

# THE CHIEF CULPRIT



Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II

**Viktor Suvorov**

*Author of Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?*

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The logo consists of the text "THE CHIEF" in a bold, sans-serif font on the top line, and "CALPRIT" on the bottom line. The letter "A" in "CALPRIT" is replaced by a grey hammer and sickle symbol, which is a common icon for communist or socialist movements. The entire logo is centered within a light grey rectangular background.



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Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II

**Viktor Suvorov**

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*All photos are from the author's collection.*

*To Scarlet Alexandra*



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## Preface

**H**itler had a red flag. And Stalin had a red flag. Hitler ruled in the name of the workers' class, his party was called the workers' party. Stalin also ruled in the name of the workers' class; his power system officially bore the title of "dictatorship of the proletariat." Hitler hated democracy and struggled against it. Stalin hated democracy and struggled against it. Hitler was building socialism. And Stalin was building socialism. Under the title of socialism Hitler saw a classless society. And Stalin, under the title of socialism, saw a classless society. In the midst of the classless society built by Hitler, and in that built by Stalin, flourished slavery in the truest sense of the word.

Hitler held his road to socialism as the only correct one, and viewed all other paths as distortions. Stalin also held his road to socialism uniquely correct, and saw all other paths as diversions from the principal line. Hitler mercilessly destroyed all his party comrades, such as Roehm and his followers, when they strayed from the correct path. Stalin also mercilessly destroyed all who strayed from the correct path. Hitler had a Four Year Plan. Stalin had Five Year Plans.

In Hitler's Germany, one party was in power, the others in jail. And in Stalin's Soviet Union, one party was in power, the others in jail. Hitler's party stood above the nation, and its leaders ruled the country. Stalin's party also stood above the nation, and its leaders ruled the country.

The most important holidays in Stalin's empire were May 1 and November 7–8. In Hitler's empire, they were May 1 and November 8–9.

Hitler had the *Hitler Jugend*, young Hitlerists. Stalin had the *Comsomol*, young Stalinists.

Stalin's official title was Fuehrer; Hitler's was leader. Pardon, Stalin's was leader and Hitler's Fuehrer. In translation, they are identical. Stalin declared that Russians were responsible for all outstanding scientific and technological advances: the hot-air balloon, locomotive, airplane, radio, etc. Hitler claimed the same for Germans.

Hitler loved grandiose structures. He laid in Berlin the foundation to the largest building in the world—the House of Assembly. Its dome spanned 250 meters in diameter, by

some counts. The main hall was to have the capacity to hold 150,000 people. Stalin also loved grandiose structures. He laid in Moscow the foundation for the largest building in the world—the Palace of Soviets. Stalin’s main hall was smaller than Hitler’s, but the entire edifice was much higher. The 400-meter-high building resembled a pedestal for the 100-meter-tall statue of Lenin.

Hitler planned to tear down Berlin, and in its place to raise a new city of monstrous structures. Stalin planned to tear down Moscow, and in its place to raise a new city of monstrous structures.

In Germany, Hitler was an outsider. He was born in Austria, and did not have German citizenship almost until the moment he came into power. For Russia, Stalin was an outsider. He was neither Russian, nor even a Slav. He was born in Georgia.

Sometimes, on rare occasions, Stalin invited foreign visitors to his Kremlin apartment. They were shocked by the modesty of the interiors: a plain table, a closet, an iron-post bed, a soldier’s bedcover. Hitler ordered the press to run a photograph of his living quarters. The world was shocked by his modesty: a plain table, a closet, an iron-post bed, a soldier’s bedcover. Nevertheless, in secluded areas in the midst of magical natural surroundings, Stalin created quite cozy and well-protected residential fortresses, which did not at all resemble an ascetic’s cell. Hitler also built impenetrable residence-fortresses in secluded areas in the midst of natural wonders, without frugality in his use of granite and marble.

Hitler’s mother dreamed that her son would become a priest. Stalin’s mother had the same dream for her son.

