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When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler

J.J. O'Rourke

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constitution, he states that "the Soviet Union appeared to be moving in the right direction and made a refreshing contrast to the rest of Europe where fascism was on the march." *Refreshing?* McCauley is apparently unaware that in the 1930s many in the West were making comparisons between the USSR and Nazi Germany. According to McCauley, following World War II, Poland and Czechoslovakia needed a powerful ally to protect them against a possible resurgent Germany, and "it was believed that the USSR fit the bill very well." *It was believed?* Soviets also initiated "democratization" in the eastern zone of Germany, created "people's democracies" throughout Eastern Europe, and introduced "reforms." Any untoward Soviet conduct in the region is described as merely "insensitive"!

Most tellingly, McCauley states that the Soviets, like the Americans in Japan, were "imposing their own agenda" in Eastern Europe. This last statement, which demonstrates a 1960s-style moral relativism, is by no means atypical. McCauley opines that "in 1947 the United States had to face the reality that there was an adversary which also had a universalist dream for mankind, and the two could not be reconciled." To McCauley, the communist vision—what led Lenin to create and Stalin to strengthen the world's first totalitarian state, imprisoning and killing millions of human beings in the process—is just another "universalist dream."

In McCauley's view, the Cold War came about largely through a U.S. misunderstanding of Moscow's "legitimate security needs," exaggerated Western views of Soviet military capabilities, and American and British attempts to turn

back the clock, too late, in Eastern Europe. The Soviets, McCauley states, really did want a "working relationship" with the United States. Unfortunately, the Americans "misread" Soviet "security interest" in Eastern Europe as (who would have thought it?) expansionism! Washington's problem was that it "never tried to see the problems from Moscow's point of view," although McCauley does admit that its sources of information were "poor." Of course they were! Washington was dealing with a totalitarian state, while "Moscow . . . was swimming in information." But remember, it was the Soviets who were misunderstood. Go figure.

McCauley is truly a historian for our politically correct times. Because the Soviet Union suffered from low self-esteem, it was the victim of a sensitivity deficit due to its background (for which it cannot be held responsible), and it was generally misunderstood with respect to its needs and feelings. The essential truth that McCauley misses is that the USSR was indeed an "evil empire." It was ultimately by treating it as such that the West won the Cold War, not by agonizing over whether we were hurting the feelings of Marxist-Leninists.

NICHOLAS DUJMOVIĆ
Sterling, Virginia

Glantz, David M., and Jonathan House.
When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1995. 414pp. \$29.95

Spahr, William J. *Zhukov: The Rise and Fall of a Great Captain*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1995. 290pp. \$14.95

Readers interested in the Second World War have had all too few trustworthy views

of it from a Soviet perspective. The reasons are familiar: excessive Soviet secrecy, byzantine political motives that periodically revised the roles and importance of the principal actors, and a tendency to downplay Soviet mistakes and the contributions of its allies. The opening up of new sources in the past few years has shed some fresh light on the Great Patriotic War, beginning the process of better understanding from the Soviet perspective. *When Titans Clashed* and *Zhukov* are two entries benefiting from increasingly accessible Soviet sources.

David Glantz and Jonathan House, former U.S. Army officers, offer in *When Titans Clashed* an operationally oriented history that should satisfy the serious reader looking for a detailed battlefield description of this colossal struggle. It is well organized, generously supported by detailed maps, tables, and an array of appendices. Glantz, founder and former director of the U.S. Army's Foreign Military Studies Office, has written extensively on the wartime operational and tactical doctrine of the Red Army. His analyses of how the Soviets learned to cope with German battlefield skill and eventually transform themselves into a formidable offensive force are among the very best available. House has also focused his studies of war at the operational and tactical level, so it is no surprise that these authors' explanation of Soviet success is overwhelmingly oriented to the military dimensions of the war.

