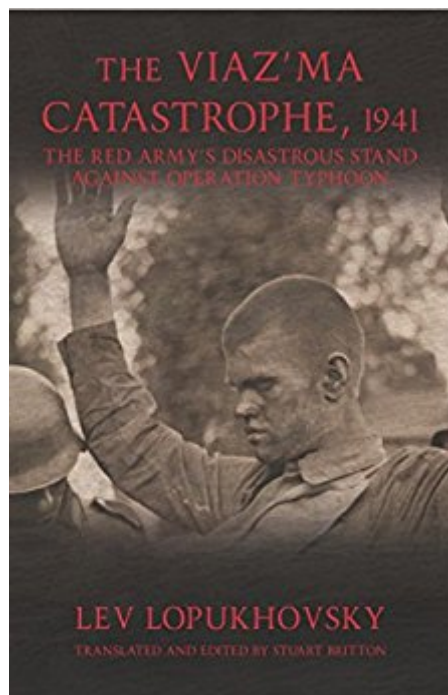




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# **The Viaz'ma Catastrophe, 1941: The Red Army's Disastrous Stand Against Operation Typhoon**



## Synopsis

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 liun' 1941: Zaprogrammirovannoe porazhenie [June 1941: A Programmed Defeat] (2010). For his active

search work, he was awarded the civilian Order of the Silver Star.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Great Eastern Front history

Very thorough examination of these historical events. Lots of details most people wouldn't be aware of and probably many presented for the first time. Intense narrative that never flags and keeps up the reader's interest.

This is a remarkable though select study of the initial battles of Operation Typhoon. Though demanding and requiring your full attention, an enthusiast could read this operational treasure-trove over and over and never tire of it. It was intriguing but also challenging to read about the same engagement from different perspectives; usually two sometimes three different viewpoints discussed. The commentary and analysis is superb and will give the reader a better understanding of the campaign. Though this book covers both sides, it is Russian-centric and it spends more time

discussing Soviet plans, assaults and maneuvers than on the German perspective. This very sentiment was first expressed nearly two years ago when describing "Demolishing the Myth" by Valeriy Zamulin but it also exactly describes "The Viazma Catastrophe, 1941" for the two books and authors have many comparable attributes: both authors spent many years researching, verifying material and writing their books; both researchers had access to material not readily available to the public; both authors have a firm grasp of tactics and can express battlefield operations succinctly as well as analyze the results of those battlefield actions. Both authors can also empathize with the key commanders and can describe accurately the thoughts and motives of those commanders as they prosecute the battle; they also have the ability to hunt down and assemble material from different sources describing the same event or happenstance, allowing the reader to have a more well rounded experience. Both books were also translated by the same person, Stuart Britton, and he did a marvelous job of converting a complex Russian text into an enjoyable, understandable English narrative. The book begins not in October but on June 22nd with the invasion of the Soviet Union. This brief overview describes the strategic advantages the Germans had at the beginning and garnered over the first few days of the invasion. It also covers the unpreparedness of the Red army and its front line defenses as well as the inability to cope with the scale and voracity of the attack all along the line, even if they were better prepared. Coverage then jumps to August where the Soviets begin to slow the Germans along the Dukhovshchina-Elnia line with a number of fanatical counter-attacks, culminating in reducing the Elnia salient. With the stage set, Chapter three begins the actual coverage of Operation Typhoon when Guderian's 2nd PzG launches in the last days of September in the general northeast direction between Bryansk and Orel against the tired Bryansk Front commanded by General Eremenko. In the opening pages of this chapter, the disposition of enemy forces are disclosed with intended objectives enumerated. Colonel Lopukhovsky, using primary records of both sides then recreates the move by move process by which German armored spearheads smash through Soviet lines, foiling every major attempt of Eremenko in stopping the blitzkrieg. An explanation is provided for practically every decision and order covered. This format is seen throughout the entire book. The coverage is so good, so personal that you get a true feeling how desperate Eremenko felt when he had to deliver a situation report to Stalin, lying to save himself from execution. Interjecting excerpts from war and personal diaries, orders, communiques and phone conversations the author supports his commentary as well as making the story more interesting. This empathy lasts throughout the remaining nearly 350 pages of the campaign as the pockets at Viazma and Bryansk are erected and the trapped men fight fanatically for their survival. It was in a Viazma pocket that the author lost his dad and was the primary motive for researching this

campaign; this campaign was very personal to the author and it shows. In the closing pages of the book a discussion is made of the human costs of the initial weeks of this campaign to the Soviets. The calculations are dizzying and the results are not 100% conclusive but latest estimates are that even with as many as 200,000 soldiers avoiding entrapment that approximately 900,000 Soviets were killed, wounded or imprisoned. German casualties are then discussed; while the numbers are much less, they're still considerable. The author then extends his thinking on how these huge losses impacted the fighting closer to Moscow in November and how the Soviets were able to go on the offensive in early December. In addition to the excellent narrative, the author provides an excellent map set that includes 19 well chosen tactical color maps that are chronologically displayed. The first maps include the difficult fighting along the Smolensk line of August and the counter-attack of the Elnia salient. The remaining maps cover the key attack sectors of Operation Typhoon through mid October. The maps support the text well and add considerably to the overall value of the book. The author includes map pointers to allow the reader to quickly find the right map though this feature could have been more liberally used. I personally would have liked to have seen one additional map. It would be a topographical map that was heavily populated with towns and villages; this map would aid the reader in following the battle action better when the combatants were fighting through small towns. There were a few instances where the capture of small towns were discussed but couldn't be followed easily because they were missing from the maps. I admit my obsession to this mapping feature; it shouldn't be a major problem for most readers. Besides the maps a photo gallery of nearly 60 photos shows key officers as well as some battle scenes. Another useful feature in addition to the seven tables running throughout the narrative is a 20 part Appendix that includes comparative strengths of different categories, various losses sustained as well as key documents and orders pertinent to this campaign. There is also a German Unit Organization description but no Order of Battle. The book closes with a competent Notes Section, Bibliography and Index. For anybody who likes to read a detailed operational study on the order of a Glantz or Zamulin presentation then this book should definitely be considered. In fact this book would be the perfect extension to David Glantz's two volume set, "Barbarossa Derailed" for it takes up where Barbarossa ends. It's a great read, highly detailed and highly recommended.

From the short interval of time I have to read some of this history, I have found it to be as good a historical record of the confusion and tragedy of war that I have ever read. Some of the details that I have noticed, the lack of ammunition, POL shortages, communications confusion seem to tie to a relationship to the book, "The Chief Culprit," authored by Viktor Suvorov, that I recently purchased

from .Without further reading, I have noticed the depth of the research so far is excellent, maps adequate enough for the study. For me to comment further at this moment without completing the entire book would not do justice to the work of the author and the years of what would appear to be hard, at times, frustrating footwork.

Recommended for people who have a good familiarity with the Eastern Front of WWII. Definitely not for general readers. No radical reevaluation for Western readers -- Lopukhovsky is primarily reacting to Soviet historiography -- but gives a detailed account at both high and low levels of what the collapse of a major pocket in 1941 looked like.

great

not well written; I expected a lot more from this book but did not get it

Once i got passed the nonstandard wording the translator used, I found the book interesting since it covered a part of the war on the Eastern Front not very well covered in other books. I wish I could read Russian, i feel something was lost in the translation of the book. I would recommend any student of the Great Patriotic War, the Eastern Front to read this book, some interesting in sites

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