Hitler’s beloved, Geli Raubal, was more than twenty years his junior. Stalin’s beloved, Nadezhda Alliluieva, was more than twenty years his junior. Geli Raubal committed suicide, as did Nadezhda Alliluieva. The circumstances of Raubal’s death remain unclear. A theory proposes that Hitler murdered her. The circumstances of Alliluieva’s death are mysterious. A theory proposes that Stalin murdered her. The means of suicide (murder) for Geli Raubal was a handgun. It was Hitler’s personal handgun. The means of suicide (murder) for Nadezhda Alliluieva was a handgun. It was Stalin’s personal handgun.

Hitler said one thing, and did another. So did Stalin. Hitler began his rule under the slogan “Germany Wants Peace.” He proceeded to occupy half of Europe. Stalin fought for the “collective security of Europe,” without holding back any strength or means. Afterwards, he proceeded to occupy half of Europe.

Hitler had the Gestapo. Stalin had the *Narodnyi Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (NKVD)—the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs. Hitler had Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau. Stalin had the *Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei* (GULAG)—the Main Prison Camp Directorate.<sup>1</sup>

Hitler had Babyi Yar. Stalin had Katyn. Hitler massacred people by the millions. Stalin also killed people by the millions.

Hitler did not decorate himself with medals of honor, and neither did Stalin. Hitler wore a semi-military uniform without any signs of distinction, and Stalin wore a semi-military uniform without signs of distinction. Some might argue that later on Stalin acquired a taste for military titles, marshal batons, and gilded epaulettes. This is true, but Stalin only named himself Marshal in 1943 after the Stalingrad victory, when it finally became clear that Hitler would lose the war. At the time of receiving this title, Stalin was sixty-three years old. He wore the Marshal’s uniform for the first time for the Tehran Conference, while meeting

with Churchill and Roosevelt. We cannot in this respect compare Hitler and Stalin simply because Hitler did not live to a comparable age, to see comparable meetings, or comparable victories.

In all other respects, the comparison fits. Stalin did not wear a beard, but had a famous mustache. Hitler had no beard, but a famous mustache. Where does the difference lie? The difference lies in the shapes of the mustaches.

The difference also lies in the fact that Hitler's actions were seen by the world as the greatest of crimes, while Stalin's actions were considered by the world as a struggle for peace and progress.

The world hated Hitler, and commiserated with Stalin. Hitler conquered half of Europe, and the rest of the world declared war against him. Stalin conquered half of Europe, and the world sent him greetings. To ensure that Hitler could not hold on to the conquered European countries, the West sank German ships, bombed German cities, and then landed a massive and powerful army on the European continent. To enable Stalin to conquer and hold on to the other half of Europe, the West gave Stalin hundreds of warships, thousands of war planes and tanks, hundreds of thousands of the world's best war vehicles, and millions of tons of its best fuel, ammunition, and supplies.

This book is about Stalin's aggressive endeavors, about his role in plotting World War II—the bloodiest slaughter in human history. Perhaps one might become suspicious: in exposing Stalin, am I attempting to exonerate Hitler? No, I am not. For me, Hitler remains a heinous criminal. But if Hitler was a criminal it does not at all follow that Stalin was his innocent victim, as Communist propaganda portrayed him before the world.



## Acknowledgments

I have planned to write this book since I discovered that the Soviet version of the history of World War II was a lie and concealed the USSR's responsibility for planning the start of the war. The primary reason for my decision to defect to the West in 1978 was to make my discoveries available to the Russian people and the world public. Since then I have been able to publish several books on military topics. All of them received wide acclaim in the West, but that was not the case with the book of my lifework—*The Icebreaker*, published in English in Great Britain in 1990. It quickly sold out, but for reasons never explained to me, the publisher refused to print further editions.

It quickly became apparent that the Western academic community was as reluctant as the Communist propaganda apparatus to accept my new interpretation of the cause of World War II. Instead of confronting my arguments the way the Soviets did, my Western opponents chose a different kind of confrontation—silence.

Meanwhile, communism and the Soviet Union collapsed. In 1990 *The Icebreaker* was published in Russian in Moscow and produced a firestorm. The first edition of *The Icebreaker* totaled 320,000 copies; the second, 1,000,000. Hundreds of thousands of copies of my other books on the same topic, including *The Day M*, *The Last Republic*, *The Purification*, and *The Suicide*, quickly sold out. Two television documentaries based on *The Icebreaker* were produced in Russia. Dozens of Russian historians rushed to explore the new horizons opened by my book. Some of them argued and disagreed with my interpretations of specific episodes or details; others raised new questions and suggested new theories.

