

The Road to Moscow II: Smolensk

4-31 July 1941

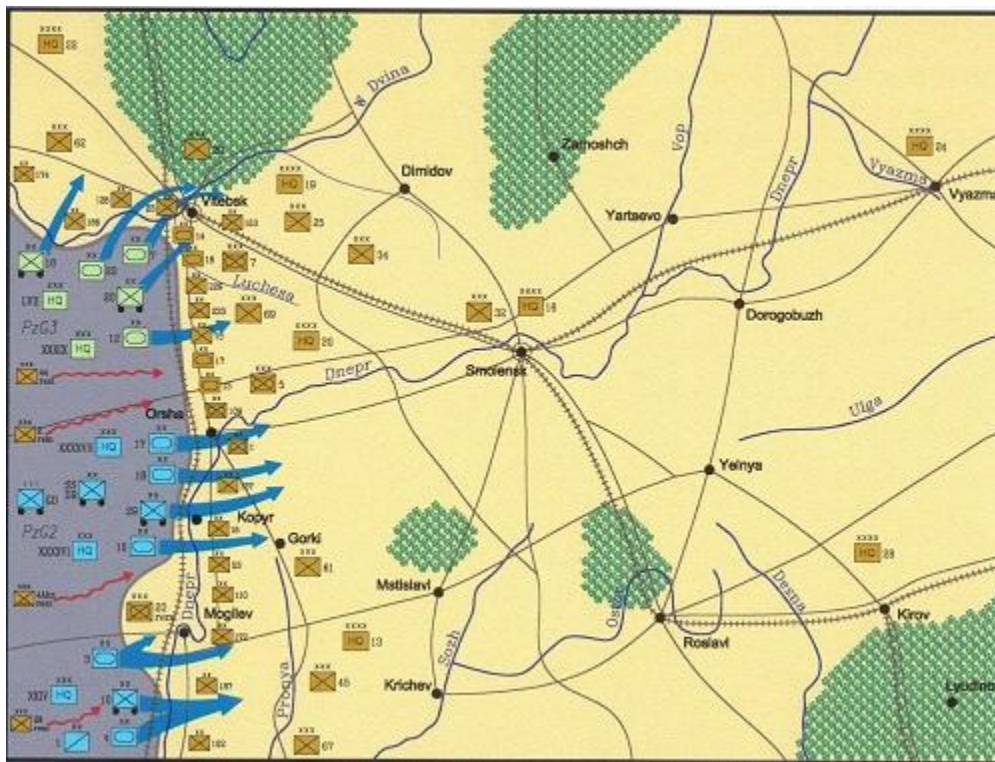
DESCRIPTION

Operation Barbarossa now enters its third week. The battle of Minsk is over and Army Group Center has destroyed three Soviet Armies.

Army Group Center crossed the Berezina River on 3 July (see Volume I. *Crossing the Border*) and is poised to take the next major objective, Smolensk.

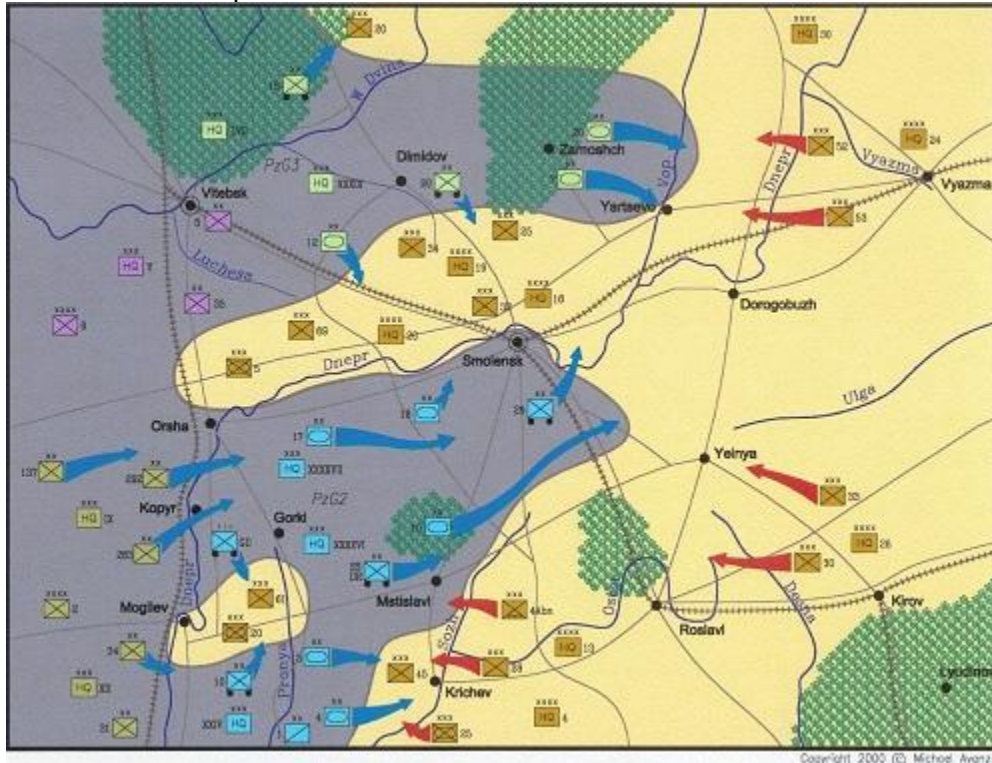
"We must take possession of Smolensk, so that we may move on the two capitals simultaneously. In Moscow we will destroy everything. In St. Petersburg we will keep everything." -Napoleon.

