



The Viaz'ma Catastrophe, 1941: The Red Army's Disastrous Stand against Operation Typhoon

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Nominated for the NYMAS Arthur Goodzeit Book Award 2013 This book describes one of the most terrible tragedies of the Second World War and the events preceding it. The horrible miscalculations made by the Stavka of the Soviet Supreme High Command and the Front commands led in October 1941 to the deaths and imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of their own people. Until recently, the magnitude of the defeats suffered by the Red Army at Viaz'ma and Briansk were simply kept hushed up. For the first time, in this book a full picture of the combat operations that led to this tragedy are laid out in detail, using previously unknown or little-used documents. The author was driven to write this book after his long years of fruitless search to learn what happened to his father Colonel N.I. Lopukhovsky, the commander of the 120th Howitzer Artillery Regiment, who disappeared together with his unit in the maelstrom of Operation Typhoon. He became determined to break the official silence surrounding the military disaster on the approaches to Moscow in the autumn of 1941. In the present edition, the author additionally introduces documents from German military archives, which will doubtlessly interest not only scholars, but also students of the Eastern Front of the Second World War. Lopukhovsky substantiates his position on the matter of the true extent of the losses of the Red Army in men and equipment, which greatly exceeded the official data. In the Epilogue, he briefly discusses the searches he has conducted with the aim of revealing the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Soviet soldiers, who to this point have been listed among the missing-in-action - including his own father. The narrative is enhanced by numerous photographs, color maps and tables. Lev Nikolaevich Lopukhovsky graduated from the prestigious Frunze Military Academy in 1962 and spent the next ten years serving in the Soviet Union's Strategic Rocket forces, rising to the rank of colonel and a regiment commander, before transferring to a teaching position in the Frunze Military Academy in 1972 due to health reasons. Lopukhovsky is a professor with the Russian Federation's Academy of Military Sciences (2008), and has been a member of Russia's Union of Journalists since 2004. Since 1989 he has been engaged in the search for those defenders of the Fatherland who went missing-in-action in the Second World War, including his own father Colonel N.I. Lopukhovsky, who is now known to have been killed while breaking out of encirclement in October 1941. Motivated by his father's disappearance, he had previously taken up the intense study of the Viaz'ma defensive operation and wrote the initial manuscript of the present book. In 1980 this manuscript was rejected by military censors, because it contradicted official views. Lopukhovsky is the author of several other books about the war, including *Prokhorovka bez grifa sekretnosti* [Prokhorovka without the seal of secrecy] (2005), *Pervye dni voyny* [First days of the war] (2007) and is the co-author of *Iiun' 1941: Zaprogrammirovannoe porazhenie* [June 1941: A Programmed Defeat] (2010). For his active search work, he was awarded the civilian Order of the Silver Star. Stuart Britton is a freelance translator and editor residing in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He has been responsible for making a growing number of Russian titles available to readers of the English language, consisting primarily of memoirs by Red Army veterans and recent historical research concerning the Eastern Front of the Second World War and Soviet air operations in the Korean War. Notable recent titles include Valeriy Zamulin's award-winning 'Demolishing the Myth: The Tank Battle at Prokhorovka, Kursk, July 1943: An Operational Narrative ' (Helion, 2011), Boris Gorbachevsky's 'Through the Maelstrom: A Red Army Soldier's War on the Eastern Front 1942-45' (University Press of Kansas, 2008) and Yuri Sutiagin's and Igor Seidov's 'MiG Menace Over Korea: The Story of Soviet Fighter Ace Nikolai Sutiagin' (Pen & Sword Aviation, 2009). Future books will include Svetlana Gerasimova's analysis of the prolonged and savage fighting against Army Group Center in

1942-43 to liberate the city of Rzhev, and more of Igor Seidov's studies of the Soviet side of the air war in Korea, 1951-1953.

REVIEWS

"Viaz'ma was the nadir of the Red Army's performance during Operation Barbarossa. Lopukhovsky's painstaking research in hitherto unavailable archival sources exposes weaknesses from the high command to the rifle platoons. The author demonstrates as well the structural weaknesses that underlay the USSR's military shortcomings, and he memorializes the soldiers whose blood paid for errors too long obscured by neglect and cover-ups." Dennis Showalter, Colorado College, author of *Armor and Blood: The Battle of Kursk, The Turning Point of World War II* "Lopukhovsky's account of the battle of Viaz'ma is masterful. The sheer detail and expert analysis reflects the 41 years he spent researching and writing it." David Stahel, author of *Operation Typhoon: Hitler's March on Moscow, October 1941 and Kiev 1941*. "The level of detail is staggering and the accompanying maps and tables add a degree of clarity rarely enjoyed in a book of this complexity. Stuart Britton who has undertaken the translation of this book from its original Russian is to be commended for another outstanding endeavour... an outstanding book and a highly recommended addition to those seeking to expand their understanding of the challenges that the Soviet's struggled with in trying to contain the German Typhoon of 1941. It is a sobering and humbling rendition of the sacrifice of the Russian soldier and the dysfunction of their leadership." *Global War Studies* "This gem of a book, a detailed and accurate exposé of what actually took place at Viaz'ma, is the product of a prolonged struggle to overcome Soviet censorship. The results is a graphic, balanced, accurate, and sometimes poignant study of the long-concealed October tragedy at Viaz'ma ... Finally provides essential details about one of the longest lasting blank chapters in the record of the 20th century's most brutal and costly war. It is a must read for those interested in the Soviet-German War, in particular, and military history in general." "... a remarkable work which took the author more than forty years to research and write ... Until there are more archival materials made available, Lopukhovsky's exhaustive study will remain the final word on the Soviet experience at Viaz'ma." *War in History* *The Russian Review*

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