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Book Description

Sunday, June 22, 1941: three million German soldiers invaded the Soviet Union as part of Hitler's long-planned Operation Barbarossa, which aimed to destroy the Soviet Union, secure its land as *lebensraum* for the Third Reich, and enslave its Slavic population. From launching points in newly acquired Poland, in three prongs—North, Central, South—German forces stormed western Russia, virtually from the Baltic to the Black Sea. By late fall, the invasion had foundered against Russian weather, terrain, and resistance, and by December, it had failed at the gates of Moscow, but early on, as

the Germans sliced through Russian territory and soldiers with impunity, capturing hundreds of thousands, it seemed as though Russia would fall.

In the spirit of Martin Middlebrook's classic *First Day on the Somme*, Craig Luther narrates the events of June 22, 1941, a day when German military might was at its peak and seemed as though it would easily conquer the Soviet Union, a day the common soldiers would remember for its tension and the frogs bellowing in the Polish marshlands. It was a day when the German blitzkrieg decimated Soviet command and control within hours and seemed like nothing would stop it from taking Moscow. Luther narrates June 22—one of the pivotal days of World War II—from high command down to the tanks and soldiers at the sharp end, covering strategy as well as tactics and the vivid personal stories of the men who crossed the border into the Soviet Union that fateful day, which is the Eastern Front in microcosm, representing the years of industrial-scale warfare that followed and the unremitting hostility of Germans and Soviets.

Editorial Reviews

Certainly the most complete, balanced, and, without question, the most thoroughly researched treatment of the first twenty-one hours of Operation Barbarossa. Luther has captured the drama, shock, and devastation of those fateful hours like no one else. It is a powerful and enthralling read. Highly recommended. (**David Stahel**, author of *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*)

A formidable, balanced, and successful effort to capture the immense complexity and overpowering emotional impact of the first day of Adolf Hitler's Operation Barbarossa, characterized by impressive and carefully documented detail. (**David M. Glantz**, author of *The Battle of Kursk and When Titans Clashed*)

An extremely impressive, well-written, and well-researched account of a critical phase in the history of World War II in Europe. It addresses the first day of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 in unprecedented detail, using both German and Russian primary materials. This book is a high-class offering. (**Jürgen Förster**, contributor to *Germany and the Second World War*)

Anyone who believes that there's nothing new to be said about the Eastern Front in World War II is in for a shock: Dr. Luther's revelatory look at the German strategic staging and the first dramatic day of Hitler's invasion of Stalin's Russia is a must read for anyone with an interest in one of the most-ambitious and complex campaigns in history. Well done, indeed! (**Ralph Peters**, author of *Cain at Gettysburg and Red Army*)

Craig Luther's *The First Day on the Eastern Front* continues his invaluable explorations of the disastrous German invasion of the Soviet Union, by focusing on the first day of Operation Barbarossa. His meticulous research has brought to light invaluable German and Russian primary documents that suggest the landmark

invasion was far more carefully planned and organized than sometimes previously thought. Hitler did not blunder blindly into Russia, but had a better appreciation of the Soviet Union's military capabilities, particularly its technology, productive capacity, and the mettle of the Russian soldier, than we may think—a fact that makes the invasion perhaps all the more incomprehensible and atrocious. Arrogance, not stupidity, doomed the Wehrmacht. A rich scholarly resource that historians of the Eastern Front will find invaluable. (**Victor Davis Hanson**, bestselling author of *The Second World Wars*)

Exhaustively researched and well written, Luther has produced a work with a very unique approach to a well-covered topic. This book is a must-read for students of the Eastern Front in World War II. (**Richard L. DiNardo**, author of *Germany and the Axis Powers*)

About the Author:

Dr. Craig Luther is a former Fulbright Scholar and is a retired U.S. Air Force historian. He is author of *Blood and Honor: A History of the 12th SS Panzer Division* and *Barbarossa Unleashed: The German Blitzkrieg through Central Russia to the Gates of Moscow*. He lives in Tehachapi, near Bakersfield, California.