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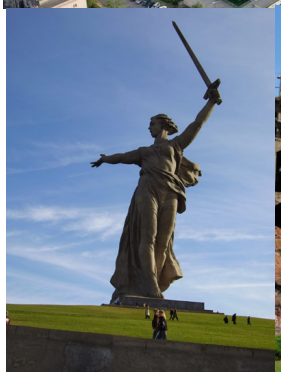
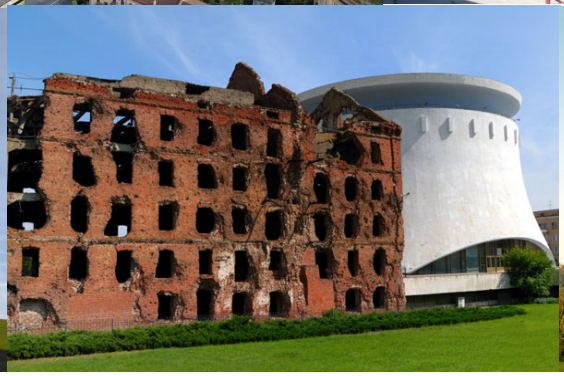

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Operation Barbarossa

Operation Barbarossa
Part of the Eastern Front of World War II

Clockwise from top left: German soldiers advance through Northern Russia, German flamethrower team in the Soviet Union, Soviet planes flying over German positions near Moscow, Soviet prisoners of war on the way to German prison camps, Soviet soldiers fire at German positions.

Date	22 June – 5 December 1941 (5 months, 1 week and 6 days)
Location	Eastern and Northern Europe
Result	See Aftermath

Belligerents	
Germany Romania Finland Italy Hungary Slovakia	Soviet Union

Croatia	
Commanders and leaders	
Adolf Hitler Walther von Brauchitsch Franz Halder Fedor von Bock Gerd von Rundstedt Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb Ion Antonescu Gustaf Mannerheim	Joseph Stalin Georgy Zhukov Aleksandr Vasilyevskiy Semyon Budyonny Kliment Voroshilov Semyon Timoshenko Markian Popov Fyodor Kuznetsov Dmitry Pavlov Ivan Tyulenev Mikhail Kirponos †
Units involved	
Axis armies	Soviet armies
Strength	
Frontline strength 3.8 million personne 3,350–3,795 tanks 3,030–3,072 other AFVs 2,770–5,369 aircraft 7,200–23,435 artillery pieces 17,081 mortars	Frontline strength 2.6–2.9 million personnel 11,000 tanks 7,133–9,100 military aircraft
Casualties and losses	
Total military casualties: 1,000,000+	Total military casualties: 4,973,820

Operation Barbarossa (German: Unternehmen Barbarossa) was the code name for the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union, starting Sunday, 22 June 1941, during World War II. The operation stemmed from Nazi Germany's ideological aims to conquer the western Soviet Union so that it could be repopulated by Germans, to use Slavs as a slave-labour force for the Axis war-effort, and to seize the oil reserves of the Caucasus and the agricultural resources of Soviet territories.

In the two years leading up to the invasion, Germany and the Soviet Union signed political and economic pacts for strategic purposes. Nevertheless, the German High Command began planning an invasion of the Soviet Union in July 1940 (under the codename Operation Otto), which Adolf Hitler authorized on 18

December 1940. Over the course of the operation, about four million Axis powers personnel, the largest invasion force in the history of warfare, invaded the western Soviet Union along a 2,900-kilometer (1,800 mi) front. In addition to troops, the Wehrmacht employed some 600,000 motor vehicles, and between 600,000 and 700,000 horses for non-combat operations. The offensive marked an escalation of the war, both geographically and in the formation of the Allied coalition.

Operationally, German forces achieved major victories and occupied some of the most important economic areas of the Soviet Union, mainly in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and inflicted, as well as sustained, heavy casualties. Despite these Axis successes, the German offensive stalled in the Battle of Moscow and the subsequent Soviet winter counteroffensive pushed German troops back. The Red Armyabsorbed the Wehrmacht's strongest blows and forced the unprepared Germans into a war of attrition. The Wehrmacht would never again mount a simultaneous offensive along the entire strategic Soviet–Axis front. The failure of the operation drove Hitler to demand further operations of increasingly limited scope inside the Soviet Union, such as Case Blue in 1942 and Operation Citadel in 1943 – all of which eventually failed.

The failure of Operation Barbarossa proved a turning point in the fortunes of the Third Reich. Most importantly, the operation opened up the Eastern Front, in which more forces were committed than in any other theater of war in world history. The Eastern Front became the site of some of the largest battles, most horrific atrocities, and highest casualties for Soviet and Axis units alike, all of which influenced the course of both World War II and the subsequent history of the 20th century. The German armies captured 5,000,000 Red Army troops, who were denied the protection guaranteed by the Hague Conventions and the 1929 Geneva Convention. A majority of Red Army POWs never returned alive. The Nazis deliberately starved to death, or otherwise killed, 3.3 million prisoners, as well as a huge number of civilians through the "Hunger Plan" that aimed at largely replacing the Slavic population with German settlers. Einsatzgruppen death squads and gassing operations murdered over a million Soviet Jews as part of the Holocaust.

Background

As early as 1925, Adolf Hitler vaguely declared in his political manifesto and autobiography Mein Kampf that he would invade the Soviet Union, asserting that the German people needed to secure Lebensraum ("living space") to ensure the survival of Germany for generations to come. On 10 February 1939, Hitler told his army commanders that the next war would be "purely a war of Weltanschauungen ... totally a people's war, a racial war". On 23 November, once World War II had already started, Hitler declared that "racial war has broken out and this war shall determine who shall govern Europe, and with it, the world". The racial policy of Nazi Germany portrayed the Soviet Union (and all of Eastern Europe) as populated by non-Aryan Untermenschen ("sub-humans"), ruled by Jewish Bolshevik conspirators. Hitler claimed in Mein Kampf that Germany's destiny was to "turn to the East" as it did "six hundred years ago" (see Ostsiedlung). Accordingly, it was stated Nazi policy to kill, deport, or enslave the majority of Russian

and other Slavic populations and repopulate the land with Germanic peoples, under the Generalplan Ost. The Germans' belief in their ethnic superiority is evident in official German records and discernible in pseudoscientific articles in German periodicals at the time, which covered topics such as "how to deal with alien populations".

While older historiography tended to emphasize the notion of a "Clean Wehrmacht", the historian Jürgen Förster notes that "In fact, the military commanders were caught up in the ideological character of the conflict, and involved in its implementation as willing participants." Before and during the invasion of the Soviet Union, German troops were heavily indoctrinated with anti-Bolshevik, anti-Semitic, and anti-Slavic ideology via movies, radio, lectures, books, and leaflets. Likening the Soviets to the forces of Genghis Khan, Hitler told Croatian military leader Slavko Kvaternik that the "Mongolian race" threatened Europe. Following the invasion, Wehrmacht officers told their soldiers to target people who were described as "Jewish Bolshevik subhumans", the "Mongol hordes", the "Asiatic flood", and the "Red beast". Nazi propaganda portrayed the war against the Soviet Union as both an ideological war between German National Socialism and Jewish Bolshevism and a racial war between the Germans and the Jewish, Gypsies, and Slavic Untermenschen. An 'order from the Führer' stated that the Einsatzgruppen were to execute all Soviet functionaries who were "less valuable Asiatics, Gypsies and Jews". German army commanders cast the Jews as the major cause behind the "partisan struggle". The main guideline policy for German troops was "Where there's a partisan, there's a Jew, and where there's a Jew, there's a partisan", or "The partisan is where the Jew is". Many German troops viewed the war in Nazi terms and regarded their Soviet enemies as sub-human.

After the war began, the Nazis issued a ban on sexual relations between Germans and foreign slave workers. There were regulations enacted against the Ost-Arbeiter ("Eastern workers") that included the death penalty for sexual relations with a German. Heinrich Himmler, in his secret memorandum, Reflections on the Treatment of Peoples of Alien Races in the East (dated 25 May 1940), outlined the future plans for the non-German populations in the East. Himmler believed the Germanization process in Eastern Europe would be complete when "in the East dwell only men with truly German, Germanic blood".

The Nazi secret plan Generalplan Ost ("General Plan for the East"), which was prepared in 1941 and confirmed in 1942, called for a "new order of ethnographical relations" in the territories occupied by Nazi Germany in Eastern Europe. The plan envisaged ethnic cleansing, executions, and enslavement of the overwhelming majority of the populations of conquered countries with very small differing percentages of the various conquered nations undergoing Germanization, expulsion into the depths of Russia, and other fates. The net effect of this plan would be to ensure that the conquered territories would be Germanized. It was divided into two parts: the Kleine Planung ("small plan"), which covered actions to be taken during the war, and the Große Planung ("large plan"), which covered actions to be undertaken after the war was won, and to be implemented gradually over a period of 25 to 30 years.

Evidence from a speech given by General Erich Hoepner indicates the disposition of Operation Barbarossa and the Nazi racial plan, as he informed the 4th Panzer Group that the war against the Soviet Union was "an

essential part of the German people's struggle for existence" (Daseinskampf), also referring to the imminent battle as the "old struggle of Germans against Slavs" and even stated, "the struggle must aim at the annihilation of today's Russia and must therefore be waged with unparalleled harshness". Hoepner also added that the Germans were fighting for "the defense of European culture against Moscovite–Asiatic inundation, and the repulse of Jewish Bolshevism ... No adherents of the present Russian-Bolshevik system are to be spared." Walther von Brauchitsch also told his subordinates that troops should view the war as a "struggle between two different races and [should] act with the necessary severity". Racial motivations were central to Nazi ideology and played a key role in planning for Operation Barbarossa since both Jews and communists were considered equivalent enemies of the Nazi state. Nazi imperialist ambitions were exercised without moral consideration for either group in their ultimate struggle for Lebensraum. In the eyes of the Nazis, the war against the Soviet Union would be a Vernichtungskrieg ("war of annihilation").

German-Soviet relations of 1939–40

The geopolitical disposition of Europe in 1941, immediately before the start of Operation Barbarossa. The grey area represents Nazi Germany, its allies, and countries under its firm control.

In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact in Moscow known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. A secret protocol to the pact outlined an agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union on the division of the eastern European border states between their respective "spheres of influence": the Soviet Union and Germany would partition Poland in the event of an invasion by Germany, and the Soviets would be allowed to overrun the Baltic states and Finland. On 23 August 1939 the rest of the world learned of this pact but were unaware of the provisions to partition Poland. The pact stunned the world because of the parties' earlier mutual hostility and their conflicting ideologies. The conclusion of this pact was followed by the German invasion of Poland on 1 September that triggered the outbreak of World War II in Europe, then the Soviet invasion of Poland that led to the annexation of the eastern part of the country. As a result of the pact, Germany and the Soviet Union maintained reasonably strong diplomatic relations for two years and fostered an important economic relationship. The countries entered a trade pact in 1940 by which the Soviets received German military equipment and trade goods in exchange for raw materials, such as oil and wheat, to help the Nazis circumvent a British blockade of Germany.

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Despite the parties' ostensibly cordial relations, each side was highly suspicious of the other's intentions. For instance, the Soviet invasion of Bukovina in June 1940 went beyond their sphere of influence as agreed with Germany. After Germany entered the Axis Pact with Japan and Italy, it began negotiations about a potential Soviet entry into the pact. After two days of negotiations in Berlin from 12 to 14 November 1940, Germany presented a written proposal for a Soviet entry into the Axis. On 25 November 1940, the Soviet Union offered a written counter-proposal to join the Axis if Germany would agree to refrain from interference in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, but Germany did not respond. As both sides began colliding with each other in Eastern Europe, conflict appeared more likely, although they did sign a border and commercial agreement addressing several open issues in January 1941. According to historian Robert Service, Joseph Stalin was convinced that the overall military strength of the USSR was such that he had nothing to fear and anticipated an easy victory should Germany attack; moreover, Stalin believed that since the Germans were still fighting the British in the west, Hitler would be unlikely to open up a two front war and subsequently delayed the reconstruction of defensive fortifications in the border regions. When German soldiers swam across the Bug River to warn the Red Army of an impending attack, they were treated like enemy agents and shot. Some historians believe that Stalin, despite providing an amicable front to Hitler, did not wish to remain allies with Germany. Rather, Stalin might have had intentions to break off from Germany and proceed with his own campaign against Germany to be followed by one against the rest of Europe.

German invasion plans

The Marcks Plan was the original German plan of attack for Operation Barbarossa, as depicted in an US Government study (March 1955).

Stalin's reputation as a brutal dictator contributed both to the Nazis' justification of their assault and their faith in success; many competent and experienced military officers were killed in the Great Purge of the 1930s, leaving the Red Army with a relatively inexperienced leadership compared to that of their German counterparts. The Nazis often emphasized the Soviet regime's brutality when targeting the Slavs with propaganda. They also claimed that the Red Army was preparing to attack the Germans, and their own invasion was thus presented as a pre-emptive strike.

In the middle of 1940, following the rising tension between the Soviet Union and Germany over territories in the Balkans, an eventual invasion of the Soviet Union seemed to Hitler to be the only solution. While no

concrete plans were made yet, Hitler told one of his generals in June that the victories in Western Europe finally freed his hands for his important real task: the showdown with Bolshevism. With the successful end to the campaign in France, General Erich Marcks was assigned to the working group drawing up the initial invasion plans of the Soviet Union. The first battle plans were entitled Operation Draft East (but colloquially it was known as the Marcks Plan). His report advocated the A-A line to be the operational objective of any invasion of the Soviet Union. This goal would extend from the northern city of Arkhangelsk on the Arctic Sea through Gorky and Rostov to the port city of Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga on the Caspian Sea. The report concluded that this military border would reduce the threat to Germany (and the Third Reich) from attacks by enemy bombers.

Although Hitler was warned by his general staff that occupying "Western Russia" would create "more of a drain than a relief for Germany's economic situation", he anticipated compensatory benefits, such as the demobilization of entire divisions to relieve the acute labor shortage in German industry; the exploitation of Ukraine as a reliable and immense source of agricultural products; the use of forced labor to stimulate Germany's overall economy; and the expansion of territory to improve Germany's efforts to isolate the United Kingdom. Hitler was convinced that Britain would sue for peace once the Germans triumphed in the Soviet Union, and if they did not, he would use the resources available in the East to defeat the British Empire.

We only have to kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down.
—Adolf Hitler

On 5 December 1940, Hitler received the final military plans for the invasion on which the German High Command had been working since July 1940 under the codename "Operation Otto". Hitler, however, was dissatisfied with these plans and on 18 December issued Führer Directive 21, which called for a new battle plan, now code-named "Operation Barbarossa".The operation was named after medieval Emperor Frederick Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire, a leader of the Third Crusade in the 12th century. The invasion was set for 15 May 1941, though it was delayed for over a month in allowing for further preparations and possibly better weather.

According to a 1978 essay by German historian Andreas Hillgruber, the invasion plans drawn up by the German military elite were coloured by hubris stemming from the rapid defeat of France at the hands of the "invincible" Wehrmacht and by ignorance tempered by traditional German stereotypes of Russia as a primitive, backward "Asiatic" country. Red Army soldiers were considered brave and tough, but the officer corps was held in contempt. The leadership of the Wehrmacht paid little attention to politics, culture and the considerable industrial capacity of the Soviet Union, in favour of a very narrow military view. Hillgruber argued that because these assumptions were shared by the entire military elite, Hitler was able to push through with a "war of annihilation" that would be waged in the most inhumane fashion possible with the complicity of "several military leaders", even though it was quite clear that this would be in violation of all accepted norms of warfare.

In autumn 1940, high-ranking German officials drafted a memorandum on the dangers of an invasion of the Soviet Union. They said Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic States would end up as only a further economic burden for Germany. It was argued that the Soviets in their current bureaucratic form were harmless and that the occupation would not benefit Germany. Hitler disagreed with economists about the risks and told his right-hand man Hermann Göring, the chief of the Luftwaffe, that he would no longer listen to misgivings about the economic dangers of a war with Russia. It is speculated that this was passed on to General Georg Thomas, who had produced reports that predicted a net economic drain for Germany in the event of an invasion of the Soviet Union unless its economy was captured intact and the Caucasus oilfields seized in the first blow, and he consequently revised his future report to fit Hitler's wishes. The Red Army's ineptitude in the Winter War against Finland in 1939–40 convinced Hitler of a quick victory within a few months. Neither Hitler nor the General Staff anticipated a long campaign lasting into the winter, and therefore adequate preparations, such as the distribution of warm clothing and winterization of vehicles and lubricants, were not made.

Beginning in March 1941, Göring's Green Folder laid out details for the disposal of the Soviet economy after conquest. The Hunger Plan outlined how the entire urban population of conquered territories was to be starved to death, thus creating an agricultural surplus to feed Germany and urban space for the German upper class. Nazi policy aimed to destroy the Soviet Union as a political entity in accordance with the geopolitical Lebensraum ideals for the benefit of future generations of the "Nordic master race". In 1941, Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, later appointed Reich Minister of the Occupied Eastern Territories, suggested that conquered Soviet territory should be administered in the following Reichskommissariate ("Reich Commissionerships"):

German military planners also researched Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia. In their calculations, they concluded that there was little danger of a large-scale retreat of the Red Army into the Russian interior, as it could not afford to give up the Baltic states, Ukraine, or the Moscow and Leningrad regions, all of which were vital to the Red Army for supply reasons and would thus have to be defended. Hitler and his generals disagreed on where Germany should focus its energy. Hitler, in many discussions with his generals, repeated his order of "Leningrad first, the Donbass second, Moscow third"; but he consistently emphasized the destruction of the Red Army over the achievement of specific terrain objectives. Hitler believed Moscow to be of "no great importance" in the defeat of the Soviet Union and instead believed victory would come with the destruction of the Red Army west of the capital, especially west of the Western Dvina and Dnieper rivers, and this pervaded the plan for Barbarossa. This belief later led to disputes between Hitler and several German senior officers, including Heinz Guderian, Gerhard Engel, Fedor von Bock and Franz Halder, who believed the decisive victory could only be delivered at Moscow. Hitler had grown overconfident in his own military judgment as a result of the rapid successes in Western Europe.

German preparations

The Germans had begun massing troops near the Soviet border even before the campaign in the Balkans had finished. By the third week of February 1941, 680,000 German soldiers were gathered in assembly areas on the Romanian-Soviet border. In preparation for the attack, Hitler had secretly moved upwards of 3 million German troops and approximately 690,000 Axis soldiers to the Soviet border regions. Additional Luftwaffe operations included numerous aerial surveillance missions over Soviet territory many months before the attack.

Although the Soviet High Command was alarmed by this, Stalin's belief that the Third Reich was unlikely to attack only two years after signing the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact resulted in a slow Soviet preparation. This fact aside, the Soviets did not entirely overlook the threat of their German neighbor, as well before the German invasion Marshal Semyon Timoshenko referred to the Germans as the Soviet Union's "most important and strongest enemy" and as early as July 1940, Red Army Chief of Staff, Boris Shaposhnikov, produced a preliminary three-pronged plan of attack for what a German invasion might look like, remarkably similar to the actual attack. Since April 1941, the Germans had begun setting up Operation Haifisch and Operation Harpune to substantiate their claims that Britain was the real target. These simulated preparations in Norway and the English Channel coast included activities such as ship concentrations, reconnaissance flights and training exercises.

The reasons for the postponement of Barbarossa from the initially planned date of 15 May to the actual invasion date of 22 June 1941 (a 38-day delay) are debated. The reason most commonly cited is the unforeseen contingency of invading Yugoslavia in April 1941. Historian Thomas B. Buell indicates that Finland and Romania, who weren't involved in initial German planning, needed additional time to prepare to participate in the invasion. Buell adds that that an unusually wet winter kept rivers at full flood until late spring. The full floods could have discouraged an earlier attack, even if it was unlikely to have happened before the end of the Balkans Campaign.