A similar response to my book was aroused in former Communist countries. In Poland I became a celebrity overnight. Baltic countries incorporated my findings into their official history and textbooks. More important was the flood of letters I began to receive from 1990 from all over the world, but mostly from the former Soviet Union. People provided me with their unique insights and sent me copies of documents in support of my theory. Many of these details, as well as evidence from newly published materials, are incorporated in *The Chief Culprit*.

However, after encountering a virtual academic boycott in the West, I gave up trying to publish my books in the West. In 1999 I received an inquiry from a man who introduced himself as Alexei Sobchenko, an American of Russian origin, about the English-language version of *The Icebreaker*. I curtly replied that there was no interest in the West for this book. Besides, I was too busy to waste time pursuing an unrealistic goal. “Well, probably, you should write another book, since *The Icebreaker* was written for Russian readers, and hardly can be understood by people who did not live in the Soviet Communist society,” replied Sobchenko. “Besides, you wrote four more books after *The Icebreaker* and it would be a good opportunity to update and summarize them, and add your new discoveries.”

Alexei was introduced to Jerry and Leona Schecter, who found my ideas challenging, and Leona agreed to become my literary agent for this book. Eventually they became my friends and did much more for this book than a literary agent’s job requires. I would also like to thank Dr. Albert Weeks for his longtime support and efforts on my behalf.

Maria Samorodina-Erb, who at the time was a student at the University of Pennsylvania, volunteered to translate the book into English. Russian Americans Vlad Barash, Leonid Avrashov, and Olga Cherny helped to translate additional chapters. Serghei Kharlamov—a Moscow-based historian, checked the text for factual accuracy. Yuri Felshtinsky, a historian from Boston, worked to tailor the text for Western readers. Misha Shauli, from Israel, skillfully applied his wide knowledge of World War II history to correcting, editing, and retranslating the text as it evolved. Actually, Misha’s role in this book was so crucial that, unwillingly, he ended up becoming my editor for *The Chief Culprit*. Copy editor Jehanne Moharram’s diligence and concern improved the final editing and proofreading. Nothing, neither the first Russian-language version of *The Icebreaker* nor this new book, would have been possible without the assistance of my devoted wife Tatiana.

I often doubted that this book would be published. It never would have been possible without the dedication of those I have mentioned and those who must remain anonymous, for their safety, who sent me new corroborating archival materials and relevant personal details. Richard Russell, director of the Naval Institute Press, has been instrumental in bringing *The Chief Culprit* to print, and to him and his dedicated colleagues I am deeply grateful. Happily, he proved me wrong in thinking its publication would never happen in the West.

## Introduction

Solving puzzles is not for everyone, but for me it is a passion. I feel that I am truly blessed, for fitting pieces together is my job. It is strenuous work that mobilizes your patience and attention; but the benefits are great. You switch off the world of turmoil, you forget about your concerns, debts, and ailments. Hated faces of enemies and opponents dissolve into darkness. Your heart starts beating calmly and steadily. Your brain is cleansed of evil plots, and your soul freed of dirt and soot. No, I am not an archaeologist who, out of clay pieces, assembles an ancient Egyptian pot, and from glass fragments, a precious Roman vase. Neither am I an anthropologist, who out of tiny splinters of bone assembles the skeleton of a mammoth hunter. I am a spy. An intelligence operative of a rare breed, an analyst from the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces (GRU).<sup>1</sup>

For some, intelligence work is violent: kidnapping and killing, or breaking into safes to steal secrets. For others, like myself, it is an office stuffed with books and thick folders piled high to the ceiling with papers that can never be straightened out. It is a green table lamp and a pot of coffee. The puzzles I had to work on were so huge they encompassed more than a hundred thousand pieces. Can you imagine the challenge? Nobody, including me, knew how many puzzles there were in the pile—one, two, or three? All I knew for sure was that some pieces were missing and could never be found. Which pieces belonged to which puzzle? Which ones were complete strays? Then came the most important task—to fill in the blanks. It is essentially the same as restoring a gigantic dinosaur from a fragment of a bone, or predicting the existence of a planet in the darkness of space based on gravitational anomalies. Archaeologists or astronomers can easily be compared to the people who process intelligence information. The difference is that intelligence achievements rarely come out in the open.

