed to recognize the much greater danger posed by

the Soviet Union. This argument carries weight—hindsight is certainly not required to identify the Soviet threat—but it seems improbable that Churchill would have made a deal with Hitler. Hitler undoubtedly would have given all kinds of assurances that Britain and its empire would be left alone in return for guarantees that the British would not interfere in Europe. However, no agreement between Britain and Germany could have resulted in a long-term solution to the essential problem arising from a German-dominated Europe facing an offshore imperial rival.

The obvious advantage for Germany was that a deal with Britain would have removed the burden of a two-front war, allowing Germany to attack the Soviet Union and immeasurably enhancing its chances of success. Then the question confronting Hitler after the defeat of France would have arisen again: *Was nun?* (What now?) Having vanquished the Soviet state, would Hitler respect the agreement with Britain, or would he decide to solve the British problem by force? I cannot envisage any kind of agreement between Britain and Germany being maintained while Europe—from the French coast to Moscow and beyond—remained under Nazi occupation. That state of affairs would have been intolerable to both parties: Britain could never realistically accept Nazi domination of Europe, since it would represent a permanent threat to British interests—above all, national security. Hitler's new order would be jeopardized by the existence of an independent and militarily strong Britain with close links to the United States, given the threat to German hegemony implicit in the Anglo-US relationship. These tensions could be resolved only by war. In that case, it would not be in Britain's interests to conclude any kind of deal with Hitler, certainly not one that would help neutralize the Soviet Union. Churchill, like von Manstein, would have recognized that despite the Non-Aggression Pact, the Soviet Union posed a threat to Germany in the east. Therefore, from the British perspective, it made sense *not* to strike a deal with Hitler and thus maintain the possibility of a war on two fronts. Time worked in Britain's favor, not Germany's.

Commenting on the Anglo-German conflict in 1940, von Manstein writes, "It is the tragedy of this brief time span in which the long-term fate of Europe was decided that neither of the two sides had seriously sought to find a way to an understanding based on a reasonable foundation."<sup>2</sup> The basis of any understanding would have been, first and foremost, Britain's recognition of Germany as the undisputed hegemon of Europe, thus giving Germany a free hand not only to exterminate millions of Jews but also to implement its occupation policies in the eastern territories undisturbed by war. It may well

be true, as von Manstein claims, that outside of a few National Socialist Party fanatics, ideas associated with the *Herrenvolk* (master race) were not taken seriously. Unfortunately, these fanatics were able to pursue their policies in the eastern territories. Writing after the end of the war, von Manstein would have been well aware of what happened in the rear areas, assuming he did not know during the war, which strikes me as scarcely credible. Had he, in 1940, bemoaned the lack of an understanding between Britain and Germany, this might be seen as an appeal to mutual Anglo-German interests and *realpolitik* (*vernünftig*, to use his word), but doing so after the war ignores the enormity of Nazi crimes in the east—crimes that were possible because of the outstanding success of German arms, of which von Manstein was one of the chief architects. From the perspective of the summer of 1940, Britain had every reason to refuse to strike a deal with Hitler; from a post-1945 perspective, Churchill's defiance shows a sure and inspired historical and moral understanding of what was at stake.

According to von Manstein's view, any invasion had to be launched immediately to ensure the best chance of success. Delays would mean the loss of good summer weather, complicating any landings undertaken in the autumn. Moreover, Germany had to defeat Britain as quickly as possible because of the ever-present threat posed by the Soviet Union. A long war may well have encouraged US entry sooner rather than later, whereas it would be too late for the United States to make any difference in the event of a German invasion.

Von Manstein also addresses the assertion that Hitler thought only in terms of war on the European continent and failed to grasp the importance of sea power and the need to attack British interests in the Mediterranean. In his view, loss of the Mediterranean would not have been a deadly blow to Britain, even allowing for the loss of Gibraltar and Malta and access to the Middle East. Von Manstein argues that trying to achieve a decisive solution in the Mediterranean would have had negative consequences for Germany. If Germany had made the Mediterranean the center—the *Schwerpunkt*—of its operations, Britain could have been defeated. But if Spain and Portugal refused to permit German troops access to Gibraltar and had to be subjugated by force, this would have required a permanent German presence, adversely affecting Germany's position relative to South America and the United States. A German presence in the Middle East would have exacerbated relations with the Soviet Union. Von Manstein also maintains that conquest of the Mediterranean would have required vast amounts of troops,

and “the temptation for the Soviet Union to get involved in the war against Germany would have risen extraordinarily.”<sup>3</sup> A major German commitment in the Mediterranean would have repeated the mistake made by Napoleon, tying down large forces. In any case, a campaign in the Mediterranean constituted a deviation from the main task: the invasion of Britain, the motherland, herself.

