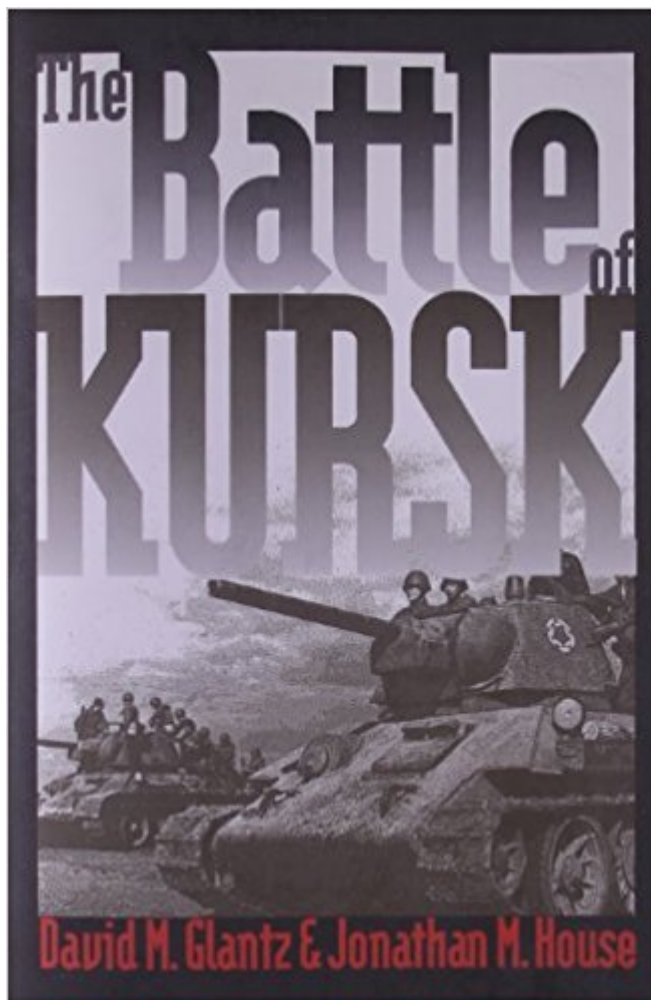


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# The Battle Of Kursk



## Synopsis

Immense in scope, ferocious in nature, and epic in consequence, the Battle of Kursk witnessed (at Prokhorovka) one of the largest tank engagements in world history and led to staggering lossesâincluding nearly 200,000 Soviet and 50,000 German casualtiesâwithin the first ten days of fighting. Going well beyond all previous accounts, David Glantz and Jonathan House now offer the definitive work on arguably the greatest battle of World War II. Drawing on both German and Soviet sources, Glantz and House separate myth from fact to show what really happened at Kursk and how it affected the outcome of the war. Their access to newly released Soviet archival material adds unprecedented detail to what is known about this legendary conflict, enabling them to reconstruct events from both perspectives and describe combat down to the tactical level. The Battle of Kursk takes readers behind Soviet lines for the first time to discover what the Red Army knew about the plans for Hitler's offensive (Operation Citadel), relive tank warfare and hand-to-hand combat, and learn how the tide of battle turned. Its vivid portrayals of fighting in all critical sectors place the famous tank battle in its proper context. Prokhorovka here is not a well-organized set piece but a confused series of engagements and hasty attacks, with each side committing its forces piecemeal. Glantz and House's fresh interpretations demolish many of the myths that suggest Hitler might have triumphed if Operation Citadel had been conducted differently. Their account is the first to provide accurate figures of combat strengths and losses, and it includes 32 maps that clarify troop and tank movements. Shrouded in obscurity and speculation for more than half a century, the Battle of Kursk finally gets its due in this dramatic retelling of the confrontation that marked the turning point of the war on the Eastern Front and brought Hitler's blitzkrieg to a crashing halt.