The book is organized into three periods of war, in a way that reflects the Soviet view of the struggle. The first period, the strategic defensive, ended with the springing of the trap around the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad. The

second period was one of transition from strategic defensive to sustained strategic offensive; the third period of war began in January 1944, when a greatly weakened Wehrmacht was driven westward by one Soviet offensive punch after another. The authors do a superb job of leading the reader through the operations of each period, which is a great aid to understanding the ebb and flow of the war from the Soviet perspective.

Because they stick to military explanations, however, the authors cannot deliver all they (or their publisher) promise. The dustcover claims that the book places "the war within its wider political, economic, and social contexts," but these facets of the larger strategic picture remain largely unexplored. The subtitle, "How the Red Army Stopped Hitler," is revealing; however, a history that explored "Why the Soviets Defeated Hitler" would be of more interest to the general reader. When Clausewitz took up why Napoleon's Russian invasion was such a disaster, he wrote, "We maintain that the 1812 campaign failed because the Russian government kept its nerve and the people remained loyal and steadfast." This thesis seems as valid in explaining Soviet tenacity in 1941-1942 as it was for czarist Russia, and it might have provided a good starting point for a broader look at the entire Soviet war effort. Why was Stalin able to maintain his grip on power despite his 1939-1941 policy and strategy blunders? Why was the Soviet economy able to produce such vast quantities of war materiel despite the loss of the most valuable industrial and resource regions? Why did the people continue to endure such intense hardship for so long yet remain loyal to Stalin's regime?

The principal strength of *When Titans Clashed* is also its biggest weakness. While

the serious student of the war will find this book valuable in providing a clearer picture of the clash between these armies, the general reader may be numbed by the details (unit designations, effective strength, etc.) that appear on seemingly every page.

Zhukov: The Rise and Fall of a Great Captain is a paperback edition of William J. Spahr's 1993 biography of arguably the preeminent military figure of the Second World War. Spahr, formerly a senior analyst and branch chief of the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence and a specialist in Soviet military policy and doctrine, seeks to undo five decades of Party misinformation that sought to diminish Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov's role in the achievement of Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Additionally, he fills the void that existed in the story from 1946 until Zhukov's death in 1974.

Spahr uses as his principal source the recently published tenth edition of Zhukov's memoirs, which purportedly includes material that was missing from the original manuscript. Spahr points out passages Zhukov was required to include to get his memoirs published in the first place. As Spahr tells the story of Zhukov's life, he tests the veracity of the Marshal's version of events against the recollections of other key personalities and archival material now becoming available. The result is a readable, balanced, and generably favorable portrait of this Hero of the Soviet Union, who twice attained the pinnacle of his profession only to be dumped by a paranoid Stalin in 1946 and a jealous Khrushchev in 1957.

Zhukov emerges as profane and proud, a true and loyal communist who

played a critical role in every military crisis and opportunity that the Red Army faced in its struggle with Germany. Organized chronologically, this biography consists of short, essay-like chapters that portray Zhukov as a ruthless, hard-driving superior and an opinionated, uncowed subordinate. In this way, Zhukov became his own worst enemy. Stalin and his cronies recognized his talent but resented his independence, and bitter subordinates were eager to settle old scores. When the war-time crisis passed, these forces combined, seeking to tar Zhukov's loyalty to the regime and his reputation as a general.

Zhukov complements a detailed military history such as *When Titans Clashed* by providing a glimpse of the political and personal struggles away from the front. One of the most interesting aspects of this biography is that it reveals Stalin's constant involvement in making military strategy, as well as his "hands-on" approach in day-to-day operations.

While *Zhukov* is more suited than *Titans* to a wide audience, both books are highly useful in that they take a new look at a theater of the Second World War that is largely a blank spot for many American readers.

J. J. O'ROURKE
Commander, U.S. Navy

Alexander, Joseph H. *Utmost Savagery: The Three Days of Tarawa*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 328pp. \$29.95

This is a history book that focuses exclusively on one tactical engagement in November 1943. In and of itself, that is not unusual; there have been numerous histo-