The main conclusion drawn by von Manstein is that an invasion of Britain, assuming it had a chance of success, was the right solution. After the Dunkirk evacuations, the British were in disarray, and this worked in the Germans’ favor in the summer of 1940. The capture or destruction of the BEF would have had profound military and political consequences. First, the loss of so many men—as well as the equipment—would have seriously weakened not just the defense of Britain but also large-scale operations in North Africa. Second, it may have brought down the Churchill government and led to serious consideration of Hitler’s overtures for a deal. Regardless of the specific outcomes, the loss of the BEF would have been a deadly blow to Britain. The failure to either capture or destroy the BEF—both entirely possible—was Hitler’s, and it had far-reaching consequences for the outcome of World War II.

Von Manstein cites two factors as critical for any invasion of Britain. First, the invasion had to be launched as soon as possible to derive maximum advantage from Britain’s weak defenses. Second, the effectiveness of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Navy had to be reduced “to a sufficient level” for the duration of the operation.<sup>4</sup> In other words, total destruction of the RAF was not required; rather, its impact and interference had to be reduced only enough to allow the invasion to occur. Deploying the Luftwaffe in the hopes of destroying the RAF before attempting a landing was, von Manstein argues, an error. The German air attack played to British strengths. The RAF was able to concentrate its entire fighter arm, backed up by a superior command and control system (including radar), on defeating the Luftwaffe. It was unencumbered by the need to attack German shipping or German troops on the bridgeheads or to provide support to British troops on the ground. Had the Luftwaffe attacks been part of an invasion with airborne troops, beach landings, and lodgment battles, the RAF would not have been able to concentrate solely on defeating the Luftwaffe. Its efforts would have been dissipated by the necessity of dealing with all the other facets of the invasion.

The Luftwaffe’s attempt to defeat the RAF alone marked a significant

departure from the all-arms concept of Blitzkrieg—a simultaneous assault in the air and on land. The Germans envisaged a seaborne landing after a successful air battle, a one-dimensional attack that lacked the concentrated violence of an all-arms assault, the defining feature of Blitzkrieg. Moreover, since the RAF bore the brunt of the Luftwaffe's attack, the British had time to improve their land defenses and recover their physical and psychological balance after the evacuation from Dunkirk. No such reorganization would have been possible had the British army been thrown into the battle immediately after Dunkirk. In von Manstein's view, even if the invasion had not succeeded, the losses could have been made good. The real damage would have been political, and it would have been considerable. Conversely, the failure to deal with Britain carried enormous long-term risks, since it facilitated the concentration of military, economic, and political forces, which ultimately destroyed the Third Reich.

### **Heinz Guderian and the Development of German Armored Warfare Doctrine**

The so-called tanks were first deployed by the British on the western front in World War I, yet it was a German officer, Heinz Guderian, who went on to formulate and test a doctrine of armored warfare that had devastating consequences for the Poles in 1939, the Anglo-French armies in 1940, and the Red Army in 1941. The new armored warfare doctrine pioneered by Guderian and fully grasped by von Manstein and Hitler placed certain demands on commanders that were appreciated by the Germans but not properly understood or even accepted by the Anglo-French and Red armies. Its armored warfare doctrine may be the single most important element in Germany's success in the east.

The Treaty of Versailles proscribed the raising of armored units in the post-World War I German army. Yet this did not prevent enlightened officers such as Guderian and others from studying and developing the theoretical foundations that could lead, at some point in the future, to the formation of armored forces. In fact, in the decade after Versailles, this prohibition may have assisted in the development of German armored forces because officers like Guderian had to concentrate on the theoretical aspects of the armored weapon before any major practical measures could be implemented. Thus, by the time Hitler came to power in 1933, theoretical foundations had been laid based on a thorough study of the best available experience, the last two years of World War I, and the work of pioneers in the field, such as Major