Tearing the Guts Out of the Wehrmacht: A Re-Examination of the Russo-German War

Randall Wells, Jr.

Date
10-2018

Department
College of Arts and Sciences

Degree
Master of Arts in History - Comprehensive (MA)

Chair
Carey M. Roberts

Keywords
Eastern Front, Russo-German War, WWII

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | History | Military History

Recommended Citation

Abstract
Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Hitler’s plan to annihilate Germany’s Eastern neighbor and populate the vast Russian expanse with his own people was as ambitious as it was adventuristic. Although it began successful, the Russo-German War quickly devolved into a quagmire as Russian troops outfought their German opponent and beat them back to Berlin. Contrary to prevailing historiography, the Wehrmacht’s loss on the Eastern Front cannot be solely attributed to a failure to equip German troops with proper winter clothing, an inadequate logistics network or Hitler’s interference in military decisions. For an army that had enjoyed rapid gains during late 1930s and 1940, only an enhanced tactical revolution, superior armor and a more aggressive martial ethos explains how the vaunted German military suffered ignominious defeat at the hands of what many consider a third-rate adversary.

Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Hitler’s plan to annihilate Germany’s Eastern neighbor and populate the vast Russian expanse with his own people was as ambitious as it was adventuristic. Although it began successful, the Russo-German War quickly devolved into a quagmire as Russian troops outfought their German opponent and beat them back to Berlin. Contrary to prevailing historiography, the Wehrmacht’s loss on the Eastern Front cannot be solely attributed to a failure to equip German troops with proper winter clothing, an inadequate logistics network or Hitler’s interference in military decisions. For an army that had enjoyed rapid gains during late 1930s and 1940, only an enhanced tactical revolution, superior armor and a more aggressive martial ethos explains how the vaunted German military suffered ignominious defeat at the hands of what many consider a third-rate adversary.

Victory over Nazi Germany. The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People 1941 - 1945. http://milresource.ru. • On September 27, 1944, British Prime Minister Churchill wrote to Stalin: “I shall take the occasion to repeat tomorrow in the House of Commons what I have said before, that it is the Russian Army that tore the guts out of the German military machine and is at the present moment holding by far the larger portion of the enemy on its front”. Of the 13.6 million German soldiers who were killed, wounded or captured during the Second World War, 10 million ended their military careers on the eastern front. Peter Kuznick, Associate Professor of History at American University, similarly notes, at 5:44 in the following video, “Throughout most of World War II, the United States and the British were fighting 10 German divisions combined. The Soviets were fighting 200.” The historical reality of World War II is that the USSR overwhelmingly defeated the Nazis. Even the colonialist, racist, anti-communist Churchill had to admit to this of the Russian Soviet Armies. —Winston Churchill, Speech in the House of Commons, 2 August 1944, "War Situation". and.