## Book Information

Series: Modern War Studies

Paperback: 485 pages

Publisher: Univ Pr of Kansas; Sixth Printing edition (October 29, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0700613358

ISBN-13: 978-0700613359

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 5.8 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 59 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #170,596 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > History > Military >

Weapons & Warfare > Conventional > Armored Vehicles #442 in Books > History > Asia > Russia #457 in Books > History > Europe > Germany

## Customer Reviews

• "An outstanding work on one of the most significant battles of World War II." • "Journal of Military History" • A good read. Looks at the traditional approach to Kursk and provides another well-founded interpretation of the battle. • "Parameters" • The definitive analysis of Kursk. Ranks among the decade's most distinguished works of military history. • "Dennis Showalter in the History Book Club Review" • The most detailed, authoritative, and thorough analysis of the massive battle that led to the final victory of the Red Army over the Germans. This outstanding book deserves the highest praise. • "Malcolm Mackintosh, author of Juggernaut: A History of Soviet Armed Forces" • The Battle of Kursk combines the authors' encyclopedic knowledge of their subject with a panoramic narrative of military operations to challenge the myths of Kursk. .... Drawing heavily upon hitherto classified Soviet material, as well as German sources, the work is both original and revisionist, making it a major contribution to our understanding of one of the most important operations of the Second World War." • "John Erickson, author of The Road to Stalingrad" • At last we have an account of the battle of Kursk from the Soviet perspective. And what an account! It is meticulously researched, persuasively argued, full of new and important findings, and written with verve and pathos. This is operational history at its best." • "Joel S. A. Hayward, author of Stopped at Stalingrad"

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It was mid-summer, 1943, on the Russian steppe. Wheat was again growing high there, as it has for thousands of years. Kursk is a provincial capital on the steppe, 450 km south of Moscow. The land is relatively flat, divided by small rivers. It is "ideal" country for tanks. And in that summer, a couple million men, and between 5,000 and 10,000 tanks slugged it out, in one of the most decisive battles in history, on the Russian-German front, in World War II. The front was a continuous line from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Envision a backwards "S" in that line, with the top half being a German salient extending eastward, centered on the town of Orel. And the bottom half being a Russian salient extending westward, centered on the town of Kursk. The Germans had lost another very decisive battle the previous winter, when the Sixth Army was decimated, surrounded and surrendered at Stalingrad. Nonetheless, the Germans intended to go on the offensive again, picking the obvious target of the Kursk salient, and via a pincer attack from the north and the south, surround and annihilate the Russian troops within. The problem for the German was that the Russians realized it was an obvious target, and therefore they were dug in and waiting. Glantz and House have written what will almost certainly always be the definitive account of that battle. The first chapter summarizes the initial two years of war on the Eastern front. This is followed by a description and analysis of the respective strengths of the two sides, in terms of men and material, and there are reasonable sketches of the commanding generals. In particular, the models of the various tanks are described in detail. As a simplification, the Germans had the better tanks, but fewer of them; the Russians had out-produced the Germans, with a standardized, but somewhat inferior tank. Quantity over Quality. General Heinz Guderian, who had once famously stood on a knoll and could see the onion domes in Moscow, way too late in the fall of 1941, is considered to be the "father of the blitzkrieg." Before Kursk, this tactic had a 100% success rate. But the Russians had determined a way to beat it, placing all the troops in the salient in special training so they would not be terrorized by a tank attack. Dig in, stay camouflaged, wait for the tanks to pass, and then attack, at close range, from the side and rear, terrorizing the tankers. The main battle extended for 9 days, July 5-14. There are 32 full page maps that are extremely useful in visualizing the ebb and flow of the battle lines. The battle is told in excruciating detail, I would argue TOO excruciating. There is a surfeit of names: unit commanders and their numerical designations. Far too many for the "general reader" and almost certainly, the "aficionado" as well. I can imagine the test on this book, at some war college, necessitating much proverbial midnight oil. And of the total of 450 pages, almost 200 are various appendixes. It is possible, however, to read for the essential action. Despite all the details, what is missing completely is the voice of the "common" soldier. No interviews. No diaries. No memoirs referenced. If you are interested in their voice, I'd highly recommend the DVD *War of*

the Century - When Hitler Fought Stalin" which contains interviews of the ordinary soldier of this war, now when they are in their 70's and 80's. I was in a tank unit in Vietnam, the 1/69th Armor. 54 tanks, if we could keep them all running. And they were never all in the same place together. The thought of thousands of tanks together, in battle, tank against tank, on the steppes around Kursk, stirred the imagination so much that my family and I drove to Kursk, in July, 1990. There is a museum, dedicated to the battle, in the town, with enormous maps of the battle. For an hour, we were the only ones there. What a contrast to Normandy. For the "war buff," or the "educated reader" who wants to know why things are the way they are, this is an important read, marred by excessive names and the lack of the common soldier. 4-stars.