OKH commander Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch and Hitler, studies maps during the early days of Hitler's Russian Campaign

The importance of the delay is still debated. Many historians argue that the 22 June start date was sufficient for the German offensive to reach Moscow by September. Antony Beevor writes about the delay caused by German attacks in the Balkans that "most [historians] accept that it made little difference" to the eventual outcome of Barbarossa. However, William Shirer argues that Hitler's Balkans Campaign had delayed the commencement of Barbarossa by several weeks and thereby jeopardized it.

The Germans deployed one independent regiment, one separate motorized training brigade and 153 divisions for Barbarossa, which included 104 infantry, 19 panzer and 15 motorized infantry divisions in three army groups, nine security divisions to operate in conquered territories, four divisions in Finland and two divisions as reserve under the direct control of OKH. These were equipped with 6,867 armored vehicles, of which 3,350–3,795 were tanks, 2,770–4,389 aircraft (that amounted to 65 percent of the Luftwaffe), 7,200–23,435 artillery pieces, 17,081 mortars, about 600,000 motor vehicles and 625,000–700,000 horses. Finland slated 14 divisions for the invasion, and Romania offered 13 divisions and eight brigades over the course of Barbarossa. The entire Axis forces, 3.8 million personnel, deployed across a front extending from the Arctic Ocean southward to the Black Sea, were all controlled by the OKH and organized into Army Norway, Army Group North, Army Group Center and Army Group South, alongside three Luftflotten (air fleets, the air force equivalent of army groups) that supported the army groups: Luftflotte 1 for North, Luftflotte 2 for Center and Luftflotte 4 for South.

Army Norway was to operate in far northern Scandinavia and bordering Soviet territories. Army Group North was to march through the Baltic states into northern Russia, either take or destroy the city of Leningrad and link up with Finnish forces. Army Group Center, the army group equipped with the most armour and air power, was to strike from Poland into Belorussia and the west-central regions of Russia proper, and advance to Smolensk and then Moscow. Army Group South was to strike the heavily populated and agricultural heartland of Ukraine, taking Kiev before continuing eastward over the steppes of southern USSR to the Volga with the aim of controlling the oil-rich Caucasus. Army Group South was deployed in two sections separated by a 198-mile (319 km) gap. The northern section, which contained the army group's only panzer group, was in southern Poland right next to Army Group Center, and the southern section was in Romania.

The German forces in the rear (mostly Waffen-SS and Einsatzgruppen units) were to operate in conquered territories to counter any partisan activity in areas they controlled, as well as to execute captured Soviet political commissars and Jews. On 17 June, Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) chief Reinhard Heydrich briefed around thirty to fifty Einsatzgruppen commanders on "the policy of eliminating Jews in Soviet territories, at least in general terms". While the Einsatzgruppen were assigned to the Wehrmacht's units, which provided them with supplies such as gasoline and food, they were controlled by the RSHA. The official plan for Barbarossa assumed that the army groups would be able to advance freely to their primary objectives simultaneously, without spreading thin, once they had won the border battles and destroyed the Red Army's forces in the border area.

Soviet preparations

In 1930, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, a prominent military theorist in tank warfare in the interwar period and later Marshal of the Soviet Union, forwarded a memo to the Kremlin that lobbied for colossal investment in the resources required for the mass production of weapons, pressing the case for "40,000 aircraft and 50,000 tanks". In the early-1930s, a modern operational doctrinefor the Red Army was developed and promulgated in the 1936 Field Regulations in the form of the Deep Battle Concept. Defense expenditure also grew rapidly from just 12 percent of the gross national product in 1933 to 18 percent by 1940.

During Stalin's Great Purge in the late-1930s, which had not ended by the time of the German invasion on 22 June 1941, much of the officer corps of the Red Army was decimated and their replacements, appointed by Stalin for political reasons, often lacked military competence. Of the five Marshals of the Soviet Union appointed in 1935, only Kliment Voroshilov and Semyon Budyonny survived Stalin's purge. Tukachevsky was killed in 1937. Fifteen of 16 army commanders, 50 of the 57 corps commanders, 154 of the 186 divisional commanders, and 401 of 456 colonels were killed, and many other officers were dismissed. In total, about 30,000 Red Army personnel were executed. Stalin further underscored his control by reasserting the role of political commissars at the divisional level and below to oversee the political loyalty of the army to the regime. The commissars held a position equal to that of the commander of the unit they were overseeing. But in spite of efforts to ensure the political subservience of the armed forces, in the wake of Red Army's poor performance in Poland and in the Winter War, about 80 percent of the officers dismissed during the Great Purge were reinstated by 1941. Also, between January 1939 and May 1941, 161 new divisions were activated. Therefore, although about 75 percent of all the officers had been in their position for less than one year at the start of the German invasion of 1941, many of the short tenures can be attributed not only to the purge, but also to the rapid increase in creation of military units.

In the Soviet Union, speaking to his generals in December 1940, Stalin mentioned Hitler's references to an attack on the Soviet Union in Mein Kampf and Hitler's belief that the Red Army would need four years to ready itself. Stalin declared "we must be ready much earlier" and "we will try to delay the war for another two years". As early as August 1940, British intelligence had received hints of German plans to attack the Soviets only a week after Hitler informally approved the plans for Barbarossa and warned the Soviet Union accordingly. But Stalin's distrust of the British led him to ignore their warnings in the belief that they were a trick designed to bring the Soviet Union into the war on their side. In early 1941, Stalin's own intelligence servicesand American intelligence gave regular and repeated warnings of an impending German attack. Soviet spy Richard Sorge also gave Stalin the exact German launch date, but Sorge and other informers had previously given different invasion dates that passed peacefully before the actual invasion. Stalin acknowledged the possibility of an attack in general and therefore made significant preparations, but decided not to run the risk of provoking Hitler.

Marshal Zhukov speaking at a military conference in Moscow, September 1941

Beginning in July 1940, the Red Army General Staff developed war plans that identified the Wehrmacht as the most dangerous threat to the Soviet Union, and that in the case of a war with Germany, the Wehrmacht's main attack would come through the region north of the Pripyat Marshes into Belorussia, which later proved to be correct. Stalin disagreed, and in October he authorized the development of new plans that assumed a German attack would focus on the region south of Pripyat Marshes towards the economically vital regions in Ukraine. This became the basis for all subsequent Soviet war plans and the deployment of their armed forces in preparation for the German invasion.

In early-1941 Stalin authorized the State Defense Plan 1941 (DP-41), which along with the Mobilization Plan 1941 (MP-41), called for the deployment of 186 divisions, as the first strategic echelon, in the four military districts of the western Soviet Union that faced the Axis territories; and the deployment of another 51 divisions along the Dvina and Dnieper Rivers as the second strategic echelon under Stavka control, which in the case of a German invasion was tasked to spearhead a Soviet counteroffensive along with the remaining forces of the first echelon. But on 22 June 1941 the first echelon only contained 171 divisions, numbering 2.6–2.9 million; and the second strategic echelon contained 57 divisions that were still mobilizing, most of which were still understrength. The second echelon was undetected by German intelligence until days after the invasion commenced, in most cases only when German ground forces bumped into them.

At the start of the invasion, the manpower of the Soviet military force that had been mobilized was 5.3–5.5 million, and it was still increasing as the Soviet reserve force of 14 million, with at least basic military training, continued to mobilize. The Red Army was dispersed and still preparing when the invasion commenced. Their units were often separated and lacked adequate transportation.

The Soviet Union had some 23,000 tanks available of which only 14,700 were combat-ready. Around 11,000 tanks were in the western military districts that faced the German invasion force. Hitler later declared to some of his generals, "If I had known about the Russian tank strength in 1941 I would not have attacked". However, maintenance and readiness standards were very poor; ammunition and radios were in short supply, and many armoured units lacked the trucks for supplies. The most advanced Soviet tank models – the KV-1 and T-

34 – which were superior to all current German tanks, as well as all designs still in development as of the summer 1941, were not available in large numbers at the time the invasion commenced.[146] Furthermore, in the autumn of 1939, the Soviets disbanded their mechanized corps and partly dispersed their tanks to infantry divisions; but following their observation of the German campaign in France, in late-1940 they began to reorganize most of their armored assets back into mechanized corps with a target strength of 1,031 tanks each. But these large armoured formations were unwieldy, and moreover they were spread out in scattered garrisons, with their subordinate divisions up to 100 kilometres (62 miles) apart. The reorganization was still in progress and incomplete when Barbarossa commenced. Soviet tank units were rarely well equipped, and they lacked training and logistical support. Units were sent into combat with no arrangements in place for refueling, ammunition resupply, or personnel replacement. Often, after a single engagement, units were destroyed or rendered ineffective. The Soviet numerical advantage in heavy equipment was thoroughly offset by the superior training and organization of the Wehrmacht.

The Soviet Air Force (VVS) held the numerical advantage with a total of approximately 19,533 aircraft, which made it the largest air force in the world in the summer of 1941. About 7,133–9,100 of these were deployed in the five western military districts, and an additional 1445 were under naval control.

Historians have debated whether Stalin was planning an invasion of German territory in the summer of 1941. The debate began in the late-1980s when Viktor Suvorov published a journal article and later the book Icebreaker in which he stated that Stalin had seen the outbreak of war in Western Europe as an opportunity to spread communist revolutions throughout the continent, and that the Soviet military was being deployed for an imminent attack at the time of the German invasion. This view had also been advanced by former German generals following the war. Suvorov's thesis was fully or partially accepted by some historians, including Valeri Danilov, Joachim Hoffmann, Mikhail Meltyukhov, and Vladimir Nevezhin, and attracted public attention in Germany, Israel, and Russia. It has been strongly rejected by most historians of this period, and Icebreaker is generally considered to be an "anti-Soviet tract" in Western countries. David Glantz and Gabriel Gorodetsky wrote books to rebut Suvorov's arguments, and most historians believe that Stalin was seeking to avoid war in 1941 as he believed that his military was not ready to fight the German forces.

German troops at the Soviet state border marker, 22 June 1941

At around 01:00 on 22 June 1941, the Soviet military districts in the border area[j] were alerted by NKO Directive No. 1, issued late on the night of 21 June. It called on them to "bring all forces to combat readiness," but to "avoid provocative actions of any kind". It took up to two hours for several of the units subordinate to the Fronts to receive the order of the directive, and the majority did not receive it before the invasion commenced.

On 21 June, at 13:00 Army Group North received the codeword Düsseldorf, indicating Barbarossa would commence the next morning, and passed down its own codeword, Dortmund. At around 03:15 on 22 June 1941, the Axis Powers commenced the invasion of the Soviet Union with the bombing of major cities in Soviet-occupied Poland and an artillery barrage on Red Army defences on the entire front. Air-raids were conducted as far as Kronstadt near Leningrad, Ismail in Bessarabia, and Sevastopol in the Crimea. Meanwhile, ground troops crossed the border, accompanied in some locales by Lithuanian and Ukrainian fifth columnists. Roughly three million soldiers of the Wehrmacht went into action and faced slightly fewer Soviet troops at the border.

At around noon, the news of the invasion was broadcast to the population by Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov: "... Without a declaration of war, German forces fell on our country, attacked our frontiers in many places ... The Red Army and the whole nation will wage a victorious Patriotic War for our beloved country, for honour, for liberty ... Our cause is just. The enemy will be beaten. Victory will be ours!" By calling upon the population's devotion to their nation rather than the Party, Molotov struck a patriotic chord that helped a stunned people absorb the shattering news. Within the first few days of the invasion, the Soviet High Command and Red Army were extensively reorganized so as to place them on the necessary war footing. Stalin did not address the nation about the German invasion until 3 July, when he also called for a "Patriotic War ... of the entire Soviet people".

In Germany, on the morning of 22 June, Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels announced the invasion to the waking nation in a radio broadcast with Hitler's words: "At this moment a march is taking place that, for

its extent, compares with the greatest the world has ever seen. I have decided today to place the fate and future of the Reich and our people in the hands of our soldiers. May God aid us, especially in this fight!" Later the same morning, Hitler proclaimed to his colleagues, "Before three months have passed, we shall witness a collapse of Russia, the like of which has never been seen in history." Hitler also addressed the German people via the radio, presenting himself as a man of peace, who reluctantly had to attack the Soviet Union. Following the invasion, Goebbels openly spoke of a "European crusade against Bolshevism", but omitted the terrible fate that awaited Jews in allied and friendly countries.

Phase one

German advances from June to August 1941

The initial momentum of the German ground and air attack completely destroyed the Soviet organizational command and control within the first few hours, paralyzing every level of command from the infantry platoon to the Soviet High Command in Moscow. Moscow not only failed to grasp the magnitude of the catastrophe that confronted the Soviet forces in the border area, but Stalin's first reaction was also disbelief. At around 07:15, Stalin issued NKO Directive No. 2, which announced the invasion to the Soviet Armed Forces, and called on them to attack Axis forces wherever they had violated the borders and launch air strikes into the border regions of German territory. At around 09:15, Stalin issued NKO Directive No. 3, signed by Marshal Semyon Timoshenko, which now called for a general counteroffensive on the entire front "without any regards for borders" that both men hoped would sweep the enemy from Soviet territory. Stalin's order, which Timoshenko authorized, was not based on a realistic appraisal of the military situation at hand, but commanders passed it along for fear of retribution if they failed to obey; several days passed before the Soviet leadership became aware of the enormity of the opening defeat.

Air war

Luftwaffe reconnaissance units plotted Soviet troop concentration, supply dumps and airfields, and marked them down for destruction. Additional Luftwaffe attacks were carried out against Soviet command and control centers in order to disrupt the mobilization and organization of Soviet forces. In contrast, Soviet artillery observers based at the border area had been under the strictest instructions not to open fire on German

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aircraft prior to the invasion. One plausible reason given for the Soviet hesitation to return fire was Stalin's initial belief that the assault was launched without Hitler's authorization. Significant amounts of Soviet territory were lost along with Red Army forces as a result; it took several days before Stalin comprehended the magnitude of the calamity. The Luftwaffe reportedly destroyed 1,489 aircraft on the first day of the invasion and over 3,100 during the first three days. Hermann Göring, Minister of Aviation and Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, distrusted the reports and ordered the figure checked. Luftwaffe staffs surveyed the wreckage on Soviet airfields, and their original figure proved conservative, as over 2,000 Soviet aircraft were estimated to have been destroyed on the first day of the invasion. In reality, Soviet losses were likely higher; a Soviet archival document recorded the loss of 3,922 Soviet aircraft in the first three days against an estimated loss of 78 German aircraft. The Luftwaffe reported the loss of only 35 aircraft on the first day of combat. A document from the German Federal Archives puts the Luftwaffe's loss at 63 aircraft for the first day.

By the end of the first week, the Luftwaffe had achieved air supremacy over the battlefields of all the army groups, but was unable to effect this air dominance over the vast expanse of the western Soviet Union. According to the war diaries of the German High Command, the Luftwaffe by 5 July had lost 491 aircraft with 316 more damaged, leaving it with only about 70 percent of the strength it had at the start of the invasion.

Baltic states

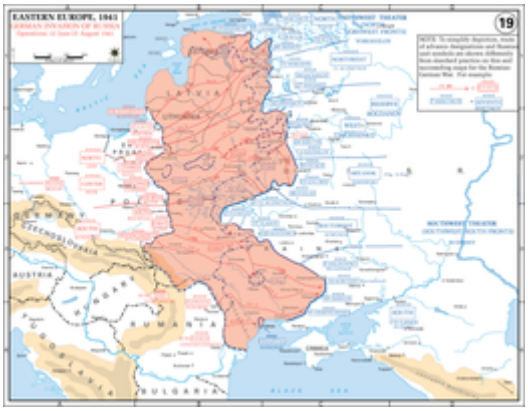
German forces pushing through Latvia, summer 1941.

On 22 June, Army Group North attacked the Soviet Northwestern Front and broke through its 8th and 11th Armies. The Soviets immediately launched a powerful counterattack against the German 4th Panzer Group with the Soviet 3rd and 12th Mechanized Corps, but the Soviet attack was defeated. On 25 June, the 8th and 11th Armies were ordered to withdraw to the Western Dvina River, where it was planned to meetup with the 21st Mechanized Corps and the 22nd and 27th Armies. However, on 26 June, Erich von Manstein's LVI Panzer Corps reached the river first and secured a bridgehead across it. The Northwestern Front was forced to abandon the river defenses, and on 29 June Stavka ordered the Front to withdraw to the Stalin Line on the approaches to Leningrad. On 2 July, Army Group North began its attack on the Stalin Line with its 4th Panzer Group, and on 8 July captured Pskov, devastating the defenses of the Stalin Line and reaching Leningrad oblast. The 4th Panzer Group had advanced about 450 kilometres (280 mi) since the

start of the invasion and was now only about 250 kilometres (160 mi) from its primary objective Leningrad. On 9 July it began its attack towards the Soviet defenses along the Luga River in Leningrad oblast.

Phase two

Further information: Battle of Smolensk (1941) and Leningrad Operation (1941)



German advances during the opening phases of Operation Barbarossa, August 1941

On 2 July and through the next six days, a rainstorm typical of Belarusian summers slowed the progress of the panzers of Army Group Center, and Soviet defenses stiffened. The delays gave the Soviets time to organize a massive counterattack against Army Group Center. The army group's ultimate objective was Smolensk, which commanded the road to Moscow. Facing the Germans was an old Soviet defensive line held by six armies. On 6 July, the Soviets launched a massive counter-attack using the V and VII Mechanized Corps of the 20th Army, which collided with the German 39th and 47th Panzer Corps in a battle where the Red Army lost 832 tanks of the 2000 employed in five days of ferocious fighting. The Germans defeated this counterattack thanks largely to the coincidental presence of the Luftwaffe's only squadron of tank-busting aircraft. The 2nd Panzer Group crossed the Dnieper River and closed in on Smolensk from the south while the 3rd Panzer Group, after defeating the Soviet counterattack, closed on Smolensk from the north. Trapped between their pincers were three Soviet armies. The 29th Panzer Division captured Smolensk on 16 July yet a gap remained between Army Group Center. On 18 July, the panzer groups came to within ten kilometres (6.2 mi) of closing the gap but the trap did not finally close until 5 August, when upwards of 300,000 Red Army soldiers had been captured and 3,205 Soviet tanks were destroyed. Large numbers of Red Army soldiers escaped to stand between the Germans and Moscow as resistance continued.

Four weeks into the campaign, the Germans realized they had grossly underestimated Soviet strength. The German troops had used their initial supplies and General Bock quickly came to the conclusion that not only had the Red Army offered stiff opposition, but German difficulties were also due to the logistical problems with reinforcements and provisions. Operations were now slowed down to allow for resupply; the delay was to be used to adapt strategy to the new situation. Hitler by now had lost faith in battles of encirclement as large numbers of Soviet soldiers had escaped the pincers. He now believed he could defeat the Soviet state by economic means, depriving them of the industrial capacity to continue the war. That meant seizing the

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industrial center of Kharkov, the Donbass and the oil fields of the Caucasus in the south and the speedy capture of Leningrad, a major center of military production, in the north.

Chief of the OKH, General Franz Halder, Fedor von Bock, the commander of Army Group Center, and almost all the German generals involved in Operation Barbarossa argued vehemently in favor of continuing the all-out drive toward Moscow. Besides the psychological importance of capturing the Soviet capital, the generals pointed out that Moscow was a major center of arms production, the center of the Soviet communications system and an important transport hub. Intelligence reports indicated that the bulk of the Red Army was deployed near Moscow under Semyon Timoshenko for the defense of the capital. Panzer commander Heinz Guderian was sent to Hitler by Bock and Halder to argue their case for continuing the assault against Moscow but Hitler issued an order through Guderian (bypassing Bock and Halder) to send Army Group Center's tanks to the north and south, temporarily halting the drive to Moscow. Convinced by Hitler's argument, Guderian returned to his commanding officers as a convert to the Führer's plan, which earned him their disdain.

Phase three

Leningrad

For its final attack on Leningrad, the 4th Panzer Group was reinforced by tanks from Army Group Center. On 8 August, the Panzers broke through the Soviet defenses. By the end of August, 4th Panzer Group had penetrated to within 48 kilometres (30 miles) of Leningrad. The Finns had pushed southeast on both sides of Lake Ladoga to reach the old Finnish-Soviet frontier.