You might wonder, how does one become an intelligence operative? I started early. I was eleven years old when I joined the Soviet Army. Seven years of the “Military Boarding School” was a tough school of life. Not everyone who trained there became an intelligence analyst. They taught us situation analysis. They gave us pieces of a puzzle: one, two, three pieces. What did they mean? The answer had to come immediately. For example: the opponent has a tank company here, an artillery battalion there, a bridge here, and there is an ammo dump on the premises. What does he intend to do? What do we have to do if we are

stronger at the moment? What if we are weaker? After graduation some of us were chosen for the Frunze High Command Army School in Kiev. That school was training intelligence operatives. Instead of four years it took me three and I graduated with honors.

I started my service duty as an officer in the Carpathian military district. Soon I was transferred to the Volga Military District whose headquarters were in Kuibyshev, the unofficial capital of the Soviet Union that was created when Moscow was threatened by the German invasion in 1941. Stalin and the most important government organizations were in Moscow, but the larger part of the government ministries and all of the foreign embassies and missions were in Kuibyshev. In case of a crisis Stalin was supposed to relocate there. This “spare” capital of the Soviet Union continued to function in the time of peace. All the political, economic, and military data on the United States of America and other countries was processed in Moscow. Simultaneously and independently of Moscow that same data was analyzed in Kuibyshev. That is what I was doing there at the command post.

They had taught us at the Academy to trust no one, to question every fact, to verify every piece of data, to doubt everything. If a hundred secret agents are reporting one way, and one sounds out of place and makes no sense, deal with him. No one will trust him or you, they will laugh at you, and they will not believe you. But this is how great discoveries are made. It is easy to repeat known facts. It is much more difficult to find something that nobody knows. And if you find it, you will be misunderstood and contradicted a lot at first. Then you find proof for it and convince your superiors. I did exactly that, and I was noticed. They sent me to the topmost secret military academy in the Soviet Union. It was called the Soviet Army Academy. It was so secret that no one ever mentioned it in public. It took me three years to complete the course of study there. The curriculum was so intense that it could take fifteen years to complete, but it was compressed for a reason: it was a test. Those who could not handle the stress would not be able to handle intelligence work. The tempo was inhuman. You were flooded with thousands of messages simultaneously: pieces of secret telegrams, secret agents’ reports, images from space, photos from passing cars, fragments of taped conversations, wrinkled and dirty topographic maps found at the site of recent maneuvers. All that raw material had to be sorted, analyzed, and evaluated. Everybody knew those who excelled would get the most interesting assignments.

After graduation I was sent to Geneva, the world capital of espionage. My first job was attaché of the USSR Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. That was my official title, but in reality I spent four years processing intelligence information.

At school they had taught me to ask, “Why?” They had taught me to look for reasons and the internal logic for everything. I believe my instructors overdid it because I started asking too many questions. Why could the Soviet Union launch the first satellite into space, and send up the first dog and human beings, but could not raise enough wheat to feed its own people? Why is America our enemy? Why doesn’t the United States like us? What if it is us who do not like them? Why? What do we need Africa for? What are our interests in Vietnam, Cuba, and Chile? Don’t we have enough land of our own? Have we resolved our own problems at home, and if not why are we trying to teach everybody else?

The head of my country told Americans: “We will bury you!” That was the essence of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy at the time. We were digging a grave for the United States and all the other countries of the world. Our foreign policy was the top priority. We had more nuclear submarines than all of the countries of the world combined. We also had more air-

borne divisions, tanks, and field artillery. We filled the world with Kalashnikovs. At the same time we could not feed ourselves. So here was the question: Why should we bury America? Are they in our way? If we bury the United States, who is going to feed us?

