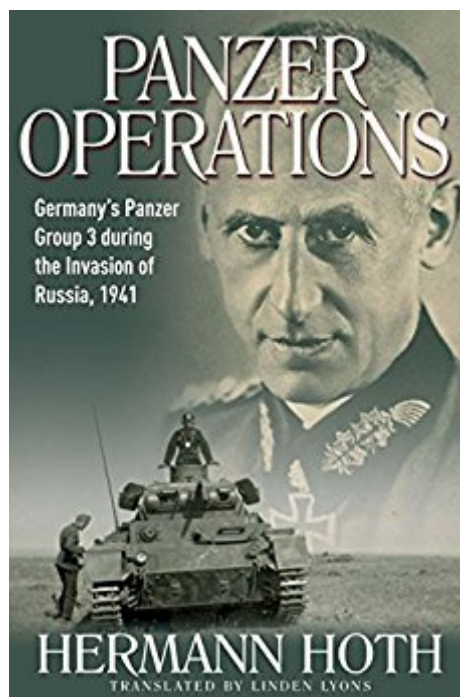




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Panzer Operations: Germany's Panzer Group 3 During The Invasion Of Russia, 1941 (Die Wehrmacht Im Kampf)



Synopsis

This book, originally published in German in 1956, has now been translated into English, unveiling a wealth of both experiences and analysis about Operation Barbarossa, perhaps the most important military campaign of the 20th century. Hermann Hoth led Germany's 3rd Panzer Group in Army Group Center in tandem with Guderian's 2nd Group during the invasion of the Soviet Union, and together those two daring panzer commanders achieved a series of astounding victories, encircling entire Russian armies at Minsk, Smolensk, and Vyazma, all the way up to the very gates of Moscow. This work begins with Hoth discussing the use of nuclear weapons in future conflicts. This cool-headed post-war reflection, from one of Nazi Germany's top panzer commanders, is rare enough. But then Hoth dives into his exact command decisions during Barbarossa—still the largest continental offensive ever undertaken—to reveal new insights into how Germany could, and in his view should, have succeeded in the campaign. Hoth critically analyses the origin, development, and objective of the plan against Russia, and presents the situations confronted, the decisions taken, and the mistakes made by the army's leadership, as the new form of mobile warfare startled not only the Soviets on the receiving end but the German leadership itself, which failed to provide support infrastructure for their panzer arm's breakthroughs. Hoth sheds light on the decisive and ever-escalating struggle between Hitler and his military advisers on the question whether, after the Dnieper and the Dvina had been reached, to adhere to the original idea of capturing Moscow. Hitler's momentous decision to divert forces to Kiev and the south only came in late August 1941. He then finally considers in detail whether the Germans, after obliterating the remaining Russian armies facing Army Group Center in Operation Typhoon, could still hope for the occupation of the Russian capital that fall. Hoth concludes his study with several lessons for the offensive use of armored formations in the future. His firsthand analysis, here published for the first time in English, will be vital reading for every student of World War II.

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Customer Reviews

“Panzer operations” is a very competent, candid and forthright discussion of the 3rd Panzer Group early battles in Operation Barbarossa seen from the eyes of his daring commander. The book is very clearly written and easy to read and it’s great to see that this book is available again. I thought fairly highly of this book (originally published in 1956!), because it allowed me to see the operational events of a highly decorated panzer commander that I knew so little about. Though preferring a little greater depth to these operations, this is still a respectable book and is still recommended. In chapter 1 (Introduction), the author begins his odyssey with explaining German war doctrine and the influence of the then new weapon – nuclear bomb – over the operations of armored units. In the next chapter (Background, 28 pages) general Hoth introduces us to the origins of the operational plan “Barbarossa”. He describes how German general staff “was confronted with a task of the kind that it had not dealt with for 25 years” and shows relevant deployment orders, estimates, assessments of the terrain and political situation, etc. He then proceeds in the next chapters (3-9) to the major battles carried out by his Panzer Group and some adjacent units in the summer of 1941 – Minsk, Smolensk Vyazma, etc. In the “Conclusion” chapter the author tried, briefly, to explain the reasons for the failure of the campaign against Russia in 1941. Among the issues mentioned are the underestimation of the Russian political-strategic resistance, Hitler’s interference in the conduct of the operations and the difference between