General Guderian at a forward command post of a Panzer regiment near Kiev, 1941

The Germans attacked Leningrad in August 1941; in the following three "black months" of 1941, 400,000 residents of the city worked to build the city's fortifications as fighting continued, while 160,000 others joined the ranks of the Red Army. Nowhere was the Soviet levée en masse spirit stronger in resisting the Germans than at Leningrad where reserve troops and freshly improvised Narodnoe Opolcheniye units, consisting of worker battalions and even schoolboy formations, joined in digging trenches as they prepared to defend the city. On 7 September, the German 20th Motorized Divisionseized Shlisselburg, cutting off all land routes to Leningrad. The Germans severed the railroads to Moscow and captured the railroad to Murmansk with Finnish assistance to inaugurate the start of a siege that would last for over two years.

At this stage, Hitler ordered the final destruction of Leningrad with no prisoners taken, and on 9 September, Army Group North began the final push. Within ten days it had advanced within 11 kilometres (6.8 miles) of the city. However, the push over the last 10 km (6.2 mi) proved very slow and casualties mounted. Hitler, now out of patience, ordered that Leningrad should not be stormed, but rather starved into submission. Along these lines, the OKH issued Directive No. la 1601/41 on 22 September 1941, which accorded Hitler's plans. Deprived of its Panzer forces, Army Group Center remained static and was subjected to numerous Soviet counterattacks, in particular the Yelnya Offensive, in which the Germans suffered their first major tactical defeat since their invasion began; this Red Army victory also provided an important boost to Soviet morale. These attacks prompted Hitler to concentrate his attention back to Army Group Center and its drive on Moscow. The Germans ordered the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies to break off their Siege of Leningrad and support Army Group Center in its attack on Moscow.

Kiev

Before an attack on Moscow could begin, operations in Kiev needed to be finished. Half of Army Group Center had swung to the south in the back of the Kiev position, while Army Group South moved to the north from its Dniepr bridgehead. The encirclement of Soviet forces in Kiev was achieved on 16 September. A battle ensued in which the Soviets were hammered with tanks, artillery, and aerial bombardment. After ten days of vicious fighting, the Germans claimed 665,000 Soviet soldiers captured, although the real figure is probably around 220,000 prisoners. Soviet losses were 452,720 men, 3,867 artillery pieces and mortars from 43 divisions of the 5th, 21st, 26th, and 37th Soviet Armies. Despite the exhaustion and losses facing some German units (upwards of 75 percent of their men) from the intense fighting, the massive defeat of the Soviets at Kiev and the Red Army losses during the first three months of the assault contributed to the German assumption that Operation Typhoon (the attack on Moscow) could still succeed.

Phase four

Battle of Moscow

Soviet planes flying over German positions near Moscow

After Kiev, the Red Army no longer outnumbered the Germans and there were no more trained reserves directly available. To defend Moscow, Stalin could field 800,000 men in 83 divisions, but no more than 25 divisions were fully effective. Operation Typhoon, the drive to Moscow, began on 30 September 1941. In front of Army Group Center was a series of elaborate defense lines, the first centered on Vyazma and the second

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on Mozhaysk. Russian peasants began fleeing ahead of the advancing German units, burning their harvested crops, driving their cattle away, and destroying buildings in their villages as part of a scorched-earth policy designed to deny the Nazi war machine of needed supplies and foodstuffs.

The first blow took the Soviets completely by surprise when the 2nd Panzer Group, returning from the south, took Oryol, just 121 km (75 mi) south of the Soviet first main defense line. Three days later, the Panzers pushed on to Bryansk, while the 2nd Army attacked from the west.[269] The Soviet 3rd and 13th Armies were now encircled. To the north, the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies attacked Vyazma, trapping the 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd Armies. Moscow's first line of defense had been shattered. The pocket eventually yielded over 500,000 Soviet prisoners, bringing the tally since the start of the invasion to three million. The Soviets now had only 90,000 men and 150 tanks left for the defense of Moscow.

The German government now publicly predicted the imminent capture of Moscow and convinced foreign correspondents of a pending Soviet collapse. On 13 October, the 3rd Panzer Group penetrated to within 140 km (87 mi) of the capital. Martial law was declared in Moscow. Almost from the beginning of Operation Typhoon, however, the weather worsened. Temperatures fell while there was continued rainfall. This turned the unpaved road network into mud and slowed the German advance on Moscow. Additional snows fell which were followed by more rain, creating a glutinous mud that German tanks had difficulty traversing, whereas the Soviet T-34, with its wider tread, was better suited to negotiate. At the same time, the supply situation for the Germans rapidly deteriorated. On 31 October, the German Army High Command ordered a halt to Operation Typhoon while the armies were reorganized. The pause gave the Soviets, far better supplied, time to consolidate their positions and organize formations of newly activated reservists. In little over a month, the Soviets organized eleven new armies that included 30 divisions of Siberian troops. These had been freed from the Soviet Far East after Soviet intelligence assured Stalin that there was no longer a threat from the Japanese. During October and November 1941, over 1,000 tanks and 1,000 aircraft arrived along with the Siberian forces to assist in defending the city.

With the ground hardening due to the cold weather, The Germans resumed the attack on Moscow on 15 November. Although the troops themselves were now able to advance again, there had been no improvement in the supply situation. Facing the Germans were the 5th, 16th, 30th, 43rd, 49th, and 50th Soviet Armies. The Germans intended to move the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies across the Moscow Canal and envelop Moscow from the northeast. The 2nd Panzer Group would attack Tula and then close on Moscow from the south. As the Soviets reacted to their flanks, the 4th Army would attack the center. In two weeks of fighting, lacking sufficient fuel and ammunition, the Germans slowly crept towards Moscow. In the south, the 2nd Panzer Group was being blocked. On 22 November, Soviet Siberian units, augmented by the 49th and 50th Soviet Armies, attacked the 2nd Panzer Group and inflicted a defeat on the Germans. The 4th Panzer Group pushed the Soviet 16th Army back, however, and succeeded in crossing the Moscow Canal in an attempt to encircle Moscow.

The German position of advances before the start of Operation Typhoon, September 1941

On 2 December, part of the 258th Infantry Division advanced to within 24 km (15 mi) of Moscow. They were so close that German officers claimed they could see the spires of the Kremlin, but by then the first blizzards had begun. A reconnaissance battalion managed to reach the town of Khimki, only about 8 km (5.0 mi) from the Soviet capital. It captured the bridge over the Moscow-Volga Canal as well as the railway station, which marked the easternmost advance of German forces. In spite of the progress made, the Wehrmacht was not equipped for such severe winter warfare. The Soviet army was better adapted to fighting in winter conditions, but faced production shortages of winter clothing. The German forces fared worse, with deep snow further hindering equipment and mobility. Weather conditions had largely grounded the Luftwaffe, preventing large-scale air operations. Newly created Soviet units near Moscow now numbered over 500,000 men, and on 5 December, they launched a massive counterattack as part of the Soviet winter counteroffensive. The offensive halted on 7 January 1942, after having pushed the German armies back 100–250 km (62–155 mi) from Moscow. The Wehrmacht had lost the Battle for Moscow, and the invasion had cost the German Army over 830,000 men.

Aftermath

With the failure of the Battle of Moscow, all German plans for a quick defeat of the Soviet Union had to be revised. The Soviet counteroffensives in December 1941 caused heavy casualties on both sides, but ultimately eliminated the German threat to Moscow. Attempting to explain matters, Hitler issued Directive N. 39, which cited the early onset of winter and the severe cold for the German failure, whereas the main reason was the German military unpreparedness for such a giant enterprise. On 22 June 1941, the Wehrmacht as a whole had 209 divisions at its disposal, 163 of which were offensively capable. On 31 March 1942, less than one year after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht was reduced to fielding 58 offensively capable divisions. The Red Army's tenacity and ability to counter-attack effectively took the Germans as much by surprise as their own initial attack had the Soviets. Spurred on by the successful defense and in an effort to imitate the Germans, Stalin wanted to begin his own blitzkrieg campaign, not just against the German forces around Moscow, but against their armies in the north and south. Anger over the failed German offensives

caused Hitler to relieve Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch of command and in his place, Hitler assumed personal control of the German Army on 19 December 1941.

The Soviet Union had suffered heavily from the conflict, losing huge tracts of territory, and vast losses in men and material. Nonetheless, the Red Army proved capable of countering the German offensives, particularly as the Germans began experiencing irreplaceable shortages in manpower, armaments, provisions, and fuel. Despite the rapid relocation of Red Army armaments production east of the Urals and a dramatic increase of production in 1942, especially of armour, new aircraft types and artillery, the Wehrmacht was able to mount another large-scale offensive in July 1942, although on a much reduced front than the previous summer. Hitler, having realized that Germany's oil supply was "severely depleted", aimed to capture the oil fields of Baku in an offensive, codenamed Case Blue. Again, the Germans quickly overran great expanses of Soviet territory, but they failed to achieve their ultimate goals in the wake of their defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad.

By 1943, Soviet armaments production was fully operational and increasingly outproducing the German war economy. The final major German offensive in the Eastern theater of the Second World War took place during July—August 1943 with the launch of Operation Zitadelle, an assault on the Kursk salient. Approximately one million German troops confronted a Soviet force over 2.5 million strong. Following the defeat of Operation Zitadelle, the Soviets then launched counter-offensives employing six million men along a 1500-mile front towards the Dnepr River as they drove the Germans westwards. Employing increasingly ambitious and tactically sophisticated offensives, along with making operational improvements in secrecy and deception, the Red Army was eventually able to liberate much of the area which the Germans had previously occupied by the summer of 1944. The destruction of Army Group Centre, the outcome of Operation Bagration, proved to be a decisive success; additional Soviet offensives against the German Army Groups North and South in the fall of 1944 put the German war machine into retreat. By January 1945, Soviet military might was aimed at the German capital of Berlin. The war ended with the total defeat and capitulation of Nazi Germany in May 1945.

War crimes

While the Soviet Union had not signed the Geneva Convention, this did not mean their soldiers were entirely exempted from the protection it afforded; Germany had signed the treaty and was thus obligated to offer Soviet POWs treatment according to its provisions (as they generally did with other Allied POWs). According to the Soviets, they had not signed the Geneva Conventions in 1929 due to Article 9 which, by imposing racial segregation of POWs into different camps, contravened the Soviet constitution. Article 82 of the convention specified that "In case, in time of war, one of the belligerents is not a party to the Convention, its provisions shall nevertheless remain in force as between the belligerents who are parties thereto. Despite this Hitler called for the battle against the Soviet Union to be a "struggle for existence" and emphasized that the Russian armies were to be "annihilated", a mindset that contributed to war crimes against Soviet prisoners of war. A Nazi memorandum from 16 July 1941, recorded by Martin Bormann, quotes Hitler saying, "The

giant [occupied] area must naturally be pacified as quickly as possible; this will happen at best if anyone who just looks funny should be shot". Conveniently for the Nazis, the fact that the Soviets failed to sign the convention played into their hands as they justified their behavior accordingly. Even if the Soviets had signed, it is highly unlikely that this would have stopped the Nazis' genocidal policies towards combatants, civilians, and prisoners of war.

Himmler inspecting a prisoner of war camp

Before the war, Hitler issued the notorious Commissar Order, which called for all Soviet political commissars taken prisoner at the front to be shot immediately without trial. German soldiers participated in these mass killings along with members of the SS-Einsatzgruppen, sometimes reluctantly, claiming "military necessity". On the eve of the invasion, German soldiers were informed that their battle "demands ruthless and vigorous measures against Bolshevik inciters, guerrillas, saboteurs, Jews and the complete elimination of all active and passive resistance". Collective punishment was authorized against partisan attacks; if a perpetrator could not be quickly identified, then burning villages and mass executions were considered acceptable reprisals. Although the majority of German soldiers accepted these crimes as justified due to Nazi propaganda, which depicted the Red Army as Untermenschen, a few prominent German officers openly protested about them. An estimated two million Soviet prisoners of war died of starvation during Barbarossa alone. The famished prisoners of war were hardly able to walk by themselves. By the end of the war, 58 percent of all Soviet prisoners of war had died in German captivity.

Organized crimes against civilians, including women and children, were carried out on a huge scale by the German police and military forces, as well as the local collaborators. Under the command of the Reich Main Security Office, the Einsatzgruppen killing squads conducted large-scale massacres of Jews and communists in conquered Soviet territories. Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg puts the number of Jews murdered by "mobile killing operations" at 1,400,000. The original instructions to kill "Jews in party and state positions" was broadened to include "all male Jews of military age" and was expanded once more to "all male Jews regardless of age." By the end of July, the Germans were regularly killing women and children. On 18 December 1941, Himmler and Hitler discussed the "Jewish question", and Himmler noted the meeting's result in his appointment book: "To be annihilated as partisans." According to Christopher Browning, this represented the Nazi decision of "annihilating Jews and solving the so-called 'Jewish question' under the cover of killing partisans." In accordance with Nazi policies against "inferior" Asian peoples, Turkmens were also persecuted. According to a post-war report by Prince Veli Kajum Khan, they were imprisoned in concentration camps in terrible conditions, where those deemed to have "Mongolian" features were murdered daily. Asians were also targeted by the Einsatzgruppen and were the subjects of lethal medical experiments and murder at a "pathological institute" in Kiev. Hitler received reports of the mass killings conducted by the Einsatzgruppen which were first conveyed to the RSHA, where they were aggregated into a summary report by GestapoChief Heinrich Müller.

Burning houses suspected of being partisan meeting places and poisoning water wells became common practice for soldiers of the German 9th Army. At Kharkov, the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union, food was provided only to the small number of civilians who worked for the Germans, with the rest designated to slowly starve. Thousands of Soviets were deported to Germany to be used as slave labor beginning in 1942.

The citizens of Leningrad were subjected to heavy bombardment and a siege that would last 872 days and starve more than a million people to death, of whom approximately 400,000 were children below the age of 14. The German-Finnish blockade cut off access to food, fuel and raw materials, and rations reached a low, for the non-working population, of four ounces (five thin slices) of bread and a little watery soup per day. Starving Soviet civilians began to eat their domestic animals, along with hair tonic and Vaseline. Some desperate citizens resorted to cannibalism; Soviet records list 2,000 people arrested for "the use of human meat as food" during the siege, 886 of them during the first winter of 1941–42. The Wehrmacht planned to seal off Leningrad, starve out the population, and then demolish the city entirely.

Sexual violence

Rape was a widespread phenomenon in the East as German soldiers regularly committed violent sexual acts against Soviet women. Whole units were occasionally involved in the crime with upwards of one-third of the instances being gang-rape. Frequently in the case of Jewish women, they were immediately murdered following acts of sexual violence. Historian Birgit Beck emphasizes that military decrees, which served to authorize wholesale brutality on many levels, essentially destroyed the basis for any prosecution of sexual offenses committed by German soldiers in the East. She also contends that detection of such instances was limited by the fact that sexual violence was often inflicted in the context of billets in civilian housing.

Historical significance

Operation Barbarossa was the largest military operation in history — more men, tanks, guns and aircraft were committed than had ever been deployed before in a single offensive. The invasion opened up the Eastern Front of World War II, the largest theater of war during that conflict, and it witnessed clashes of unprecedented violence and destruction for four years that resulted in the deaths of more than 26 million Soviet people. More people died fighting on the Eastern Front than in all other fighting across the globe during World War II. Damage to both the economy and landscape was enormous for the Soviet Union as approximately 1,710 towns and 70,000 villages were razed.

Operation Barbarossa and the subsequent German failure to achieve their objectives changed the political landscape of Europe dividing it into Eastern and Western blocs. The political vacuum left in the eastern half of the continent was filled by the USSR when Stalin secured his territorial prizes of 1944–1945 and firmly placed his Red Army in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the eastern half of Germany. Stalin's fear of any resurgence of German power and his distrust in the former Allied powers contributed to Soviet pan-Slavic initiatives and a subsequent alliance of Slavic states. Historians David Glantz and Jonathan House reference Operation Barbarossa's influence not only on Stalin but subsequent Soviet

leaders, claiming it "colored" their strategic mindsets for the "next four decades" and instigated the creation of "an elaborate system of buffer and client states, designed to insulate the Soviet Union from any possible future attack." As a consequence, Eastern Europe became communist in political disposition and Western Europe fell under the democratic sway of the United States, a nation uncertain about its future policies in Europe.

Battle of Stalingrad

For the 1949 Russian film, see The Battle of Stalingrad (film). For the Russian Civil War battle at the same city, see Battle for Tsaritsyn.

Battle of Stalingrad	
Part of the Eastern Front of World War II	
A Soviet soldier waving the Red Banner over the central plaza of Stalingrad in 1943.	
Date	23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943 (5 months, 1 week and 3 days)
Location	Stalingrad, Russian SFSR, Soviet Union
Result	Decisive Soviet victory • Destruction of the German 6th Army • Expulsion of the Germans from the Caucasus, reversing their gains from the 1942 Summer Campaign
Belligerents	
Germany Romania Italy Hungary Croatia	Soviet Union
Commanders and leaders	
Adolf Hitler	Georgy Zhukov

Friedrich Paulus Erich von Manstein W.F. von Richthofen Petre Dumitrescu C. Constantinescu Italo Gariboldi Gusztáv Jány	Nikolay Voronov A.M. Vasilevsky Andrey Yeryomenko Nikita Khrushchev K.K. Rokossovsky Nikolai Vatutin Vasily Chuikov
Units involved	
Army Group B: • 6th Army • 4th Panzer Army • Third Army • Fourth Army • Eighth Army • Second Army	Stalingrad Front 28th Army 51st Army 57th Army 62nd Army 64th Army Don Front[Note 1] South West Front[Note 2]
Strength	
Initial: 270,000 personnel 3,000 artillery pieces 500 tanks 600 aircraft, 1,600 by mid-September (Luftflotte 4) At the time of the Soviet counter-offensive: c. 1,040,000 men (400,000+ Germans, 220,000 Italians, 200,000 Hungarians, 143,296 Romanians, 40,000 Hiwi) 10,250 artillery pieces 500 tanks 732 (402 operational) aircraft	Initial: 187,000 personnel 2,200 artillery pieces 400 tanks 300 aircraft At the time of the Soviet counteroffensive: 1,143,000 13,451 artillery pieces 894 tanks 1,115 aircraft
Casualties and losses	
627,899 men 299,899 114,000	1,129,619 men 478,741 killed and missing 650,878 wounded or sick

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109,000 105,000	
900 aircraft 1,500 tanks 6,000 guns See casualties section	2,769 aircraft 4,341 tanks 15,728 guns See casualties section

Case Blue: German advances from 7 May 1942 to 18 November 1942

to 7 July 1942

to 22 July 1942

to 1 August 1942

to 18 November 1942

The Battle of Stalingrad (23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943) was a major confrontation of World War II in which Nazi Germanyand its allies fought the Soviet Union for control of the city of Stalingrad (now Volgograd) in Southern Russia.

Marked by fierce close quarters combat and direct assaults on civilians in air raids, it is often regarded as one of the single largest (nearly 2.2 million personnel) and bloodiest (1.7–2 million killed, wounded or captured) battles in the history of warfare. It was an extremely costly defeat for German forces, and the Army High Command had to withdraw vast military forces from the West to replace their losses.

The German offensive to capture Stalingrad began in August 1942, using the 6th Army and elements of the 4th Panzer Army. The attack was supported by intensive Luftwaffe bombing that reduced much of the city to rubble. The fighting degenerated into house-to-housefighting; both sides poured reinforcements into the city. By mid-November 1942, the Germans had pushed the Soviet defenders back at great cost into narrow zones along the west bank of the Volga River.

On 19 November 1942, the Red Army launched Operation Uranus, a two-pronged attack targeting the weaker Romanian and Hungarianarmies protecting the German 6th Army's flanks. The Axis forces on the flanks were overrun and the 6th Army was cut off and surrounded in the Stalingrad area. Adolf Hitler ordered that the army stay in Stalingrad and make no attempt to break out; instead, attempts were made to supply the army by air and to break the encirclement from the outside. Heavy fighting continued for another two months. By the beginning of February 1943, the Axis forces in Stalingrad had exhausted their ammunition and food. The remaining units of the 6th Army surrendered. The battle lasted five months, one week and three days.