I became more and more bewildered as I tried to answer my own questions. I had been taught to notice strange occurrences, anomalies, exceptions to the rules. One strange thing that I noticed: No matter what happened in the Soviet Union our leaders always tried to conceal the negative aspects and show the positive. There were no private enterprises in the Soviet Union back then. All the media—and everything else, for that matter—belonged to the government. Our newspapers reported only what was advantageous to the government. For example, the media reported that crime was almost nonexistent and steadily declining. They wrote that everything was fine, culture was flourishing, the quality of life was getting better and better, we would soon surpass the United States. You could not find any negative news.

On the night of October 6, 1948, the city of Ashkhabad was leveled by an earthquake reported to have reached magnitude 10 on the Richter scale, the maximum strength. The epicenter was only twenty kilometers away from downtown. The disaster struck in the middle of the night when all of the people were asleep. The whole city collapsed instantaneously. The only building left standing was the city prison. Everything else turned into broken brick and stone rubble; 110,000 people died under the debris. The facts of this disaster became public only thirty years later. Back in 1948 not a single Soviet newspaper or radio station reported it. Not one government official commented on it. Furthermore, those who spoke about the earthquake were arrested and put in prison for “spreading false rumors.” You would ask yourself, why conceal an earthquake? That was the way the Soviet system worked: we are so good that we do not even have earthquakes!

On the same premise no media outlet or official in the Soviet Union mentioned the Chernobyl disaster when it occurred. The Swedes were the first to sound the alarm. The wind had blown the radioactive cloud from the Ukraine through Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and across the Baltic Sea to Sweden where the emergency warning equipment went off at a local nuclear power station. Swedish engineers could not figure out why their equipment was going off; they were looking for problems at their own station. It took them awhile to figure out that the radiation was in the air, carried by the wind from afar. After the international investigation had started the Soviet government admitted that there had been a small accident at the nuclear plant in Chernobyl. Even then the Soviets claimed that the accident was completely insignificant and no one should pay any attention to it.

There were other terrible catastrophes at the Soviet nuclear power stations and nuclear sites prior to Chernobyl, but they were kept under wraps. Soviet television shows relished tragedies elsewhere but nothing was said about our own. On October 24, 1960, the Chief Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Chief Artillery Marshal M. I. Nedelin, was killed as a result of a rocket explosion. His death could not be concealed. The Soviet command announced it, but did not reveal how many people perished with him. Even now, eighteen years after Marshal Nedelin’s death, the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*<sup>2</sup> does not specify where or how he died. The encyclopedia lists dates and places of birth and death for everyone but him.

Modern Russia inherited the tradition of hiding everything negative. When the nuclear submarine *Kursk* sank it was not possible to hush that up. The Russian authorities announced that the submarine was submerged, that communication with the crew was established, there

were no victims, and there was a hose pumping air into the vessel. For a week, the Russian government told tall tales about how everything at *Kursk* was going just fine. Later it turned out that there had been no communication with the people on board the *Kursk*, and nobody had pumped air in to them.

I gave you all of those examples to show that these are our traditions and rules. But there is an exception to these rules: June 22, 1941, the day when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. This day is described by Communist propaganda in truly dark colors. Thousands of books, tens of thousands of articles, and radio and TV broadcasts told about the blatant unpreparedness of the Red Army for military action. All of those sources paint a picture of stupid, cowardly Stalin who trusted Hitler. They tell us that after the Germans attacked, Stalin was so scared that he went into hiding and would not show himself. They talk about the army that had no good commanders, about outdated tanks and airplanes that were called “flying coffins,” about the terrible ineptitude of the Soviet military leaders, about the absence of war planning.

Hundreds of Western historians fell for those stories: if the Russians themselves were talking about their own stupidity, why not repeat it? Everyone is happy to laugh at someone else’s stupidity. As a result the whole world is laughing. I was taught to look for incoherence. There it was, gaping right at me. Why could we not talk about an earthquake, but could speak about bad tanks? Why was it that the Soviets, who thoroughly hid any mistakes, accidents, or catastrophes, made such a tremendous effort to emphasize the mistakes of 1941? Why did we expose the negative developments of 1941, while hiding data about a bad harvest? I took a closer look at the way our history was written and found something even more curious. In 1942 the Red Army suffered a number of monstrous defeats: in the Crimea, near Kharkov, Leningrad, and Rzhev. Our textbooks did not mention those. It struck me as strange that it was acceptable to talk about the defeats of 1941, but not about the defeats of 1942.