Hitler's and Army war objectives. The author also concentrated on 13 theories and principles for the operational use of panzers related to the conditions of 1941. In the final chapter (the "Epilogue", written by Linden Lyons, the translator of the book) some interesting aspects of Hoth's career after battle of Vyazma are provided. For the rest of the book, in 12 appendixes, the author showed a series of helpful documents (deployment orders, directives, assessments, etc). There were 16 maps at the beginning of the book that are helpful and added to the narrative. The maps are poorly located. The maps should have been placed only in the chapters that actually discuss the battle. As it is, when you are reading about a battle you have to flip back several pages to find the relevant map. There is a small gallery of 14 b&w photos included showing Hoth, Guderian, other German military leaders and panzers in action. No index is provided and an extensive notes Section closes out the book. Finally, in writing this book, the author relies on published books and unpublished manuscripts mentioned in a 3-page bibliography. I highly recommend this work to any student of WW II.

"Panzer Operations: Germany's Panzer Group 3 during the Invasion of Russia, 1941" by Gen. Hermann Hoth (April 2015), which was originally published in German in 1956. As the subtitle of this book states, the battlefield scope of this book focuses on Panzer Group 3 during its invasion of Russia between June-Oct. 1941, although the author does review the "Big Picture" of the overall invasion.. Although this book totals 215 pages, 10% of the book is devoted to appendices & bibliography. The author devotes 6 pages to his thoughts regarding the viability of tanks during a possible nuclear war in Europe -- which really don't add much to this book. Fortunately, 16 pages are of nice campaign maps. The author spends several pages analyzing the differences between "operational" versus "strategic" goals versus "tactics" (p.28) and how such thoughts were contemplated by Clausewitz versus Scharnhorst, and how such thoughts influenced the German military mind during the 1870s, WWI, and Hitler. As the author noted: "This book does not purport to be a definitive account of the military history of the Russian campaign" (p.7) ... "In the first few months of the Russian campaign, [the author's] Panzer Group 3 was the middlemost of the three northern German panzer groups". The author noted: "The pros and cons of an attack against Russia are thoroughly described elsewhere" (p.39), but he does devote a couple of pages reviewing how the German campaigns against England (Operation Sealord), and in the Balkans, influenced Hitler's time-schedule in invading Russia (Operation Barbarossa). Hence, with all of the author's prior-to-battle analysis, his discussion regarding his actual invasion and initial battles inside Russia are reduced to barely 80 pages -- but the author's prior-to-battle reflection is still very useful in

understanding some of the battle-preparation thoughts of Hitler's staff as they developed the Russia-invasion plans -- and how they debated how much initial emphasis should be devoted to destroying Russian military units before turning attention to capturing political targets (Moscow vs. Leningrad). As a graduate of the U.S. Army's "Command & General Staff College" myself, it was insightful that the author high-lighted some of the invasion problems: roads were more paved in northwestern Russia than in the south, different terrains (forests versus marshlands) constricted armour-column traffic routes, could bridges be secured before the Russians could destroy them?, where were Russian military units deployed?, how many Russian units were mech verses horse-drawn?, how soon would new and stronger Russian tanks replace weaker under-armed tanks?, how the lack of railroad lines impeded troop advancement?, etc. The author noted how German generals debated whether or not to allow panzer units to rapidly advance -- as slower-moving supporting units might have to be left behind and play a slow catch-up (p.73). No need here to recount how the author, Gen. Hoth, maneuvered his Panzer Group 3 during the invasion, except to note that he provided nice details as to how he conducted his maneuvers in advancing and encircling Russian units. He noted disputes between German military commanders, as how some Russian units escaped (temporarily) when Gen. Guderian decided to capture terrain heights to deprive them from the enemy (p.113). Gen. Hoth also discussed how campaigns changed (usually for the worse) as Hitler changed his mind as to how his units should be deployed within Russia -- even by mid-July (barely 30 days into the invasion). Besides discussing his own maneuvers, Gen. Hoth also describes how adjacent units were also affected by changes from Hitler's directives. Gen. Hoth limits his book to essentially operational issues, he doesn't comment upon whether or not any of his units assisted in the rounding up of Jews or punishment of captured Russian guerrilla-partisans. I highly recommend this very informative book. [A companion book regarding the harsh treatment of captured Jews and partisans during the 1941 invasion by the German XXXIII Corps is: "A German General on the Eastern Front" by Johannes Hutter -- being a limited history of German Gen. Gotthard Heinrici between 1941-42.]

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