Background

By the spring of 1942, despite the failure of Operation Barbarossa to decisively defeat the Soviet Union in a single campaign, the Wehrmacht had captured vast expanses of territory, including Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic republics. Elsewhere, the war had been progressing well: the U-boat offensive in the Atlantic had been very successful and Erwin Rommel had just captured Tobruk. In the east, they had stabilized their front in a line running from Leningrad in the north to Rostov in the south. There were a number of salients, but these were not particularly threatening. Hitler was confident that he could master the Red Army after the winter of 1942, because even though Army Group Centre (Heeresgruppe Mitte) had suffered heavy losses west of Moscow the previous winter, 65% of its infantry had not been engaged and had been rested and re-equipped. Neither Army Group North nor Army Group South had been particularly hard pressed over the winter. Stalin was expecting the main thrust of the German summer attacks to be directed against Moscow again.

With the initial operations being very successful, the Germans decided that their summer campaign in 1942 would be directed at the southern parts of the Soviet Union. The initial objectives in the region around Stalingrad were the destruction of the industrial capacity of the city and the deployment of forces to block the Volga River. The river was a key route from the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to central Russia. Its capture would disrupt commercial river traffic. The Germans cut the pipeline from the oilfields when they captured Rostov on 23 July. The capture of Stalingrad would make the delivery of Lend Lease supplies via the Persian Corridor much more difficult.

On 23 July 1942, Hitler personally rewrote the operational objectives for the 1942 campaign, greatly expanding them to include the occupation of the city of Stalingrad. Both sides began to attach propaganda value to the city, based on it bearing the name of the leader of the Soviet Union. Hitler proclaimed that after Stalingrad's capture, its male citizens were to be killed and all women and children were to be deported because its population was "thoroughly communistic" and "especially dangerous". It was assumed that the fall of the city would also firmly secure the northern and western flanks of the German armies as they advanced on Baku, with the aim of securing these strategic petroleum resources for Germany. The expansion

of objectives was a significant factor in Germany's failure at Stalingrad, caused by German overconfidence and an underestimation of Soviet reserves.

The Soviets realized that they were under tremendous constraints of time and resources and ordered that anyone strong enough to hold a rifle be sent to fight.

Army Group South was selected for a sprint forward through the southern Russian steppes into the Caucasus to capture the vital Soviet oil fields there. The planned summer offensive was code-named Fall Blau (Case Blue). It was to include the German 6th, 17th, 4th Panzer and 1st Panzer Armies. Army Group South had overrun the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1941. Poised in Eastern Ukraine, it was to spearhead the offensive.

Hitler intervened, however, ordering the Army Group to split in two. Army Group South (A), under the command of Wilhelm List, was to continue advancing south towards the Caucasus as planned with the 17th Army and First Panzer Army. Army Group South (B), including Friedrich Paulus's 6th Army and Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army, was to move east towards the Volga and Stalingrad. Army Group B was commanded initially by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock and later by General Maximilian von Weichs.

The German advance to the Don River between 7 May and 23 July.

The start of Case Blue had been planned for late May 1942. A number of German and Romanian units that were to take part in Blau, however, were besieging Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula. Delays in ending the siege pushed back the start date for Blau several times, and the city did not fall until the end of June.

Operation Fridericus I by the Germans against the "Isium bulge", pinched off the Soviet salient in the Second Battle of Kharkov, and resulted in the envelopment of a large Soviet force between 17 May and 29 May. Similarly, Operation Wilhelm attacked Voltshansk on 13 June and Operation Fridericus attacked Kupiansk on 22 June.

Blau finally opened as Army Group South began its attack into southern Russia on 28 June 1942. The German offensive started well. Soviet forces offered little resistance in the vast empty steppes and started streaming eastward. Several attempts to re-establish a defensive line failed when German

units outflanked them. Two major pockets were formed and destroyed: the first, northeast of Kharkov, on 2 July, and a second, around Millerovo, Rostov Oblast, a week later. Meanwhile, the Hungarian 2nd Army and the German 4th Panzer Army had launched an assault on Voronezh, capturing the city on 5 July.

Situation briefing near Stalingrad between a company commander and a platoon leader

The initial advance of the 6th Army was so successful that Hitler intervened and ordered the 4th Panzer Army to join Army Group South (A) to the south. A massive traffic jam resulted when the 4th Panzer and the 1st Panzer both required the few roads in the area. Both armies were stopped dead while they attempted to clear the resulting mess of thousands of vehicles. The delay was long, and it is thought that it cost the advance at least one week. With the advance now slowed, Hitler changed his mind and reassigned the 4th Panzer Army back to the attack on Stalingrad.

By the end of July, the Germans had pushed the Soviets across the Don River. At this point, the Don and Volga Rivers were only 65 km (40 mi) apart, and the Germans left their main supply depots west of the Don, which had important implications later in the course of the battle. The Germans began using the armies of their Italian, Hungarian and Romanian allies to guard their left (northern) flank. Occasionally Italian actions were mentioned in official German communiques. Italian forces were generally held in little regard by the Germans, and were accused of having low morale: in reality, the Italian divisions fought comparatively well, with the 3rd Mountain Infantry Division Ravenna and 5th Infantry Division Cosseria proving to have good morale, according to a German liaison officer and being forced to retreat only after a massive armoured attack in which German reinforcements had failed to arrive in time, according to a German historian. Indeed the Italians distinguished themselves in numerous battles, as in the battle of Nikolayevka.

Infantry and a supporting StuG IIIassault gun advance towards the city centre

On 25 July the Germans faced stiff resistance with a Soviet bridgehead west of Kalach. "We had had to pay a high cost in men and material...left on the Kalatch battlefield were numerous burnt-out or shot-up German tanks."

The Germans formed bridgeheads across the Don on 20 Aug. with the 295th and 76th Infantry Divisions, enabling the XIVth Panzer Corps "to thrust to the Volga north of Stalingrad." The German 6th Army was only a few dozen kilometers from Stalingrad. The 4th Panzer Army, ordered south on 13 July to block the Soviet retreat "weakened by the 17th Army and the 1st Panzer Army", had turned northwards to help take the city from the south.

To the south, Army Group A was pushing far into the Caucasus, but their advance slowed as supply lines grew overextended. The two German army groups were not positioned to support one another due to the great distances involved.

After German intentions became clear in July 1942, Stalin appointed Marshal Andrey Yeryomenko as commander of the Southeastern Front on 1 August 1942. Yeryomenko and Commissar Nikita Khrushchev were tasked with planning the defense of Stalingrad. The eastern border of Stalingrad was the wide River Volga, and over the river, additional Soviet units were deployed. These units became the newly formed 62nd Army, which Yeryomenko placed under the command of Lieutenant General Vasiliy Chuikov on 11 September 1942. The situation was extremely dire. When asked how he interpreted his task, he responded "We will defend the city or die in the attempt." The 62nd Army's mission was to defend Stalingrad at all costs. Chuikov's generalship during the battle earned him one of his two Hero of the Soviet Union awards.

Attack on Stalingrad

The German advance to Stalingrad between 24 July and 18 November

"Stalingrad-South", 1942 map from the German General Staff

David Glantz indicated[31] that four hard-fought battles – collectively known as the Kotluban Operations – north of Stalingrad, where the Soviets made their greatest stand, decided Germany's fate before the Nazis ever set foot in the city itself, and were a turning point in the war. Beginning in late August, continuing in September and into October, the Soviets committed between two and four armies in hastily coordinated and poorly controlled attacks against the German's northern flank. The actions resulted in more than 200,000 Red Army casualties but did slow the German assault.

On 23 August the 6th Army reached the outskirts of Stalingrad in pursuit of the 62nd and 64th Armies, which had fallen back into the city. Kleist later said after the war:

The capture of Stalingrad was subsidiary to the main aim. It was only of importance as a convenient place, in the bottleneck between Don and the Volga, where we could block an attack on our flank by Russian forces coming from the east. At the start, Stalingrad was no more than a name on the map to us.

The Soviets had enough warning of the Germans' advance to ship grain, cattle, and railway cars across the Volga and out of harm's way but most civilian residents were not evacuated. This "harvest victory" left the city short of food even before the German attack began. Before the Heer reached the city itself, the Luftwaffe had rendered the River Volga, vital for bringing supplies into the city, unusable to Soviet shipping. Between 25 and 31 July, 32 Soviet ships were sunk, with another nine crippled.

Smoke over the city center after aerial bombing by the German Luftwaffe on the central station

The battle began with the heavy bombing of the city by Generaloberst Wolfram von Richthofen's Luftflotte 4, which in the summer and autumn of 1942 was the single most powerful air formation in the world. Some 1,000 tons of bombs were dropped in 48 hours, more than in London at the height of the Blitz. Stalin refused to evacuate civilian population from the city, so when bombing began 400,000 civilians were trapped within

city boundaries. The exact number of civilians killed during the course of the battle is unknown but was most likely very high. Around 40,000 were moved to Germany as slave workers, some fled the city during battle and a small number were evacuated by the Soviets. In February 1943 only between 10,000 to 60,000 civilians were still alive in Stalingrad. Much of the city was quickly turned to rubble, although some factories continued production while workers joined in the fighting. The Stalingrad Tractor Factory continued to turn out T-34 tanks literally until German troops burst into the plant. The 369th (Croatian) Reinforced Infantry Regiment was the only non-German unit selected by the Wehrmacht to enter Stalingrad city during assault operations. It fought as part of the 100th Jäger Division.

German Infantry in position for an attack

Stalin rushed all available troops to the east bank of the Volga, some from as far away as Siberia. All the regular ferries were quickly destroyed by the Luftwaffe, which then targeted troop barges being towed slowly across the river by tugs. It has been said that Stalin prevented civilians from leaving the city in the belief that their presence would encourage greater resistance from the city's defenders. Civilians, including women and children, were put to work building trenchworks and protective fortifications. A massive German air raid on 23 August caused a firestorm, killing hundreds and turning Stalingrad into a vast landscape of rubble and burnt ruins. Ninety percent of the living space in the Voroshilovskiy area was destroyed. Between 23 and 26 August, Soviet reports indicate 955 people were killed and another 1,181 wounded as a result of the bombing. Casualties of 40,000 were greatly exaggerated, and after 25 August, the Soviets did not record any civilian and military casualties as a result of air raids.

Approaching this place, [Stalingrad], soldiers used to say: "We are entering hell." And after spending one or two days here, they say: "No, this isn't hell, this is ten times worse than hell."
Vasily Chuikov

The Soviet Air Force, the Voyenno-Vozdushnye Sily (VVS), was swept aside by the Luftwaffe. The VVS bases in the immediate area lost 201 aircraft between 23 and 31 August, and despite meager reinforcements of some 100 aircraft in August, it was left with just 192 serviceable aircraft, 57 of which were fighters. The Soviets continued to pour aerial reinforcements into the Stalingrad area in late September, but continued to suffer appalling losses; the Luftwaffe had complete control of the skies.

Soviets preparing to ward off a German assault in Stalingrad's suburbs

The burden of the initial defense of the city fell on the 1077th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, a unit made up mainly of young female volunteers who had no training for engaging ground targets. Despite this, and with no support available from other units, the AA gunners stayed at their posts and took on the advancing panzers. The German 16th Panzer Division reportedly had to fight the 1077th's gunners "shot for shot" until all 37 anti-aircraft guns were destroyed or overrun. The 16th Panzer was shocked to find that, due to Soviet manpower shortages, it had been fighting female soldiers. In the early stages of the battle, the NKVD organized poorly armed "Workers' militias" composed of civilians not directly involved in war production for immediate use in the battle. The civilians were often sent into battle without rifles. Staff and students from the local technical university formed a "tank destroyer" unit. They assembled tanks from leftover parts at the tractor factory. These tanks, unpainted and lacking gunsights, were driven directly from the factory floor to the front line. They could only be aimed at point-blank range through the gun barrel.

By the end of August, Army Group South (B) had finally reached the Volga, north of Stalingrad. Another advance to the river south of the city followed, while the Soviets abandoned their Rossoshka position for the inner defensive ring west of Stalingrad. The wings of the 6th Army and the 4th Panzer Army met near Jablotchni along the Zaritza on 2 Sept. By 1 September, the Soviets could only reinforce and supply their forces in Stalingrad by perilous crossings of the Volga under constant bombardment by artillery and aircraft.

On 5 September, the Soviet 24th and 66th Armies organized a massive attack against XIV Panzer Corps. The Luftwaffe helped repulse the offensive by heavily attacking Soviet artillery positions and defensive lines. The Soviets were forced to withdraw at midday after only a few hours. Of the 120 tanks the Soviets had committed, 30 were lost to air attack.

German soldiers clearing the streets in Stalingrad

Soviet operations were constantly hampered by the Luftwaffe. On 18 September, the Soviet 1st Guards and 24th Army launched an offensive against VIII Army Corps at Kotluban. VIII. Fliegerkorps dispatched wave after wave of Stuka dive-bombers to prevent a breakthrough. The offensive was repulsed. The Stukas claimed 41 of the 106 Soviet tanks knocked out that morning, while escorting Bf 109s destroyed 77 Soviet aircraft. Amid the debris of the wrecked city, the Soviet 62nd and 64th Armies, which included the Soviet 13th Guards Rifle Division, anchored their defense lines with strongpoints in houses and factories.

Soviet soldiers running through trenches in the ruins of Stalingrad

Fighting within the ruined city was fierce and desperate. Lieutenant General Alexander Rodimtsev was in charge of the 13th Guards Rifle Division, and received one of two Heroes of the Soviet Union awarded during the battle for his actions. Stalin's Order No. 227 of 27 July 1942 decreed that all commanders who ordered unauthorized retreat would be subject to a military tribunal. However, it was the NKVD that ordered the regular army and lectured them, on the need to show some guts. Through brutal coercion for self-sacrifice, thousands of deserters and presumed malingerers were captured or executed to discipline the troops. At Stalingrad, it is estimated that 14,000 soldiers of the Red Army were executed in order to keep the formation. "Not a step back!" and "There is no land behind the Volga!" were the slogans. The Germans pushing forward into Stalingrad suffered heavy casualties.

Fighting in the city

By 12 September, at the time of their retreat into the city, the Soviet 62nd Army had been reduced to 90 tanks, 700 mortars and just 20,000 personnel. The remaining tanks were used as immobile strongpoints within the city. The initial German attack on 14 September attempted to take the city in a rush. The 51st Army Corps' 295th Infantry Division went after the Mamayev Kurgan hill, the 71st attacked the central rail station and toward the central landing stage on the Volga, while 48th Panzer Corps attacked south of the Tsaritsa River. Rodimtsev's 13th Guards Rifle Division had been hurried up to cross the river and join the defenders inside the city. Assigned to counterattack at the Mamayev Kurgan and at Railway Station No. 1 it suffered particularly heavy losses.

October 1942: A German soldier with a Soviet PPSh-41 submachine gun in Barrikady factory rubble

Though initially successful, the German attacks stalled in the face of Soviet reinforcements brought in from across the Volga. The Soviet 13th Guards Rifle Division, assigned to counterattack at the Mamayev Kurgan and at Railway Station No. 1 suffered particularly heavy losses. Over 30 percent of its soldiers were killed in the first 24 hours, and just 320 out of the original 10,000 survived the entire battle. Both objectives were retaken, but only temporarily. The railway station changed hands 14 times in six hours. By the following evening, the 13th Guards Rifle Division had ceased to exist.

Combat raged for three days at the giant grain elevator in the south of the city. About fifty Red Army defenders, cut off from resupply, held the position for five days and fought off ten different assaults before running out of ammunition and water. Only forty dead Soviet fighters were found, though the Germans had thought there were many more due to the intensity of resistance. The Soviets burned large amounts of grain during their retreat in order to deny the enemy food. Paulus chose the grain elevator and silos as the symbol of Stalingrad for a patch he was having designed to commemorate the battle after a German victory.

German soldiers of the 24th Panzer Division in action during the fighting for the southern station of Stalingrad

German military doctrine was based on the principle of combined-arms teams and close cooperation between tanks, infantry, engineers, artillery and ground-attack aircraft. Some Soviet commanders adopted the tactic of always keeping their front-line positions as close to the Germans as physically possible; Chuikov called this "hugging" the Germans. This slowed the German advance and reduced the effectiveness of the German advantage in supporting fire.

The Red Army gradually adopted a strategy to hold for as long as possible all the ground in the city. Thus, they converted multi-floored apartment blocks, factories, warehouses, street corner residences and office

buildings into a series of well defended strongpoints with small 5–10 man units. Manpower in the city was constantly refreshed by bringing additional troops over the Volga. When a position was lost, an immediate attempt was usually made to re-take it with fresh forces.

Soviets defend a position

Bitter fighting raged for every ruin, street, factory, house, basement, and staircase. Even the sewers were the sites of firefights. The Germans, calling this unseen urban warfare Rattenkrieg ("Rat War"), bitterly joked about capturing the kitchen but still fighting for the living room and the bedroom. Buildings had to be cleared room by room through the bombed-out debris of residential neighborhoods, office blocks, basements and apartment high-rises. Some of the taller buildings, blasted into roofless shells by earlier German aerial bombardment, saw floor-by-floor, close quarters combat, with the Germans and Soviets on alternate levels, firing at each other through holes in the floors.

Fighting on and around Mamayev Kurgan, a prominent hill above the city, was particularly merciless; indeed, the position changed hands many times.

In another part of the city, a Soviet platoon under the command of Sergeant Yakov Pavlov fortified a four-story building that oversaw a square 300 meters from the river bank, later called Pavlov's House. The soldiers surrounded it with minefields, set up machine-gun positions at the windows and breached the walls in the basement for better communications. The soldiers found about ten Soviet civilians hiding in the basement. They were not relieved, and not significantly reinforced, for two months. The building was labeled Festung ("Fortress") on German maps. Sgt. Pavlov was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union for his actions.

German soldiers positioning themselves for urban warfare

The Germans made slow but steady progress through the city. Positions were taken individually, but the Germans were never able to capture the key crossing points along the river bank. By 27 Sept. the Germans occupied the southern portion of the city, but the Soviets held the center and northern part. Most importantly, the Soviets controlled the ferries to their supplies on the east bank of the Volga.

Soviet assault troops in the battle

The Germans used airpower, tanks and heavy artillery to clear the city with varying degrees of success. Toward the end of the battle, the gigantic railroad gun nicknamed Dora was brought into the area. The Soviets built up a large number of artillery batteries on the east bank of the Volga. This artillery was able to bombard the German positions or at least to provide counter-battery fire.

Soviet marines landing on the west bank of the Volga River.

Snipers on both sides used the ruins to inflict casualties. The most famous Soviet sniper in Stalingrad was Vasily Zaytsev, with 225 confirmed kills during the battle. Targets were often soldiers bringing up food or water to forward positions. Artillery spotters were an especially prized target for snipers.

Soviet soldiers in the Red October Factory

A significant historical debate concerns the degree of terror in the Red Army. The British historian Antony Beevornoted the "sinister" message from the Stalingrad Front's Political Department on 8 October 1942 that: "The defeatist mood is almost eliminated and the number of treasonous incidents is getting lower" as an example of the sort of coercion Red Army soldiers experienced under the Special Detachments (later to be renamed SMERSH). On the other hand, Beevor noted the often extraordinary bravery of the Soviet soldiers in a battle that was only comparable to Verdun, and argued that terror alone cannot explain such self-

sacrifice. Richard Overy addresses the question of just how important the Red Army's coercive methods were to the Soviet war effort compared with other motivational factors such as hatred for the enemy. He argues that, though it is "easy to argue that from the summer of 1942 the Soviet army fought because it was forced to fight," to concentrate solely on coercion is nonetheless to "distort our view of the Soviet war effort. After conducting hundreds of interviews with Soviet veterans on the subject of terror on the Eastern Front – and specifically about Order No. 227 ("Not a step back!") at Stalingrad – Catherine Merridale notes that, seemingly paradoxically, "their response was frequently relief." Infantryman Lev Lvovich's explanation, for example, is typical for these interviews; as he recalls, "[i]t was a necessary and important step. We all knew where we stood after we had heard it. And we all – it's true – felt better. Yes, we felt better."