The Battle of Kursk. David Glantz and Jonathan House. In November of 1942, Winston Churchill said, "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning. "Henceforth Hitler's Nazis will meet equally well armed, and perhaps better armed troops." No truer, or more prescient words have been spoken in regard to the changing tides in warfare. If not Stalingrad, then Operation Citadel, the German pincers attack on the Kursk salient during July of 1943, was the beginning of the end for the Third Reich. David Glantz and Jonathan House have written the definitive volume of this monumental battle. With some hesitation, I give the book five stars as the Glantz and House work has comprehensively documented the battle, which though a tactical stalemate, ended German pretensions for strategic victory as the Germans were on their heels the remainder of the war in the East. The authors use extensive German and Soviet documentation for The Battle of Kursk. He provides background of the war, geography, opposing military leaders (especially Soviet), and dovetails divisional records and personal accounts as he weaves this story of the meat grinder on the Russian front. I personally appreciated the "anglicizing" of Soviet accounts. All too often in the past, I have read accounts where translations were literally word for word and led to rather balky reading. Though maps are almost always an Achilles heel in this type of book, thirty two black and white maps are provided for the reader, some of which are topographical. Perhaps more a matter of my older eyes, but there was an awful lot of searching and flipping back and forth before I became comfortable with what was going on with who vs who on a daily basis. For basic geography, I'd recommend to new readers of this book spend some time with map 3 on page 24, and if your eyes dictate bifocals, a magnifying glass may prove helpful. One hundred and sixty seven pages of notes and a bibliography follow the battle and its aftermath, as well as an extensive index. All the information is available for a reader/historian for the purpose of cross referencing. Many superb reviews have preceded mine, and on the merits of the book, I don't

think I can shed any more light than other reviewers have already done. Small caveats will exist in any book of this nature. Referring to the German tank buster Henschel 129 as the Henschel 109 is one of these. Big whoop. The authors conclusion, however, may be open to a bit more debate. If Kursk had not happened, as some German generals had put forth earlier in the book, why was any offensive on the Eastern front necessary, would it have made any differences in future conduct of the war? Political reasons, and "pinching off the Kursk salient would have shortened German defensive lines, thus freeing men and equipment for increasingly short supply of reserves. Or, if the offensive would have been carried out in April, as some German generals believe, the chances for success would have been greater. A curious anomaly occurs on pages 257 and 261. General Mellenthin, of the 48th Panzer Corps, who was in favor of an an early attack writes,"As part of the Fourth Panzer Army, the 48th Panzer Corps was to be the spearhead of the main drive from the south. I welcomed the idea, for our hardenedand experienced panzer divisionshad suffered little in the recent thrust on Kharkov, and were fit and ready for another battle as soon as the state of the ground would permit us to move." Yet, on page 261 the authors state that ,"The panzer divisions of the XXXXVIII Panzer Corps, for example, often counted fewer than twenty tanks each..." This is in regard to late March. I found this curious, that the authors use the Von Mellenthin quote in regard to the 48th Panzer Corps state of readiness, yet contradict him, without mentioning the earlier Von Mellenthin quote. Who was correct? The concept of a German mobile defense is discussed. Would it have been enough to create stalemate on the Russian front? Glantz and House seem to think not, as the concept of mobile defense was new, and he perceives it to be more of an after-war reflection of German generals. But when one looks at casualty and equipment loss figures (those dealing with Operation Citadel and the ensuing Soviet counter attacks, soviet losses exceeded German losses by a 5:1 ratio), one wonders if the Germans had not bled themselves white throwing themselves against prepared Soviet positions, could they not have done the same to the soviets if the mobile reserves were present? Ahhh the stuff of discussion and debate. The bottom line, the Soviet army had the manpower and equipment advantage to sustain such losses, the Germans, even with the technical superiority of their weaponry did not. This was a superb book that I would highly recommend to anybody interested in the clash between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. As an ultimate compliment to the authors based on my impression on the thoroughness of "The Battle of Kursk, I have every intention of reading the Glantz/House trilogy on the Battle of Stalingrad.

A well documented, thoroughly researched rendering of arguably WWII's most important battle, that literally broke the spine of the Wehrmacht in terms of both, huge strategic miscalculation, and

immense material loss. After this turning point Germany's defeat became just a matter of time. The authors, while offering all the chronological and tactical (sometimes excessive) details, manage to put this battle in the historic perspective it deserves. A MUST READ for anyone seriously interested in the WWII.

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