This map from John Tillers *Panzer Campaigns: Smolensk '41* shows the situations on 7 July 1941 after the Panzer Groups have advanced another 100 km to reach the Dnepr River.

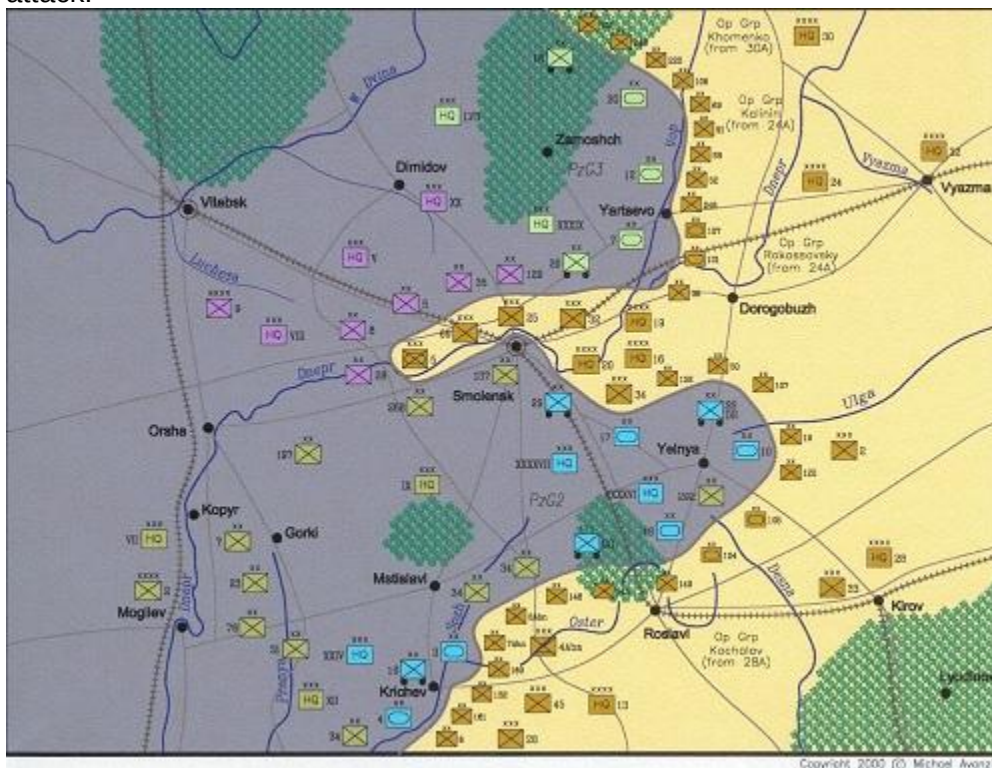


On 10 July Guderian made a surprise attack over the Dnepr and trapped several Soviet divisions at Mogilev. The Red Army makes a series of counter-attack including a major thrust at Bobruisk, off the lower left of the map and Lepiel off the upper left. All were a disaster.

The next map is the situation on 16 July. Panzer Group 3 is driving north of Smolensk to link up with Panzer Group 2 on the south.



Finally, on 25 July the two Panzer Groups have made an incomplete encirclement around Smolensk. The two groups finally linked up on 27 July, hindered by repeated Red Army counter-attack.



PLAYER'S NOTES

GERMAN PLAYER German Objective: Occupy Smolensk,

Historically, Guderian crossed the Dneper River by avoiding the fortified cities of Orsha, Mogilev and Rogachev, and crossed at weaker points in between. The German player should do the same. The infantry divisions arrive a week later and should be used to surround and destroy the by-passed Soviet divisions and secure the flanks of the Panzer groups-

SOVIET PLAYER

The Red Army had an offensive mentality in a defensive situation, and wasted most of their tanks units in ill-conceived attacks. The Soviets should fight a delaying action to the Yartsevo-Yelna- Roslovl line.

REFERENCES:

STRATEGY AND TACTICS MAGAZINE Issue 57, "Panzergruppe Guderian", article and board game

Zaloga, S.J., Ness, L.S. *Red Army Handbook*. Detailed tables of organization and equipment of the Soviet Army.

Guderian, Heinz, *Panzer Leader*. Incorporates a daily diary of unit locations and battles of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group.

Glantz, David, *Barbarossa Derailed: The Battle of Smolensk. 10 July-10 September*. A massive, detailed account of the impact the battle had on the entire Barbarossa campaign.

Glantz, David, *Stumbling Colossus*. An excellent order of battle of the 1941 Red Army.

Glantz, David, and House, J. *When Titans Clash*.

Glantz, D. FORGOTTEN BATTLES OF THE GERMAN-SOVIET WAR, Vol. 1, 22 June 41 to 4 Dec 41. A treasure of newly released Soviet archival material and German operations maps. Self-published and kindly signed and sent to me by COL Glantz.

Haupt, Werner, *Army Group Center*.

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MAPS

Eastern Europe AMS Topographic Maps

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ams/eastern_europe/

1:250,000 by the US Army in 1952 from 1943 maps of the General Staff of the Red Army. A priceless resource.

Tactical Pilots Map. a great resource, 1:500,000 topographical map of modern Russia.

Tiller, John. *Panzer Campaign: Smolensk '41* The three Smolensk battle maps in this description are by Michael Avanzini, in John Tiller Software game. This is a highly recommended detailed game of the Battle of Smolensk from brigade and battalion up to Army level.