Pavlov's House (1943)

Many women fought on the Soviet side, or were under fire. As General Chuikov acknowledged, "Remembering the defence of Stalingrad, I can't overlook the very important question ... about the role of women in war, in the rear, but also at the front. Equally with men they bore all the burdens of combat life and together with us men, they went all the way to Berlin." At the beginning of the battle there were 75,000 women and girls from the Stalingrad area who had finished military or medical training, and all of whom were to serve in the battle. Women staffed a great many of the anti-aircraft batteries that fought not only the Luftwaffe but German tanks. Soviet nurses not only treated wounded personnel under fire but were involved in the highly dangerous work of bringing wounded soldiers back to the hospitals under enemy fire. Many of the Soviet wireless and telephone operators were women who often suffered heavy casualties when their command posts came under fire. Though women were not usually trained as infantry, many Soviet women fought as machine gunners, mortar operators, and scouts. Women were also snipers at Stalingrad. Three air regiments at Stalingrad were entirely female. At least three women won the title Hero of the Soviet Union while driving tanks at Stalingrad.

Soil after the battle of Stalingrad in the Vladimir Military Museum

For both Stalin and Hitler, Stalingrad became a matter of prestige far beyond its strategic significance. The Soviet command moved units from the Red Army strategic reserve in the Moscow area to the lower Volga, and transferred aircraft from the entire country to the Stalingrad region.

The strain on both military commanders was immense: Paulus developed an uncontrollable tic in his eye, which eventually afflicted the left side of his face, while Chuikov experienced an outbreak of eczema that required him to have his hands completely bandaged. Troops on both sides faced the constant strain of close-range combat.

Fighting in the industrial district

The Tractor Factory in the northernmost part of the city(1942)

After 27 September the fighting shifted north to the industrial district. Having slowly advanced over 10 days against strong Soviet resistance, 51st Army Corps was finally in front of the three giant factories of Stalingrad: The Red October, Barricades and Tractor Factory. It took a few more days for them to prepare for the most savage offensive of all, which was unleashed on 14 October with a concentration of fire never seen before. Exceptionally intense shelling and bombing paved the way for the German assault groups. The main attack (14th Panzer and 305th Infantry Divisions) came towards the Tractor Factory, while another attack led by 24th Panzer Division hit south of the giant plant.

The German onslaught crushed the 37th Guards Rifle Division and in the afternoon the forward assault group reached the Tractor Factory then the Volga River, splitting the 62nd Amry in two.

The fighting raged inside the Barricades until the end of October. The Soviet-controlled area shrunk down to a few strips of land along the Volga, and in November the fighting concentrated around what Soviet newspapers called "Lyudnikov's Island", a patch of ground behind the Barricades Factory where the remnants of Colonel Ivan Lyudnikov's 138th Division resisted all assaults and became a symbol of the stout defense of Stalingrad.

Air attacks

Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive bombers above the burning city.

From 5 to 12 September, Luftflotte 4 conducted 7,507 sorties (938 per day). From 16 to 25 September, it carried out 9,746 missions (975 per day). Determined to crush Soviet resistance, Luftflotte 4's Stukawaffe flew 900 individual sorties against Soviet positions at the Dzerzhinskiy Tractor Factory on 5 October. Several Soviet regiments were wiped out; the entire staff of the Soviet 339th Infantry Regiment was killed the following morning during an air raid.

The Luftwaffe retained air superiority into November and Soviet daytime aerial resistance was nonexistent. However, the combination of constant air support operations on the German side and the Soviet surrender of the daytime skies began to affect the strategic balance in the air. From 28 June to 20 September, Luftflotte 4's original strength of 1,600 aircraft, of which 1,155 were operational, fell to 950, of which only 550 were operational. The fleet's total strength decreased by 40 percent. Daily sorties decreased from 1,343 per day to 975 per day. Soviet offensives in the central and northern portions of the Eastern Front tied down Luftwaffe reserves and newly built aircraft, reducing Luftflotte 4's percentage of Eastern Front aircraft from 60 percent on 28 June to 38 percent by 20 September. The Kampfwaffe (bomber force) was the hardest hit, having only 232 out of an original force of 480 left. The VVS remained qualitatively inferior, but by the time of the Soviet counter-offensive, the VVS had reached numerical superiority.

In mid-October, after receiving reinforcements from the Caucasus theater, the Luftwaffe intensified its efforts against remaining Red Army positions holding the west bank. Luftflotte 4 flew 1,250 sorties on 14 October and its Stukas dropped 550 t (610 short tons) of bombs while German infantry surrounded the three factories Stukageschwader 1, 2, and 77 had largely silenced Soviet artillery on the eastern bank of the Volga before turning their attention to the shipping that was once again trying to reinforce the narrowing Soviet pockets of resistance. The 62nd Army had been cut in two, and, due to intensive air attack on its supply ferries, was receiving much less material support. With the Soviets forced into a 1-kilometre (1,000-yard) strip of land on the western bank of the Volga, over 1,208 Stuka missions were flown in an effort to eliminate them.

Clouds of smoke and dust rise from the ruins of Stalingrad after German bombing of the city on 2 October 1942

The Soviet bomber force, the Aviatsiya Dal'nego Deystviya (Long Range Aviation; ADD), having taken crippling losses over the past 18 months, was restricted to flying at night. The Soviets flew 11,317 night sorties over Stalingrad and the Don-bend sector between 17 July and 19 November. These raids caused little damage and were of nuisance value only.

On 8 November, substantial units from Luftflotte 4 were withdrawn to combat the Allied landings in North Africa. The German air arm found itself spread thinly across Europe, struggling to maintain its strength in the other southern sectors of the Soviet-German front.

As historian Chris Bellamy notes, the Germans paid a high strategic price for the aircraft sent into Stalingrad: the Luftwaffe was forced to divert much of its air strength away from the oil-rich Caucasus, which had been Hitler's original grand-strategic objective.

Germans reach the Volga

After three months of slow advance, the Germans finally reached the river banks, capturing 90% of the ruined city and splitting the remaining Soviet forces into two narrow pockets. Ice floes on the Volga now prevented boats and tugs from supplying the Soviet defenders. Nevertheless, the fighting, especially on the slopes of Mamayev Kurgan and inside the factory area in the northern part of the city, continued. From 21 August to 20 November, the German 6th Army lost 60,548 men, including 12,782 killed, 45,545 wounded and 2,221 missing.

Soviet counter-offensives

Soviet soldiers attack a house, February 1943

Recognizing that German troops were ill prepared for offensive operations during the winter of 1942, and that most of them were redeployed elsewhere on the southern sector of the Eastern Front, the Stavka decided to conduct a number of offensive operations between 19 November 1942 and 2 February 1943. These

operations opened the Winter Campaign of 1942–1943 (19 November 1942 – 3 March 1943), which involved some 15 Armies operating on several fronts.

According to Zhukov, "German operational blunders were aggravated by poor intelligence: they failed to spot preparations for the major counter-offensive near Stalingrad where there were 10 field, 1 tank and 4 air armies.

Weakness on the German flanks

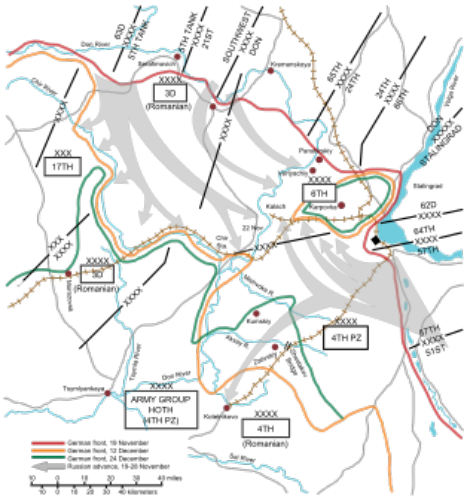
During the siege, the German and allied Italian, Hungarian, and Romanian armies protecting Army Group B's flanks had pressed their headquarters for support. The Hungarian 2nd Army was given the task of defending a 200 km (120 mi) section of the front north of Stalingrad between the Italian Army and Voronezh. This resulted in a very thin line, with some sectors where 1–2 km (0.62–1.24 mi) stretches were being defended by a single platoon. These forces were also lacking in effective anti-tank weapons.

Zhukov states, "Compared with the Germans, the troops of the satellites were not so well armed, less experienced and less efficient, even in defence."

Because of the total focus on the city, the Axis forces had neglected for months to consolidate their positions along the natural defensive line of the Don River. The Soviet forces were allowed to retain bridgeheads on the right bank from which offensive operations could be quickly launched. These bridgeheads in retrospect presented a serious threat to Army Group B.

Similarly, on the southern flank of the Stalingrad sector the front southwest of Kotelnikovo was held only by the Romanian 4th Army. Beyond that army, a single German division, the 16th Motorized Infantry, covered 400 km. Paulus had requested permission to "withdraw the 6th Army behind the Don," but was rejected. According to Paulus' comments to Adam, "There is still the order whereby no commander of an army group or an army has the right to relinquish a village, even a trench, without Hitler's consent."

Operation Uranus: the Soviet offensive



The Soviet counter-attack at Stalingrad

German front, 19 November

German front, 12 December

German front, 24 December

Soviet advance, 19–28 November

In autumn, the Soviet generals Georgy Zhukov and Aleksandr Vasilevsky, responsible for strategic planning in the Stalingrad area, concentrated forces in the steppes to the north and south of the city. The northern flank was defended by Hungarian and Romanian units, often in open positions on the steppes. The natural line of defense, the Don River, had never been properly established by the German side. The armies in the area were also poorly equipped in terms of anti-tank weapons. The plan was to punch through the overstretched and weakly defended German flanks and surround the German forces in the Stalingrad region.

During the preparations for the attack, Marshal Zhukov personally visited the front and noticing the poor organization, insisted on a one-week delay in the start date of the planned attack. The operation was code-named "Uranus" and launched in conjunction with Operation Mars, which was directed at Army Group Center. The plan was similar to the one Zhukov had used to achieve victory at Khalkhin Gol three years before, where he had sprung a double envelopment and destroyed the 23rd Division of the Japanese army.

On 19 November 1942, the Red Army launched Operation Uranus. The attacking Soviet units under the command of Gen. Nikolay Vatutinconsisted of three complete armies, the 1st Guards Army, 5th Tank Army, and 21st Army, including a total of 18 infantry divisions, eight tank brigades, two motorized brigades, six cavalry divisions and one anti-tank brigade. The preparations for the attack could be heard by the Romanians, who continued to push for reinforcements, only to be refused again. Thinly spread, deployed in exposed positions, outnumbered and poorly equipped, the Romanian 3rd Army, which held the northern flank of the German 6th Army, was overrun.

Behind the front lines, no preparations had been made to defend key points in the rear such as Kalach. The response by the Wehrmachtwas both chaotic and indecisive. Poor weather prevented effective air action against the Soviet offensive.

On 20 November, a second Soviet offensive (two armies) was launched to the south of Stalingrad against points held by the Romanian 4th Army Corps. The Romanian forces, made up primarily of infantry, were overrun by large numbers of tanks. The Soviet forces raced west and met on 23 November at the town of Kalach, sealing the ring around Stalingrad. The link-up of the Soviet forces, not filmed at the time, was later re-enacted for a propaganda film which was shown worldwide.

Sixth Army surrounded

Romanian soldiers near Stalingrad

German soldiers as prisoners of war. In the background is the heavily fought-over Stalingrad grain elevator

German dead in the city

The surrounded Axis personnel comprised 265,000 Germans, Romanians, Italians, and the Croatians. In addition, Beevor states that one quarter of the Sixth Army's frontline strength (i.e. more than 65,000 personnel) were Hilfswillige (Hiwi) or "volunteer auxiliaries": a term used for personnel recruited amongst Soviet POWs and civilians from areas under occupation. Hiwi often proved to be reliable Axis personnel, because the Soviet penalty for collaboration was summary execution. Other sources suggest that only 40,000 Hiwi and similar auxiliaries were surrounded, or about 15% of the total. German personnel in the pocket numbered about 210,000, according to strength breakdowns of the 20 field divisions (average size 9,000) and 100 battalion sized units of the Sixth Army on 19 November 1942. Inside the pocket (German: Kessel, literally "cauldron"), there were also around 10,000 Soviet civilians and several thousand Soviet soldiers the Germans had taken captive during the battle. Not all of the 6th Army was trapped; 50,000 soldiers were brushed aside outside the pocket. These belonged mostly to the other 2 divisions of the 6th Army between the Italian and Romanian Armies: the 62nd and 298th Infantry Divisions. Of the 210,000 Germans, 10,000 remained to fight on, 105,000 surrendered, 35,000 left by air and the remaining 60,000 died.

Army Group Don was formed under Field Marshal von Manstein. Under his command were the 20 German and 2 Romanian divisions encircled at Stalingrad, Adam's battle groups formed along the Chir River and on the Don bridgehead, plus the remains of the Romanian 3rd Army.

The Red Army units immediately formed two defensive fronts: a circumvallation facing inward and a contravallation facing outward. Field Marshal Erich von Manstein advised Hitler not to order the 6th Army to break out, stating that he could break through the Soviet lines and relieve the besieged 6th Army. The American historians Williamson Murray and Alan Millet wrote that it was Manstein's message to Hitler on 24 November advising him that the 6th Army should not break out, along with Göring's statements that the Luftwaffe could supply Stalingrad that "... sealed the fate of the Sixth Army." After 1945, Manstein claimed that he told Hitler that the 6th Army must break out. The American historian Gerhard Weinberg wrote that Manstein distorted his record on the matter. Manstein was tasked to conduct a relief operation, named Operation Winter Storm (Unternehmen Wintergewitter) against Stalingrad, which he thought was feasible if the 6th Army was temporarily supplied through the air.

Adolf Hitler had declared in a public speech (in the Berlin Sportpalast) on 30 September 1942 that the German army would never leave the city. At a meeting shortly after the Soviet encirclement, German army chiefs pushed for an immediate breakout to a new line on the west of the Don, but Hitler was at his Bavarian retreat of Obersalzberg in Berchtesgaden with the head of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring. When asked by Hitler, Göring replied, after being convinced by Hans Jeschonnek, that the Luftwaffe could supply the 6th Army with an "air bridge." This would allow the Germans in the city to fight on temporarily while a relief force was assembled. A similar plan had been used a year earlier at the Demyansk Pocket, albeit on a much smaller scale: a corps at Demyansk rather than an entire army.

A Ju 52 approaching Stalingrad

The director of Luftflotte 4, Wolfram von Richthofen, tried to get this decision overturned. The forces under the 6th Army were almost twice as large as a regular German army unit, plus there was also a corps of the 4th Panzer Army trapped in the pocket. The maximum 107 t (118 short tons) they could deliver a day – based on the number of available aircraft and with only the airfield at Pitomnik to land at – was far less than the minimum 750 t (830 short tons) needed. To supplement the limited number of Junkers Ju 52 transports, the Germans pressed other aircraft into the role, such as the Heinkel He 177 bomber (some bombers performed adequately – the Heinkel He 111 proved to be quite capable and was much faster than the Ju 52). General

Richthofen informed Manstein on 27 November of the small transport capacity of the Luftwaffe and the impossibility of supplying 300 tons a day by air. Manstein now saw the enormous technical difficulties of a supply by air of these dimensions. The next day he made a six-page situation report to the general staff. Based on the information of the expert Richthofen, he declared that contrary to the example of the pocket of Demyansk the permanent supply by air would be impossible. If only a narrow link could be established to Sixth Army, he proposed that this should be used to pull it out from the encirclement, and said that the Luftwaffe should instead of supplies deliver only enough ammunition and fuel for a breakout attempt. He acknowledged the heavy moral sacrifice that giving up Stalingrad would mean, but this would be made easier to bear by the conserving the combat power of Sixth Army and regaining the initiative. He ignored the limited mobility of the army and the difficulties of disengaging the Soviets. Hitler reiterated that Sixth Army would stay at Stalingrad and that the air bridge would supply it until the encirclement was broken by a new German offensive.

Supplying the 270,000 men trapped in the "cauldron" required 700 tons of supplies a day. That would mean 350 Ju52 flights a day into Pitomnik. At a minimum, 500 tons were required. However, according to Adam, "On not one single day have the minimal essential number of tons of supplies been flown in." The Luftwaffe was able to deliver an average of 85 t (94 short tons) of supplies per day out of an air transport capacity of 106 t (117 short tons) per day. The most successful day, 19 December, delivered 262 t (289 short tons) of supplies in 154 flights. The outcome of the airlift was the Luftwaffe's failure to provide its transport units with the tools they needed to maintain an adequate count of operational aircraft – tools that included airfield facilities, supplies, manpower, and even aircraft suited to the prevailing conditions. These factors, taken together, prevented the Luftwaffe from effectively employing the full potential of its transport forces, ensuring that they were unable to deliver the quantity of supplies needed to sustain the 6th Army.

In the early parts of the operation, fuel was shipped at a higher priority than food and ammunition because of a belief that there would be a breakout from the city. Transport aircraft also evacuated technical specialists and sick or wounded personnel from the besieged enclave. Sources differ on the number flown out: at least 25,000 to at most 35,000. Carell: 42,000, of which 5000 did not survive.

The center of Stalingrad after liberation

Initially, supply flights came in from the field at Tatsinskaya, called 'Tazi' by the German pilots. On 23 December, the Soviet 24th Tank Corps, commanded by Major-General Vasily Mikhaylovich Badanov, reached nearby Skassirskaya and in the early morning of 24 December, the tanks reached Tatsinskaya.

Without any soldiers to defend the airfield, it was abandoned under heavy fire; in a little under an hour, 108 Ju 52s and 16 Ju 86s took off for Novocherkassk – leaving 72 Ju 52s and many other aircraft burning on the ground. A new base was established some 300 km (190 mi) from Stalingrad at Salsk, the additional distance would become another obstacle to the resupply efforts. Salsk was abandoned in turn by mid-January for a rough facility at Zverevo, near Shakhty. The field at Zverevo was attacked repeatedly on 18 January and a further 50 Ju 52s were destroyed. Winter weather conditions, technical failures, heavy Soviet anti-aircraft fire and fighter interceptions eventually led to the loss of 488 German aircraft.

In spite of the failure of the German offensive to reach the 6th Army, the air supply operation continued under ever more difficult circumstances. The 6th Army slowly starved. General Zeitzler, moved by their plight, began to limit himself to their slim rations at meal times. After a few weeks on such a diet, he had "visibly lost weight", according to Albert Speer, and Hitler "commanded Zeitler to resume at once taking sufficient nourishment."

The toll on the Transportgruppen was heavy. 160 aircraft were destroyed and 328 were heavily damaged (beyond repair). Some 266 Junkers Ju 52s were destroyed; one-third of the fleet's strength on the Eastern Front. The He 111 gruppen lost 165 aircraft in transport operations. Other losses included 42 Ju 86s, 9 Fw 200 Condors, 5 He 177 bombers and 1 Ju 290. The Luftwaffealso lost close to 1,000 highly experienced bomber crew personnel. So heavy were the Luftwaffe's losses that four of Luftflotte 4's transport units (KGrzbV 700, KGrzbV 900, I./KGrzbV 1 and II./KGzbV 1) were "formally dissolved."