Let us look further. In July, August, September, and October of 1941 the Red Army suffered crushing defeats near Smolensk, Kiev, Uman, and Viazma. Our history books did not and still do not mention those either. What could that mean? When, where, and under what kind of circumstances would a person or a nation passionately try to prove that they are stupid and unfit for a fight? I found one example. Imagine a murderer in court trying to convince the jurors that he is not guilty of the crime because he is mentally challenged, completely blind and therefore cannot shoot, and too weak to raise an ax. In addition he says that he has no bullets to shoot, his gun is broken, and his ax is rusty. There is no reason anyone would deem themselves stupid, powerless, and unfit to do anything other than to get out of a situation where they can be accused of a crime.

That is exactly the way Communist propaganda behaved while describing the events of June 1941. Communist historians and propaganda masters went out of their way to hide any details that would enable an outsider to restore the reality of what was happening at the time. They would only show their stupidity and incapacity to the world. For example, Soviet textbooks did not give information about the number of tanks that the Red Army had at that time. The texts just said that the tanks were badly suited for battle. The books did not say anything about the number of planes. They just stated that the planes were outdated. I decided to compose the picture myself, to re-create that reality. I had to find all the shards, all the fragments, all the pieces that were scattered all over. I decided to start from the top. How many field armies were there in the Soviet Union in 1941? I looked through many books on

the subject but could not find the answer. Then I started to collect information about every field army individually in order to put the pieces together later. The results were amazing.

In June 1939, when Hitler was the enemy and his name was used to scare children and adults alike, the Soviet Union had two field armies. Neither of them was deployed in the European part of the Soviet Union. In August 1939 Stalin and Hitler, represented by Molotov and Ribbentrop, signed the non-aggression pact. We were told that Stalin decided to believe Hitler. I trusted that information, but here are some statistics: In June 1941 the Soviet Union had thirty-one field armies. Twenty-six of them were deployed in the European part of the country. This surprised me. While Hitler was considered an enemy we did not possess any armies against him, but as soon as the pact between Stalin and Hitler was signed, Stalin increased the number of Soviet armies from zero to twenty-six in a period slightly less than two years. How does that fit with stories of Stalin trusting Hitler?

A corps is the next level within an army. How many of those did we have? The answer is hidden. There are thousands of books about the war, but nobody ever talks about how many corps there were within the Red Army in June 1941. I collected all the data. When I put it together the results were, again, astounding.

How many divisions were there? And most importantly where were they positioned?

If you were analyzing a chess match you would want to know not only the number of pieces on the board but their positions too. The problem was that although there were mountains of books about the war written in the Soviet Union, none of them had a map demonstrating the deployment of the Soviet Forces. In a famous book by Marshal Zhukov, all the maps are colored. The only map that shows the deployment of the armed forces at the moment of Hitler's attack is black and white. It is also very small and shows the span from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea in six centimeters, less than two and a half inches. You could cover the whole theater of war between the Soviet Union and Germany with the palm of a child's hand. The map says that the 3rd, 4th, and 10th armies were deployed on the German border. It also states that there were other armies. But only nine of the twenty-six are named. The rest are omitted. Most important is that the deployment of the armies is not shown on the map. It is completely unclear where they really were. How can you analyze the beginning of a war if you do not know the number of the armed forces and their positions? I was determined to solve the puzzle. But how does one go about it?

I found a way. I was a student at the Academy at the time. Our professors urged us all to conduct independent scientific research in order to figure out who would make the best intelligence analysts. I took advantage of the situation and chose "The Attack of Germany on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941" as the title of my paper. I explained my interest in the subject easily. I said that it was a horrible tragedy and I wanted to study how Germany prepared for the attack, in order to make sure that nothing of the kind would ever happen again.

The topic of my research was approved and I was given access to closed archives. The most important things that I needed were the archives of the German army. The Red Army had captured them at the end of the war, transferred them from Berlin to Moscow, and placed them under lock and key. Almost nobody has access to these archives. I was bewildered: If Hitler was the aggressor, why not open the archives for all to see?

There could be only one answer: there was something in those archives that the Soviet leadership did not want to admit. There is an incredible number of German documents in