End of the battle

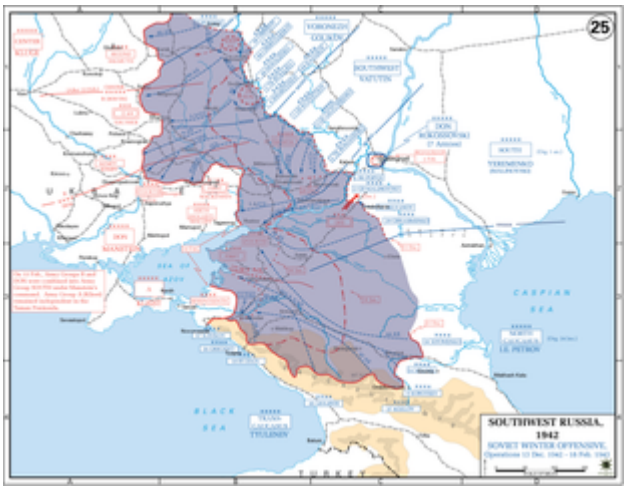
Operation Winter Storm

Soviet forces consolidated their positions around Stalingrad, and fierce fighting to shrink the pocket began. Operation Winter Storm (Operation Wintergewitter), the German attempt led by Erich von Manstein to relieve the trapped army from the south, was initially successful. By 18 December, the German Army had pushed to within 48 km (30 mi) of Sixth Army's positions. The starving encircled forces at Stalingrad made no attempt to break out or link up with Manstein's advance. Some German officers requested that Paulus defy Hitler's orders to stand fast and instead attempt to break out of the Stalingrad pocket. Paulus refused, concerned about the Red Army attacks on the flank of Army Group Don and Army Group B in their advance on Rostov-on-Don, "an early abandonment" of Stalingrad "would result in the destruction of Army Group A in the Caucasus," and the fact that his 6th Army tanks only had fuel for a 30 km advance towards Hoth's spearhead, a futile effort if they did not receive assurance of resupply by air. Of his questions to Army Group Don, Paulus was told, "Wait, implement Operation 'Thunderclap' only on explicit orders!" Operation Thunderclap being the code word initiating the breakout.

On 23 December, the attempt to relieve Stalingrad was abandoned and Manstein's forces switched over to the defensive to deal with new Soviet offensives. As Zhukov states, "The military and political leadership of Nazi Germany sought not to relieve them, but to get them to fight on for as long possible so as to tie up the Soviet forces. The aim was to win as much time as possible to withdraw forces from the Caucasus and to

rush troops from other Fronts to form a new front that would be able in some measure to check our counter-offensive."

Operation Little Saturn



Soviet gains (shown in blue) during Operation Little Saturn

On 16 December, the Soviets launched Operation Little Saturn, which attempted to punch through the Axis army (mainly Italians) on the Don and take Rostov. The Germans set up a "mobile defense" of small units that were to hold towns until supporting armor arrived. From the Soviet bridgehead at Mamon, 15 divisions – supported by at least 100 tanks – attacked the Italian Cosseria and Ravenna Divisions, and although outnumbered 9 to 1, the Italians initially fought well, with the Germans praising the quality of the Italian defenders, but on 19 December, with the Italian lines disintegrating, ARMIR headquarters ordered the battered divisions to withdraw to new lines.

The fighting forced a total revaluation of the German situation. The attempt to break through to Stalingrad was abandoned and Army Group A was ordered to pull back from the Caucasus. The 6th Army now was beyond all hope of German relief. While a motorised breakout might have been possible in the first few weeks, the 6th Army now had insufficient fuel and the German soldiers would have faced great difficulty breaking through the Soviet lines on foot in harsh winter conditions. But in its defensive position on the Volga, 6th Army continued to tie down a significant number of Soviet Armies.

Soviet victory

759,560 Soviet personnel were awarded this medal for the defence of Stalingrad from 22 December 1942.

Main article: Operation Koltso

The Red Army High Command sent three envoys while simultaneously aircraft and loudspeakers announced terms of capitulation on 7 January 1943. The letter was signed by Colonel-General of Artillery Voronov and the commander-in-chief of the Don Front, Lieutenant-General Rokossovski. The German High Command informed Paulus, "Every day that the army holds out longer helps the whole front and draws away the Russian divisions from it."

The Germans inside the pocket retreated from the suburbs of Stalingrad to the city itself. The loss of the two airfields, at Pitomnik on 16 January 1943 and Gumrak on the night of 21/22 January, meant an end to air supplies and to the evacuation of the wounded. The third and last serviceable runway was at the Stalingradskaya flight school, which reportedly had the last landings and takeoffs on 23 January. After 23 January, there were no more reported landings, just intermittent air drops of ammunition and food until the end.

GeneralfeldmarschallFriedrich Paulus (left), with his chief of staff, GeneralleutnantArthur Schmidt (centre) and his aide, Wilhelm Adam(right), after their surrender.

The Germans were now not only starving, but running out of ammunition. Nevertheless, they continued to resist, in part because they believed the Soviets would execute any who surrendered. In particular, the so-called HiWis, Soviet citizens fighting for the Germans, had no illusions about their fate if captured. The Soviets were initially surprised by the number of Germans they had trapped, and had to reinforce their encircling troops. Bloody urban warfare began again in Stalingrad, but this time it was the Germans who were pushed back to the banks of the Volga. The Germans adopted a simple defense of fixing wire nets over all windows to protect themselves from grenades. The Soviets responded by fixing fish hooks to the grenades so they stuck to the nets when thrown.

The Germans had no usable tanks in the city, and those that still functioned could, at best, be used as makeshift pillboxes. The Soviets did not bother employing tanks in areas where the urban destruction restricted their mobility. A low-level Soviet envoy party (comprising Major Aleksandr Smyslov, Captain Nikolay Dyatlenko and a trumpeter) carried an offer to Paulus: if he surrendered within 24 hours, he would receive a

guarantee of safety for all prisoners, medical care for the sick and wounded, prisoners being allowed to keep their personal belongings, "normal" food rations, and repatriation to any country they wished after the war; but Paulus – ordered not to surrender by Hitler – did not respond.

On 22 January, Paulus requested that he be granted permission to surrender. Hitler rejected it on a point of honour. He telegraphed the 6th Army later that day, claiming that it had made a historic contribution to the greatest struggle in German history and that it should stand fast "to the last soldier and the last bullet." Hitler told Goebbels that the plight of the 6th Army was a "heroic drama of German history."

On 24 January, in his radio report to Hitler, Paulus reported "18,000 wounded without the slightest aid of bandages and medicines."

On 26 January 1943, the German forces inside Stalingrad were split into two pockets north and south of Mamai-Kurgan. The northern pocket consisting of the VIIIth Corps, under General Walter Heitz, and the XIth Corps, was now cut off from telephone communication with Paulus in the southern pocket. Now "each part of the cauldron came personally under Hitler."

On 28 January, the cauldron was split into three parts. The northern cauldron consisted of the XIth Corps, the central with the VIIIth and LIst Corps, and the southern with the XIVth Panzer Corps and IVth Corps "without units". The sick and wounded reached 40,000 to 50,000.

On 30 January 1943, the 10th anniversary of Hitler's coming to power, Goebbels read out a proclamation that included the sentence: "The heroic struggle of our soldiers on the Volga should be a warning for everybody to do the utmost for the struggle for Germany's freedom and the future of our people, and thus in a wider sense for the maintenance of our entire continent." Hitler promoted Paulus to the rank of Generalfeldmarschall. No German field marshal had ever surrendered, and the implication was clear: if Paulus surrendered, he would shame himself and would become the highest ranking German officer ever to be captured. Hitler believed that Paulus would either fight to the last man or commit suicide.

On the next day, the southern pocket in Stalingrad collapsed. Soviet forces reached the entrance to the German headquarters in the ruined GUM department store. General Schmidt negotiated a surrender of the headquarters while Paulus was unaware in another room. When interrogated by the Soviets, Paulus claimed that he had not surrendered. He said that he had been taken by surprise. He denied that he was the commander of the remaining northern pocket in Stalingrad and refused to issue an order in his name for them to surrender. The central pocket, under the command of Heitz, surrendered the same day while the northern pocket, under the command of Karl Strecker, held out for two more days. When Strecker finally surrendered he and his Chief of Staff, Helmuth Groscurth, drafted the final signal sent from Stalingrad, purposely omitting the customary exclamation to Hitler, replacing it with "Long live Germany!"

Four Soviet armies were deployed against the remaining northern pocket. At four in the morning on 2 February, General Strecker was informed that one of his own officers had gone to the Soviets to negotiate surrender terms. Seeing no point in continuing, he sent a radio message saying that his command had done

its duty and fought to the last man. He then surrendered. Around 91,000 exhausted, ill, wounded, and starving prisoners were taken, including 3,000 Romanians (the survivors of the 20th Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division and "Col. Voicu" Detachment). The prisoners included 22 generals. Hitler was furious and confided that Paulus "could have freed himself from all sorrow and ascended into eternity and national immortality, but he prefers to go to Moscow."

Aftermath

The aftermath of the Battle of Stalingrad

The German public was not officially told of the impending disaster until the end of January 1943, though positive media reports had stopped in the weeks before the announcement. Stalingrad marked the first time that the Nazi government publicly acknowledged a failure in its war effort. On 31 January, regular programmes on German state radio were replaced by a broadcast of the somber Adagio movement from Anton Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, followed by the announcement of the defeat at Stalingrad. On 18 February, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels gave the famous Sportpalast speech in Berlin, encouraging the Germans to accept a total war that would claim all resources and efforts from the entire population.

A Red Army soldier marches a German soldier into captivity.

Based on Soviet records, over 10,000 German soldiers continued to resist in isolated groups within the city for the next month. Some have presumed that they were motivated by a belief that fighting on was better than a slow death in Soviet captivity. Brown University historian Omer Bartovclaims they were motivated by National Socialism. He studied 11,237 letters sent by soldiers inside of Stalingrad between 20 December 1942 and 16 January 1943 to their families in Germany. Almost every letter expressed belief in Germany's ultimate victory and their willingness to fight and die at Stalingrad to achieve that victory. Bartov reported that

a great many of the soldiers were well aware that they would not be able to escape from Stalingrad but in their letters to their families boasted that they were proud to "sacrifice themselves for the Führer".

The remaining forces continued to resist, hiding in cellars and sewers but by early March 1943, the last small and isolated pockets of resistance had surrendered. According to Soviet intelligence documents shown in the documentary, a remarkable NKVD report from March 1943 is available showing the tenacity of some of these German groups:

The mopping-up of counter-revolutionary elements in the city of Stalingrad proceeded. The German soldiers – who had hidden themselves in huts and trenches – offered armed resistance after combat actions had already ended. This armed resistance continued until 15 February and in a few areas until 20 February. Most of the armed groups were liquidated by March ... During this period of armed conflict with the Germans, the brigade's units killed 2,418 soldiers and officers and captured 8,646 soldiers and officers, escorting them to POW camps and handing them over.

The operative report of the Don Front's staff issued on 5 February 1943, 22:00 said,

The 64th Army was putting itself in order, being in previously occupied regions. Location of army's units is as it was previously. In the region of location of the 38 Motorized Rifle Brigade in a basement 18 armed SS-men (sic) were found, who refused to surrender, the Germans found were destroyed.

The condition of the troops that surrendered was pitiful. British war correspondent Alexander Werth described the following scene in his Russia at War book, based on a first-hand account of his visit to Stalingrad from 3–5 February 1943,

We [...] went into the yard of the large burnt out building of the Red Army House; and here one realized particularly clearly what the last days of Stalingrad had been to so many of the Germans. In the porch lay the skeleton of a horse, with only a few scraps of meat still clinging to its ribs. Then we came into the yard. Here lay more more horses' skeletons, and to the right, there was an enormous horrible cesspool – fortunately, frozen solid. And then, suddenly, at the far end of the yard I caught sight of a human figure. He had been crouching over another cesspool, and now, noticing us, he was hastily pulling up his pants, and then he slunk away into the door of the basement. But as he passed, I caught a glimpse of the wretch's face – with its mixture of suffering and idiot-like incomprehension. For a moment, I wished that the whole of Germany were there to see it. The man was probably already dying. In that basement [...] there were still two hundred Germans—dying of hunger and frostbite. "We haven't had time to deal with them yet," one of the Russians said. "They'll be taken away tomorrow, I suppose." And, at the far end of the yard, besides the other cesspool, behind a low stone wall, the yellow corpses of skinny Germans were piled up – men who had died in that basement—about a dozen wax-like dummies. We did not go into the basement itself – what was the use? There was nothing we could do for them.

Out of the nearly 91,000 German prisoners captured in Stalingrad, only about 5,000 returned. Weakened by disease, starvation and lack of medical care during the encirclement, they were sent on foot marches to

prisoner camps and later to labour camps all over the Soviet Union. Some 35,000 were eventually sent on transports, of which 17,000 did not survive. Most died of wounds, disease (particularly typhus), cold, overwork, mistreatment and malnutrition. Some were kept in the city to help rebuild.

A handful of senior officers were taken to Moscow and used for propaganda purposes, and some of them joined the National Committee for a Free Germany. Some, including Paulus, signed anti-Hitler statements that were broadcast to German troops. Paulus testified for the prosecution during the Nuremberg Trials and assured families in Germany that those soldiers taken prisoner at Stalingrad were safe. He remained in the Soviet Union until 1952, then moved to Dresden in East Germany, where he spent the remainder of his days defending his actions at Stalingrad and was quoted as saying that Communism was the best hope for postwar Europe. General Walther von Seydlitz-Kurzbach offered to raise an anti-Hitler army from the Stalingrad survivors, but the Soviets did not accept. It was not until 1955 that the last of the 5,000–6,000 survivors were repatriated (to West Germany) after a plea to the Politburo by Konrad Adenauer.

Significance

Stalingrad has been described as the biggest defeat in the history of the German Army. It is often identified as the turning point on the Eastern Front, in the war against Germany overall, and the entire World War II. The Red Army had the initiative, and the Wehrmacht was in retreat. A year of German gains during Case Blue had been wiped out. Germany's Sixth Army had ceased to exist, and the forces of Germany's European allies, except Finland, had been shattered. In a speech on 9 November 1944, Hitler himself blamed Stalingrad for Germany's impending doom.

Stalingrad's significance has been downplayed by some historians, who point either to the Battle of Moscow or the Battle of Kursk as more strategically decisive. Others maintain that the destruction of an entire army (the largest killed, captured, wounded figures for Axis soldiers, nearly 1 million, during the war) and the frustration of Germany's grand strategy made the battle a watershed moment. At the time, however, the global significance of the battle was not in doubt. Writing in his diary on 1 January 1943, British General Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, reflected on the change in the position from a year before:

I felt Russia could never hold, Caucasus was bound to be penetrated, and Abadan (our Achilles heel) would be captured with the consequent collapse of Middle East, India, etc. After Russia's defeat how were we to handle the German land and air forces liberated? England would be again bombarded, threat of invasion revived... And now! We start 1943 under conditions I would never have dared to hope. Russia has held, Egypt for the present is safe. There is a hope of clearing North Africa of Germans in the near future... Russia is scoring wonderful successes in Southern Russia.

At this point, the British had won the Battle of El Alamein in November 1942. However, there were only about 50,000 German soldiers at El Alamein in Egypt, while at Stalingrad 200,000 Germans had been lost.

Regardless of the strategic implications, there is little doubt about Stalingrad's symbolism. Germany's defeat shattered its reputation for invincibility and dealt a devastating blow to German morale. On 30 January 1943, the tenth anniversary of his coming to power, Hitler chose not to speak. Joseph Goebbels read the text of his speech for him on the radio. The speech contained an oblique reference to the battle, which suggested that Germany was now in a defensive war. The public mood was sullen, depressed, fearful, and war-weary. Germany was looking in the face of defeat.

The reverse was the case on the Soviet side. There was an overwhelming surge in confidence and belief in victory. A common saying was: "You cannot stop an army which has done Stalingrad." Stalin was feted as the hero of the hour and made a Marshal of the Soviet Union.

The news of the battle echoed round the world, with many people now believing that Hitler's defeat was inevitable. The Turkish Consul in Moscow predicted that "the lands which the Germans have destined for their living space will become their dying space". Britain's conservative The Daily Telegraph proclaimed that the victory had saved European civilisation. The country celebrated "Red Army Day" on 23 February 1943. A ceremonial Sword of Stalingrad was forged by King George VI. After being put on public display in Britain, this was presented to Stalin by Winston Churchill at the Tehran Conference later in 1943. Soviet propaganda spared no effort and wasted no time in capitalising on the triumph, impressing a global audience. The prestige of Stalin, the Soviet Union, and the worldwide Communist movement was immense, and their political position greatly enhanced.

Commemoration

In recognition of the determination of its defenders, Stalingrad was awarded the title Hero City in 1945. A colossal monument called The Motherland Calls was erected in 1967 on Mamayev Kurgan, the hill overlooking the city where bones and rusty metal splinters can still be found. The statue forms part of a war memorial complex which includes the ruins of the Grain Silo and Pavlov's House. On 2 February 2013 Volgograd hosted a military parade and other events to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the final victory.

Casualties

The calculation of casualties depends on what scope is given to the Battle of Stalingrad. The scope can vary from the fighting in the city and suburbs to the inclusion of almost all fighting on the southern wing of the Soviet–German front from the spring of 1942 to the end of the fighting in the city in the winter of 1943. Scholars have produced different estimates depending on their definition of the scope of the battle. The difference is comparing the city against the region. The Axis suffered 627,899 total casualties (wounded, killed, captured) among all branches of the German armed forces and its allies; 282,606 in the 6th Army from 21 August to the end of the battle, 17,293 in the 4th Panzer Army from 21 August to 31 January, 109,000 Romanians of which at least 70,000 were captured or missing, 114,000 Italians and 105,000 Hungarians were killed, wounded or captured.

The Germans lost 900 aircraft (including 274 transports and 165 bombers used as transports), 500 tanks and 6,000 artillery pieces. According to a contemporary Soviet report, 5,762 guns, 1,312 mortars, 12,701 heavy machine guns, 156,987 rifles, 80,438 sub-machine guns, 10,722 trucks, 744 aircraft; 1,666 tanks, 261 other armored vehicles, 571 half-tracks and 10,679 motorcycles were captured by the Soviets. An unknown amount of Hungarian, Italian, and Romanian materiel was lost.

The USSR, according to archival figures, suffered 1,129,619 total casualties; 478,741 personnel killed or missing, and 650,878 wounded or sick. The USSR lost 4,341 tanks destroyed or damaged, 15,728 artillery pieces and 2,769 combat aircraft. 955 Soviet civilians died in Stalingrad and its suburbs from aerial bombing by Luftflotte 4 as the German 4th Panzer and 6th Armies approached the city.

Luftwaffe losses

The losses of transport planes were especially serious, as they destroyed the capacity for supply of the trapped 6th Army. The destruction of 72 aircraft when the airfield at Tatsinskaya was overrun meant the loss of about 10 percent of the Luftwaffe transport fleet.

These losses amounted to about 50 percent of the aircraft committed and the Luftwaffe training program was stopped and sorties in other theaters of war were significantly reduced to save fuel for use at Stalingrad.

Volgograd is one of the most beautiful ancient cities of Russia. It is located in the south-eastern European part of Russia. The city was built as a fortress on the right bank of the Volga. The date of birth of the city is July 2, 1589. The city is 90 km, and is the longest city in Russia. The total area of the city is 565 sq. km. There is an interesting and rich history in Volgograd with a lot of historical monuments, culture and architecture.. Throughout its history the city has changed names three times.. Tsaritsyn - from 1589 to 1925. Stalingrad - from 1925 to 1961, and from 1961 the city has been known as Volgograd. For more than 400 years, the city has experienced many historical events. Many battles have taken place for control: Stepan Razin captured the city twice in 1670, and in 1708 power passed into the hands of Kondrat Bulavin. In 1774 Yemelyan Pugachev tried to take the city by storm, and in 1918 there was a civil war.The latest and most famous battle, was the ba ttle for Stalingrad during World War II. The Battle of Stalingrad began on the 17th of July 1942, and ended on the 2nd of February 1943. This battle was very fierce, with about a 1000000 bombs being dropped on the city.It was completely destroyed, and more than 2 million Soviet and German soldiers were killed. This battle marked a turning point in the battle against Nazi Germany, and the city rose up from the ashes.

Now Volgograd is the administrative centre of the Volgograd region. This is the most important industrial, economic and cultural / historical center of Russia. Its population is 1023000 people. Major industries are fuel, chemical, petrochemical, woodworking, light industry, food industry, ferrous and nonferrous metallurgy, machinery, building materials and energy. In Volgograd, there is an airport and railway, and europe's largest river port. Two federal highways also pass through the city.

Volgograd is a major tourist center. It is a monument-city and a hero-city, visited by hundreds of thousands of Russian and foreign tourists. They are attracted by Volgagrad s nature, mineral springs, spa s and rest-houses, along with the rich and glorious history. There are many museums and monuments, with a vibrant culture and architecture.

The city has a well developed transportation network: buses, trolleybuses, trams, minibuses and taxi, and also Russia's only underground tram system. There are a large numer of hotels in Volgagrad, with plans to build more to satisfy the needs of tourists.

After visiting our city, you will have an unforgettable impression. The hero-city is waiting for you, to show you all of it's power and beauty.

Museum – Panorama ”Stalingrad Battle”

Not far from Pavlov House there is State historical memorial museum “Stalingrad Battle”. This museum exhibits military equipment that is demonstrated in the open air. You can see famous Soviet “Katusha” (a military car with reactive artillery) here.

The guns of different calibers, which were produced in the period of the war.

Howitzers of the war years.

Troop train is on the siding.

The war train consists of platforms with guns and tanks, carriages for soldiers. It is written on the carriages: “Everything for the front. Everything for the victory”.

The monument to the tank-men. It is written on the memorial plate: “Glory to the tank-men”.

The ruins of Grudinina mill is in the centre of the complex. The mill was built in 1903. It is the only building left after bombing of Stalingrad. The ruins of the mill were left untouched as a monument to courage and heroism of the Soviet Union.

A column with the inscription: ”By the call of Motherland and party the Soviet people came here to defend freedom and honor of the people, the achievements of Great October. Here, on this land, they turned the way of the fare, made it go from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from death to life”.

Entrance to the museum – panorama ”Stalingrad Battle”

Visit one of Volgograd’s world famous sights related to the World War II. This museum consists of an artistic panoramic canvas «The Defeat of Fascist Forces under Stalingrad» the largest painted panorama in Russia measuring 16x120 metres, and the Museum of Stalingrad Battle with 8 exhibition halls containing more that 3,500 exhibits, 4 dioramas 5x25 metres each, a unique portrait gallery of Soviet military leaders and commanders involved in the Stalingrad battle. Museum’s funds host an extraordinary collection of weapons, military equipment, documents, photographs, banners, and works of art.

Next to the museum building you will see another striking evidence of the horrors of war – the ruins of a mill. This five storey building was left for the generations to come as a gruesome reminder of what had happened in Stalingrad in 1942.

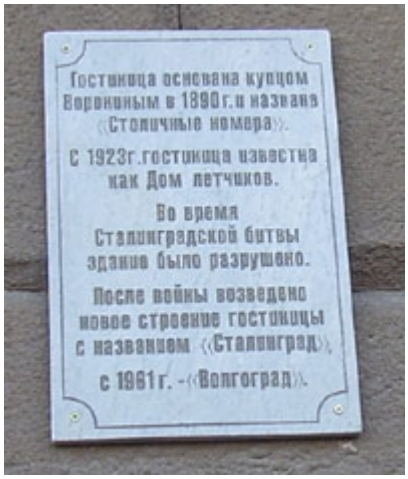
You will also see the house of Sergeant Yakov Pavlov mentioned in German military maps as an unconquered fortress. The building was under siege for 58 days, but the brave soldiers never gave up.

The Heroes` Alley

The Alley of Heroes is situated between the Square of Fallen Fighters and the central Embankment. It is surrounded with high poplar-trees. Comfortable benches are places in their shadow. Volgograders like to spend their free time here.

In 1985 on one side of the Alley a memorial monument to 192 heroes of the Soviet Union born in Volgograd was opened. Tree of them were twice-heroes of the Soviet Union, and 28 had orders of Glory of 3 grades.

Opposite it there is a monument to 127 heroes of the Soviet Union who got the title during Stalingrad Battle.



Opposite it one can see a hotel “Volgograd” built in 1890 by a merchant Voronin. It was called “Capital rooms” and was on 3 floors. During the war it was ruined and then newly rebuilt in 1955.

The monument to Alexander Nevsky was erected on February, 24, 2007 in front of the theatre. A. Nevsky is considered to be a celestial protector of Volgograd.

Not far from Eternal Flame there is an international grave of 3 fighters. They defended Stalingrad from the fascists: a Spaniard Ibarruri Ruben Ruis, a Russian pilot Kamenshikov Vladimir Grigorjevich and a Tartar Hafis Fatjahuddinov.

On the square of the Fallen Fighters you can see a poplar-tree. It is the only tree left after Stalingrad Battle. That`s why it is covered with war scars. In 1975 a granite plate was put here. There are such words on it: “Nature – historical monument. This poplar-tree brought his life through the great battle”.

Mamaev Kurgan

The Mamai Hill is a sacred place for the Volgograders and all the Russians. It is the highest point in Volgograd. During the Great Patriotic War the hill was called “Height 102”. The whole city can be seen from the top of the hill. That`s why terrible fights were waged here for its possession. Stalingrad Battle lasted for 200 days and 135 days the Soviet troops fought for the “Height 102”. All the Mamai Hill was dug with bombs, projectiles and mines. Every 1 sq. Meter of the Mamai Hill was covered with 500 – 1300 bullets and shells. The burnt ground soaked with soldier`s blood after bombing was quite lifeless. Even grass didn`t grow there. After Stalingrad Battle the Mamai Hill became the brother`s grave for 34,5 thousand people fallen down defending the city and its population. Making a project of the memorial complex took a lot of time. The building of it started only in May, 1959. The memorial complex “To the heroes of Stalingrad Battle” was opened in October 1967. It is considered to be one of the 7 wonders of Russia.

There is an introduction composition “Memory of generations” at the pedestal of the Mamai Hill. One can see a crowd of people who are going to honour the memory of the fallen fighters with wreaths and descended banners. A man and a small girl with a bunch of flowers are at the head of the column. He represents an old generation and she – the young one.

There are memory tombs with some ground from hero – cities: Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Odessa, Sevastopol, Novorossijsk, Kertch, Tula, Brest Fortress, Murmansk, Smolensk.

The central granite staircase is 10 m higher and leads to the Alley of Poplar-trees.

On the left hand from the central staircase there is a memorial wall with an inscription: ”Years and decades will pass by. New generations of people will appear. But grandsons and grand-grandsons of the heroes will come to the majestic memorial monument of Great Victory. They`ll come with their children and bring flowers. Here, thinking of the past and dreaming of the future people will remind all those who fell down defending the eternal flame of life.

The Alley of Pyramid Poplar trees looks like soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder. It`s length – 223 m. The alley leads to the square “Standing to death”.

In the centre of the square there is a pond with the figure of a soldier by the rock in the middle of it. He`s got an automatic gun in one hand and a grenade in the other one. You can read the inscriptions on the rock: “stand to death”, “There is no room for us on the other bank of the Volga”, “No step backwards”, “Every house is a fortress”, “Don`t bring shame upon sacred memory”.

The staircase leads us to the Square of Heroes. Two walls on both sides of it symbolize ruins of Stalingrad after bombing. One can see figure compositions, slogans and appeals on the walls. All the inscriptions on the walls show soul condition of the people. Songs of the war period, information about battle events are heard here.

In the centre of the Heroes square there is a pond (26,6/86 m) which symbolizes the Volga. To the left you can see a wall which looks like a banner. There is an inscription on it: “ Iron wind blew in their faces, but they

were walking straightwards and the feeling of superstitions horror captured the enemy. Are the people walking? Are they mortal?" There are six sculptor – figures to the right. The height of each is 6 m. They tell about the heroic deeds of the Soviet people during Stalingrad Battle.

1) A soldier is heavily wounded but he holds a grenade in his hand. He relies on the shoulder of his friend. Both of them will struggle to the end.

2) A young girl, a nurse, is carrying away a wounded soldier from the battlefield.

3) A navy soldier with a knot of grenades is moving to the fascist tank, his wounded friend is near – by on the ground.

4) A soldier helps his commander to stand on his legs who continues to conduct the fight.

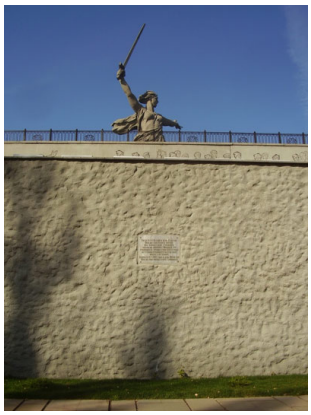
5) A soldier takes a standard from the hands of a falling standard – bearer and holds it forward.

6) Two soldiers are killing a snake and a swastika that symbolize fascism and then throw them into the Volga.

At the end of the square one can see a wall where gladness of the winners is shown. The length of it is 125 m, the height – 10 m. The invasion of the Soviet troops can be seen on the left side of the wall. The happy figures of the soldiers are in the middle of the wall. They are embracing each other and greeting with the Great Victory.

On the right side of the wall the prisoned Germans are portrayed with the inscription: ”The fascist fighters wanted to see the Volga and the Red Army gave them such a possibility”.

On the 9-th of May, 1970 a capsule with a letter to the descendants was put in the wall. This capsule must be opened on the 100-th anniversary of the Great Victory on May, 9, 2045. There is a memorial plate on the place where the capsule was put in one can read: “Here, on 9.05.1970, on day of 25-th anniversary of the Great Victory, a capsule with a letter to the descendants from the workers of the city – hero Volgograd and veterans of the Great Patriotic War is put in. Open it on 9.05.2045 on the 100-th anniversary over the fascist Germany”.



Here in the wall there is an entrance to the Hall of War Glory. The hall is a cylinder in from, the diameter of it is 42 m. and the height – 13,5 m. There are 34 pictures of the standards on the round wall with the names 7200 fallen fighters, defenders of Stalingrad. A whit marble hand with a torch and eternal flame in it is in the middle of the Hall. A guard of honour is standing at the exit out of the Hall. The change of the guard takes place every hour since 9.00 till 19.00. There is a white marble footwear leading to the Square of Sorrow.

Here one can see a figure of a sorrowful mother. Her figure is bent over her dead son fallen in the fight. This sculpture symbolizes all the mothers who lost sons, husbands, brothers, fathers in the war.There is a pond at mother`s feet. It is a lake of her tears. The height of this sculpture is 11 m.

The grave of Marshal of the Soviet Union Chuikov V.I. a twice-hero of the Soviet Union is situated on the Square of Sorrow. He died in 1982 and was buried here. There are usually many flowers from Thankful descendants on the grave.

From the Square of Sorrow a footway leads to the top of the hill 34505 soldiers are buried along it. The footway consists of 200 stairs because Stalingrad Battle lasted for this period of time. One can find here 35 granite tombs of heroes of the Soviet Union, defenders of Stalingrad.

The height of the hill is 14 m. The main monument “Motherland calls” is situated on the top of it. This woman with a sword in a hand calls her sons to defend their Motherland. The height of this sculpture is 85 m. (52 m. is the height of Motherland, the length of the hand – 20 m, of the sword – 29 m). The weight of the sculpture is 8 thousand tons.

In May, 2005 Temple of all the Saints was opened on the Mamai Hill for the sake of the fallen fighters. A white stone temple with five domes is situated near the Brother`s grave of Stalingrad defenders.

There is a tank tower on the granite pedestal near-by. It marks the famous “Height 102”. One can read an inscription on the desk: “Here, on the Mamai Hill, during the Great Patriotic War in the battle for Stalingrad the most bloody and persistent fights for the possession of the dominating height took place. Here there is a brother`s grave of the soldiers who defended “height 102”. About 1500 people are buried here.

The grave is surrounded by the granite plates and green fir-trees. There is an inscription on the plate: “The fighters of the 62-nd Army are buried here. They defended the Mamai Hill in Stalingrad in 1942-1943. One can see a sculpture of a woman – soldier who wants to lay a wreath on the grave as a sign of gratitude and memory.

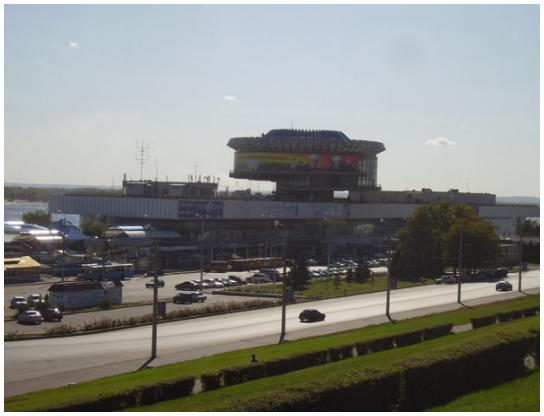
There are many places on the Mamai Hill that are of historic value but only a few people know about them. Not far from the central Alley, in a small ravine there is a spring of life. During the war it was the only source of water for the Soviet and German soldiers. Today the spring is in a bad condition but the city authority plans to make it a memorial monument.

The Central Embankment

A Fountain with the composition “Arts” in the centre of it was erected in 1957 on the upper terrace of the Central Embankment. The composition presents 3 dancing girls in national dresses.

Then there is a staircase with two white propylons on both sides of it.

The monument to the fire – brigade ship “Gasitel” was opened in November, 1977 on the lower terrace of the central embankment. It was built in 1903 and called “Tsarev” till 1926. It served as a fire-ship till 1966, participated in Tsaritsin defence, tock part in Stalingrad Battle.



Volgograd river station is considered to be the greatest river station of Europe. It is situated on the Central Embankment. It`s length is 296 m (the same one Red Square in Moscow has), width – 36 m, height – 47 m. The spacious of the waiting – hall is 700 people.

On 26 January 1943, the German forces inside Stalingrad were split into two pockets. A northern pocket centered on the tractor factory and a smaller southern pocket in the city center. The northern pocket was tactically commanded by General Strekker while the southern pocket was commanded by General Roske. The same day HQs of 6th German Army moved away from Gumrak to the very center of Stalingrad - to the cellar of Univermag Department Store.

On 30 January 1943, the 10th anniversary of Hitler's coming to power, Goebbels read out a proclamation that included the sentence: "The heroic struggle of our soldiers on the Volga should be a warning for everybody to do the utmost for the struggle for Germany's freedom and the future of our people, and thus in

a wider sense for the maintenance of our entire continent." Hitler promoted Paulus to the rank of Generalfeldmarschall. No German field marshal had ever surrendered, and the implication was clear: if Paulus surrendered, he would shame himself and would become the highest ranking German officer ever to be captured. Hitler believed that Paulus would either fight to the last man or commit suicide. Paulus, however, commented, "I have no intention of shooting myself for this Bohemian corporal."

The next day, the southern pocket in Stalingrad collapsed. Soviet forces reached the entrance to the German headquarters in the ruined TSUM - Central Stalingrad Department Store. General Schmidt negotiated a surrender of the headquarters while Paulus waited in another room. When interrogated by the Soviets, Paulus claimed that he had not surrendered. He said that he had been taken by surprise. He denied that he was the commander of the remaining northern pocket in Stalingrad and refused to issue an order in his name for them to surrender.

Today in the original cellar of Stalingrad Department Store you can find the new museum «Memory» which was opened in 2003. During the Soviet Union times the basements of Store were conserved and any visits for tourists were not available. The museum inlcudes copies of originals documents, hundreds of exhibits and pictures but the most interesting and precious here are the walls - witnesses of what was happening here in 1942-43.

Battle of Moscow

Battle of Moscow	
Part of the Eastern Front of World War II	
Soviet anti-aircraft gunners on the roof of the Moskva hotel.	
Date	2 October 1941 – 7 January 1942 (3 months and 5 days)
Location	Moscow Oblast, Russian SFSR, USSR
Result	Strategic Soviet victory • German operational and tactical failure • Eventual failure of Operation Barbarossa
Belligerents	
Germany	Soviet Union
Commanders and leaders	

Walther von Brauchitsch / Adolf Hitler Fedor von Bock Albert Kesselring	Joseph Stalin Georgy Zhukov Aleksandr Vasilevsky
Strength	
As of 1 October 1941: 1,183,693–1,929,406 men, 1,000–2,470 tanks and assault guns, 14,000 guns, Initial aircraft: 549 serviceable At time of counter offensive: 599	As of 1 October 1941: 1,250,000–1,400,000 men, 3,232 tanks, 7,600 guns, Initial aircraft: 936 (545 serviceable) At time of counter offensive: 1,376
Casualties and losses	
174,194	1,029,234

The Battle of Moscow (Russian: Битва за Москву, translit. Bitva za Moskvu) was a military campaign that consisted of two periods of strategically significant fighting on a 600 km (370 mi) sector of the Eastern Front during World War II. It took place between October 1941 and January 1942. The Soviet defensive effort frustrated Hitler's attack on Moscow, the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Soviet Union's largest city. Moscow was one of the primary military and political objectives for Axis forces in their invasion of the Soviet Union.

The German strategic offensive, named Operation Typhoon (German: Unternehmen Taifun), called for two pincer offensives, one to the north of Moscow against the Kalinin Front by the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies, simultaneously severing the Moscow–Leningrad railway, and another to the south of Moscow Oblast against the Western Front south of Tula, by the 2nd Panzer Army, while the 4th Army advanced directly towards Moscow from the west. According to Andrew Roberts, Hitler's offensive towards the Soviet capital was nothing less than an 'all-out attack': "It is no exaggeration to state that the outcome of the Second World War hung in the balance during this massive attack".

Initially, the Soviet forces conducted a strategic defence of the Moscow Oblast by constructing three defensive belts, deploying newly raised reserve armies, and bringing troops from the Siberian and Far Eastern Military Districts. As the German offensives were halted, a Soviet strategic counter-offensive and smaller-scale offensive operations forced the German armies back to the positions around the cities of Oryol, Vyazma and Vitebsk, and nearly surrounded three German armies. It was a major setback for the Germans, the end of the idea of a fast German victory in the USSR. Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch was excused as commander of OKH, with Hitler appointing himself as Germany's supreme military commander.

The eastern front at the time of the Battle of Moscow:

- Initial Wehrmacht advance – to 9 July 1941
- Subsequent advances – to 1 September 1941
- Encirclement and battle of Kiev to 9 September 1941
- Final Wehrmacht advance – to 5 December 1941

Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion plan, called for the capture of Moscow within four months. On 22 June 1941, Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union, destroyed most of the Soviet Air Force on the ground, and advanced deep into Soviet territory using blitzkriegtactics to destroy entire Soviet armies. The German Army Group North moved towards Leningrad, Army Group South took control of Ukraine, and Army Group Center advanced towards Moscow. By July 1941, Army Group Center crossed the Dnieper River, on the path to Moscow.

In August 1941, German forces captured Smolensk, an important stronghold on the road to Moscow. At this stage, although Moscow was vulnerable, an offensive against the city would have exposed the German flanks. In part to address these risks, in part to attempt to secure Ukraine's food and mineral resources, Hitler ordered the attack to turn north and south and eliminate Soviet forces at Leningrad and Kiev. This delayed the German advance on Moscow. When that advance resumed on 2 October 1941, German forces had been weakened, while the Soviets had raised new forces for the defence of the city.

Map of the Vyazma-Bryansk double encirclement (in German).

Initial German advance (30 September – 10 October)

Plans

For Hitler, the Soviet capital was secondary, and he believed the only way to bring the Soviet Union to its knees was to defeat it economically. He felt this could be accomplished by seizing the economic resources of Ukraine east of Kiev. When Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, supported a direct thrust to Moscow, he was told that "only ossified brains could think of such an idea". Franz Halder, head of the Army General Staff, was also convinced that a drive to seize Moscow would be victorious after the German Army inflicted enough damage on the Soviet forces. This view was shared by most within the German high command. But Hitler overruled his generals in favor of pocketing the Soviet forces around Kiev in the south, followed by the seizure of Ukraine. The move was successful, resulting in the loss of 660,000 Red Army personnel by 26 September, and further advances by Axis forces.

With the end of summer, Hitler redirected his attention to Moscow and assigned Army Group Center to this task. The forces committed to Operation Typhoon included three infantry armies (the 2nd, 4th and 9th) supported by three Panzer (tank) Groups (the 2nd, 3rd and 4th) and by the Luftwaffe's Luftflotte 2. Up to two million German troops were committed to the operation, along with 1,000–2,470 tanks and assault guns and 14,000 guns. German aerial strength, however, had been severely reduced over the summer's campaign; the Luftwaffe had lost 1,603 aircraft destroyed and 1,028 damaged. Luftflotte 2 had only 549 serviceable machines, including 158 medium and dive-bombers and 172 fighters, available for Operation Typhoon. The attack relied on standard blitzkrieg tactics, using Panzer groups rushing deep into Soviet formations and executing double-pincer movements, pocketing Red Army divisions and destroying them.

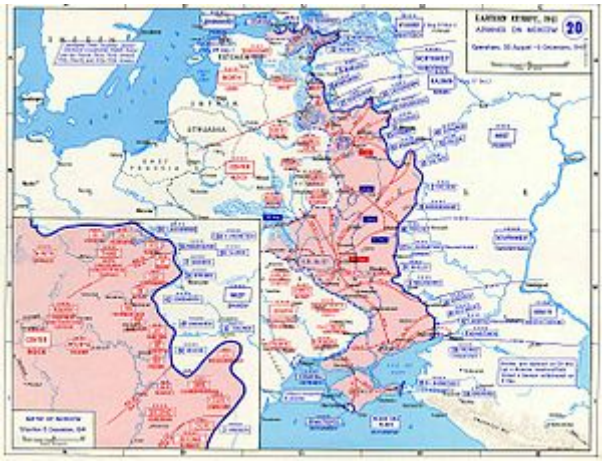
Facing the Wehrmacht were three Soviet fronts forming a defensive line between the cities of Vyazma and Bryansk, which barred the way to Moscow. The armies comprising these fronts had also been

wartraveller
discovering world war II sights

involved in heavy fighting. Still, it was a formidable concentration consisting of 1,250,000 men, 1,000 tanks and 7,600 guns. The Soviet Air Force (Voyenno-Vozdushnye Sily, VVS) had suffered appalling losses of some 7,500 to 21,200 aircraft. Extraordinary industrial achievements had begun to replace these, and at the outset of Typhoon the VVS could muster 936 aircraft, 578 of which were bombers.

Once Soviet resistance along the Vyazma-Bryansk front was eliminated, German forces were to press east, encircling Moscow by outflanking it from the north and south. Continuous fighting had reduced their effectiveness, and logistical difficulties became more acute. Guderian wrote that some of his destroyed tanks had not been replaced, and there were fuel shortages at the start of the operation.

The Battles of Vyazma and Bryansk



The German offensives during Operation Typhoon

The German attack went according to plan, with 3rd Panzer Army pushing through the middle nearly unopposed and then splitting its mobile forces north to complete the encirclement of Vyazma with 4th Panzer Army, and other units south to close the ring around Bryansk in conjunction with 2nd Panzer Army. The Soviet defenses, still under construction, were overrun and spearheads of the Second and Third Panzer Groups met at Vyazma on 10 October 1941. Four Soviet armies (the 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd) were encircled in a large pocket just west of the city.

The encircled Soviet forces continued to fight, and the Wehrmacht had to employ 28 divisions to eliminate them, using troops which could have supported the offensive towards Moscow. The remnants of the Soviet Western and Reserve Fronts retreated and manned new defensive lines around Mozhaisk. Although losses were high, some of the encircled units escaped in small groups, ranging in size from platoons to full rifle divisions. Soviet resistance near Vyazma also provided time for the Soviet high command to reinforce the four armies defending Moscow (the 5th, 16th, 43rd and 49th Armies). Three rifle and two tank divisions were transferred from East Siberia with more to follow.

In the south near Bryansk, initial Soviet performance was barely more effective than at Vyazma. The Second Panzer Group executed an enveloping movement around the city, linking with the advancing 2nd Army and capturing Orel by 3 October and Bryansk by 6 October.

The mud of the rasputitsa before Moscow, November 1941

But the weather began to change, hampering the Germans. By 7 October, the first snow fell and quickly melted, turning roads and open areas into muddy quagmires, a phenomenon known as rasputitsa in Russia. German armored groups were greatly slowed, allowing Soviet forces to fall back and regroup.

Soviet forces were able to counterattack in some cases. For example, the 4th Panzer Division fell into an ambush set by Dmitri Leliushenko's hastily formed 1st Guards Special Rifle Corps, including Mikhail Katukov's 4th Tank Brigade, near the city of Mtsensk. Newly built T-34 tanks were concealed in the woods as German armor rolled past them; as a scratch team of Soviet infantry contained their advance, Soviet armor attacked from both flanks and savaged the German Panzer IV tanks. For the Wehrmacht, the shock of this defeat was so great that a special investigation was ordered. Guderian and his troops discovered, to their dismay, that the Soviet T-34s were almost impervious to German tank guns. As the general wrote, "Our Panzer IV tanks with their short 75 mm guns could only explode a T-34 by hitting the engine from behind." Guderian also noted in his memoirs that "the Russians already learned a few things." In 2012, Niklas Zetterling disputed the notion of a major German reversal at Mtsensk, noting that only a battlegroup from the 4th Panzer Division was engaged while most of the division was fighting elsewhere, that both sides withdrew from the battlefield after the fighting and that the Germans only lost six tanks destroyed and three damaged. For German commanders like Hoepner and Bock, the action was inconsequential; their primary worry was resistance from within the pocket, not without.

Other counterattacks further slowed the German offensive. The 2nd Army, which was operating to the north of Guderian's forces with the aim of encircling the Bryansk Front, had come under strong Red Army pressure assisted by air support.

According to German assessments of the initial Soviet defeat, 673,000 soldiers had been captured by the Wehrmacht in both the Vyazma and Bryansk pockets, although recent research suggests a lower—but still enormous—figure of 514,000 prisoners, reducing Soviet strength by 41%. Personnel losses of 499,001 (permanent as well as temporary) were calculated by the Soviet command. On 9 October, Otto Dietrich of the German Ministry of Propaganda, quoting Hitler himself, forecast in a press conference the imminent destruction of the armies defending Moscow. As Hitler had never had to lie about a specific and verifiable military fact, Dietrich convinced foreign correspondents that the collapse of all Soviet resistance was perhaps

hours away. German civilian morale—low since the start of Barbarossa—significantly improved, with rumors of soldiers home by Christmas and great riches from the future Lebensraum in the east.

However, Red Army resistance had slowed the Wehrmacht. When, on 10 October the Germans arrived within sight of the Mozhaisk line west of Moscow, they encountered another defensive barrier manned by new Soviet forces. That same day, Georgy Zhukov, who had been recalled from the Leningrad Front on 6 October, took charge of Moscow's defense and the combined Western and Reserve Fronts, with Colonel General Ivan Konev as his deputy. On 12 October, he ordered the concentration of all available forces on a strengthened Mozhaisk line, a move supported by Vasilevsky. The Luftwaffe still controlled the sky wherever it appeared, and Stuka and bomber groups flew 537 sorties, destroying some 440 vehicles and 150 artillery pieces.

On 15 October, Stalin ordered the evacuation of the Communist Party, the General Staff and various civil government offices from Moscow to Kuibyshev (now Samara), leaving only a limited number of officials behind. The evacuation caused panic among Muscovites. On 16–17 October, much of the civilian population tried to flee, mobbing the available trains and jamming the roads from the city. Despite all this, Stalin publicly remained in the Soviet capital, somewhat calming the fear and pandemonium.

Mozhaisk defense line (13–30 October)

By 13 October 1941, the Wehrmacht had reached the Mozhaisk defense line, a hastily constructed double set of fortifications protecting Moscow's western approaches which extended from Kalinin towards Volokolamsk and Kaluga. Despite recent reinforcements, only around 90,000 Soviet soldiers manned this line–far too few to stem the German advance. Given the limited resources available, Zhukov decided to concentrate his forces at four critical points: the 16th Army under Lieutenant General Rokossovsky guarded Volokolamsk, Mozhaisk was defended by 5th Army under Major General Govorov, the 43rd Army of Major General Golubev defended Maloyaroslavets, and the 49th Army under Lieutenant General Zakharkin protected Kaluga. The entire Soviet Western Front—nearly destroyed after its encirclement near Vyazma—was being recreated almost from scratch.

With all the men at the front, Moscow women dig anti-tank trenches around their city in 1941

Barricades in a Moscow street, October 1941

Moscow itself was also hastily fortified. According to Zhukov, 250,000 women and teenagers worked building trenches and anti-tank moats around Moscow, moving almost three million cubic meters of earth with no mechanical help. Moscow's factories were hastily converted to military tasks: one automobile factory was turned into a submachine gun armory, a clock factory manufactured mine detonators, the chocolate factory shifted to food production for the front, and automobile repair stations worked fixing damaged tanks and military vehicles. Despite these preparations, the capital was within striking distance of German tanks, with the Luftwaffe mounting large-scale air raids on the city. The air raids caused only limited damage because of extensive anti-aircraft defenses and effective civilian fire brigades.

On 13 October 1941 (15 October, according to other sources), the Wehrmacht resumed its offensive. At first, the German forces attempted to bypass Soviet defenses by pushing northeast towards the weakly protected city of Kalinin and south towards Kaluga and Tula, capturing all except Tula by 14 October. Encouraged by these initial successes, the Germans launched a frontal assault against the fortified line, taking Mozhaisk and Maloyaroslavets on 18 October, Naro-Fominsk on 21 October, and Volokolamsk on 27 October after intense fighting. Because of the increasing danger of flanking attacks, Zhukov was forced to fall back, withdrawing his forces east of the Nara River.

In the south, the Second Panzer Army initially advanced towards Tula with relative ease because the Mozhaisk defense line did not extend that far south and no significant concentrations of Soviet troops blocked their advance. However bad weather, fuel problems, and damaged roads and bridges eventually slowed the German army, and Guderian did not reach the outskirts of Tula until 26 October. The German plan initially called for the rapid capture of Tula, followed by a pincer move around Moscow. The first attack, however, was repelled by the 50th Army and civilian volunteers on 29 October, after a fight within sight of the city. On 31 October, the German Army high command ordered a halt to all offensive operations until increasingly severe logistical problems were resolved and the rasputitsa subsided.

Wehrmacht at the gates (1 November – 5 December)

By late October, the German forces were worn out, with only a third of their motor vehicles still functioning, infantry divisions at third- to half-strength, and serious logistics issues preventing the delivery of warm clothing and other winter equipment to the front. Even Hitler seemed to surrender to the idea of a long

struggle, since the prospect of sending tanks into such a large city without heavy infantry support seemed risky after the costly capture of Warsaw in 1939.

A 7 November 1941 parade by Soviet troops on Red Square depicted in this 1949 painting by Konstantin Yuon vividly demonstrates the symbolic significance of the event.

To stiffen the resolve of the Red Army and boost civilian morale, Stalin ordered the traditional military parade on 7 November (Revolution Day) to be staged in Red Square. Soviet troops paraded past the Kremlin and then marched directly to the front. The parade carried a great symbolic significance by demonstrating the continued Soviet resolve, and was frequently invoked as such in the years to come. Despite this brave show, the Red Army's position remained precarious. Although 100,000 additional Soviet soldiers had reinforced Klin and Tula, where renewed German offensives were expected, Soviet defenses remained relatively thin. Nevertheless, Stalin ordered several preemptive counteroffensives against German lines. These were launched despite protests from Zhukov, who pointed out the complete lack of reserves. The Wehrmacht repelled most of these counteroffensives, which squandered Soviet forces that could have been used for Moscow's defense. The offensive's only notable success occurred west of Moscow near Aleksino, where Soviet tanks inflicted heavy losses on the 4th Army because the Germans still lacked anti-tank weapons capable of damaging the new, well-armored T-34 tanks.

Soviet poster proclaiming, "Let's make a stand for Moscow!"

From 31 October to 15 November, the Wehrmacht high command stood down while preparing to launch a second offensive towards Moscow. Although Army Group Centre still possessed considerable nominal

strength, its fighting capabilities had thoroughly diminished because of combat fatigue. While the Germans were aware of the continuous influx of Soviet reinforcements from the east as well as the presence of large reserves, given the tremendous Soviet casualties, they did not expect the Soviets to be able to mount a determined defense. But in comparison to the situation in October, Soviet rifle divisions occupied a much stronger defensive position: a triple defensive ring surrounding the city and some remnants of the Mozhaisk line near Klin. Most of the Soviet field armies now had a multilayered defense, with at least two rifle divisions in second echelon positions. Artillery support and sapper teams were also concentrated along major roads that German troops were expected to use in their attacks. There were also many Soviet troops still available in reserve armies behind the front. Finally, Soviet troops—and especially officers—were now more experienced and better prepared for the offensive.

By 15 November 1941, the ground had finally frozen, solving the mud problem. The armored Wehrmacht spearheads, consisting of 51 divisions, could now advance, with the goal of encircling Moscow and linking up near the city of Noginsk, east of the capital. To achieve this objective, the German Third and Fourth Panzer Groups needed to concentrate their forces between the Volga Reservoir and Mozhaysk, then proceed past the Soviet 30th Army to Klin and Solnechnogorsk, encircling the capital from the north. In the south, the Second Panzer Group intended to bypass Tula, still held by the Red Army, and advance to Kashira and Kolomna, linking up with the northern pincer at Noginsk. The German 4th Field Army in the center were to "pin down the troops of the Western Front."

Final pincer

German soldiers tend to a wounded comrade near Moscow, November–December 1941

On 15 November 1941, German tank armies began their offensive towards Klin, where no Soviet reserves were available because of Stalin's wish to attempt a counteroffensive at Volokolamsk, which had forced the relocation of all available reserve forces further south. Initial German attacks split the front in two, separating the 16th Army from the 30th. Several days of intense combat followed. Zhukov recalled in his memoirs that "The enemy, ignoring the casualties, was making frontal assaults, willing to get to Moscow by any means necessary." Despite the Wehrmacht's efforts, the multi-layered defense reduced Soviet casualties as the Soviet 16th Army slowly retreated and constantly harassed the German divisions trying to make their way through the fortifications.

The Third Panzer Army captured Klin after heavy fighting on 24 November, and by 25 November, Solnechnogorsk as well. Soviet resistance was still strong, and the outcome of the battle was by no means

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certain. Reportedly, Stalin asked Zhukov whether Moscow could be successfully defended and ordered him to "speak honestly, like a communist." Zhukov replied that it was possible, but that reserves were urgently needed. By 28 November, the German 7th Panzer Division had seized a bridgehead across the Moscow-Volga Canal—the last major obstacle before Moscow—and stood less than 35 km (22 mi) from the Kremlin; but a powerful counterattack by the 1st Shock Army drove them back. Just northwest of Moscow, the Wehrmacht reached Krasnaya Polyana, little more than 18 mi (29 km) from the Kremlin in central Moscow; German officers were able to make out some of the major buildings of the Soviet capital through their field glasses. Both Soviet and German forces were severely depleted, sometimes having only 150–200 riflemen—a company's full strength—left in a regiment.

German soldiers west of Moscow, December 1941

In the south, near Tula, combat resumed on 18 November 1941, with the Second Panzer Army trying to encircle the city. The German forces involved were extremely battered from previous fighting and still had no winter clothing. As a result, initial German progress was only 5–10 km (3.1–6.2 mi) per day. Moreover, it exposed the German tank armies to flanking attacks from the Soviet 49th and 50th Armies, located near Tula, further slowing the advance. Guderian nevertheless was able to pursue the offensive, spreading his forces in a star-like attack, taking Stalinogorsk on 22 November 1941 and surrounding a Soviet rifle division stationed there. On 26 November, German tanks approached Kashira, a city controlling a major highway to Moscow. In response, a violent Soviet counterattack was launched the following day. General Belov's 2nd Cavalry Corps, supported by hastily assembled formations which included 173rd Rifle Division, 9th Tank Brigade, two separate tank battalions, and training and militia units, halted the German advance near Kashira. The Germans were driven back in early December, securing the southern approach to the city. Tula itself held, protected by fortifications and determined defenders, both soldiers and civilians. In the south, the Wehrmacht never got close to the capital.

Because of the resistance on both the northern and southern sides of Moscow, on 1 December, the Wehrmacht attempted a direct offensive from the west along the Minsk-Moscow highway near the city of Naro-Fominsk. This offensive had limited tank support and was directed against extensive Soviet defenses. After meeting determined resistance from the Soviet 1st Guards Motorized Rifle Division and flank counterattacks staged by the 33rd Army, the German offensive stalled and was driven back four days later in the ensuing Soviet counteroffensive. On the same day, 638th Infantry Regiment, the only foreign formation of the Wehrmacht that took part in the advance on Moscow, went into action near the village of Diutkovo. On

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2 December, a reconnaissance battalion came to the town of Khimki—some 18 km (11 mi) away from the Kremlin in central Moscow reaching its bridge over the Moscow-Volga Canal as well as its railway station. This marked the farthest advance of German forces on Moscow.

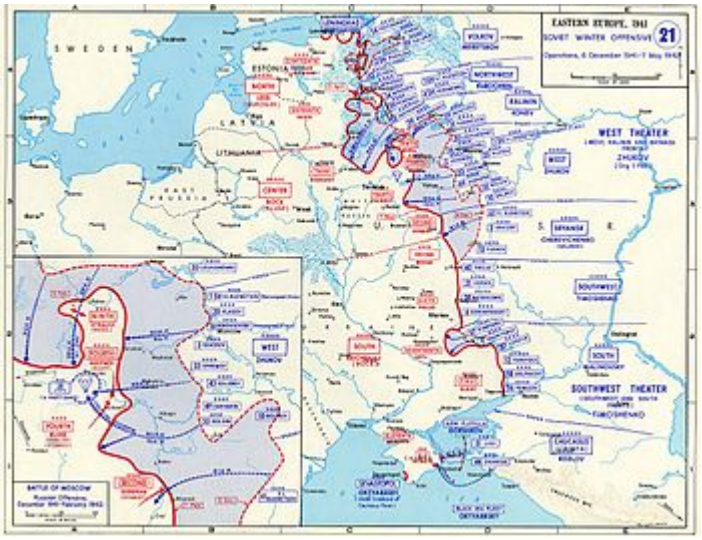
Red Army ski troops in Moscow. Still from documentary Moscow Strikes Back, 1942

The European Winter of 1941-1942 was the coldest of the twentieth century. On 30 November, von Bock reported to Berlin that the temperature was – 45 °C (–49 °F). General Erhard Raus, commander of the 6th Panzer Division, kept track of the daily mean temperature in his war diary. It shows a suddenly much colder period during 4–7 December: from –36 to –38 °C (–37 to –38 °F). Other temperature reports varied widely. Zhukov said that November's freezing weather stayed around –7 to –10 °C (+19 to +14 °F) Official Soviet Meteorological Service records show the lowest December temperature reached –28.8 °C (–20 °F). These numbers indicated severely cold conditions, and German troops were freezing with no winter clothing, using equipment that was not designed for such low temperatures. More than 130,000 cases of frostbite were reported among German soldiers. Frozen grease had to be removed from every loaded shell and vehicles had to be heated for hours before use. The same cold weather, typical for the season, hit the Soviet troops, but they were better prepared.

The Axis offensive on Moscow stopped. Heinz Guderian wrote in his journal that "the offensive on Moscow failed ... We underestimated the enemy's strength, as well as his size and climate. Fortunately, I stopped my troops on 5 December, otherwise the catastrophe would be unavoidable."

Artificial floods

Some historians have suggested that artificial floods played an important role in defending Moscow. They were primarily meant to break the ice and prevent troops and heavy military equipment from crossing the Volga river and Ivankovo Reservoir. This began with the blowing up of the Istra (ru) waterworks reservoir dam on 24 November 1941. On 28 November 1941, the water was drained into the Yakhroma and Sestra Rivers from six reservoirs (Khimki (ru), Iksha (ru), Pyalovskoye (ru), Pestovskoye (ru), Pirogovskoye (ru), and Klyazma (ru) reservoirs), as well as from Ivankovo Reservoir using dams near Dubna. This caused some 30-40 villages to become partially submerged even in the severe winter weather conditions of the time. Both were results of Soviet General Headquarters' Order 0428 dated 17 November 1941. Artificial floods were also used as unconventional weapon of direct impact.



The Soviet winter counter-offensive, 5 December 1941 – 7 May 1942

Although the Wehrmacht's offensive had been stopped, German intelligence estimated that Soviet forces had no more reserves left and thus would be unable to stage a counteroffensive. This estimate proved wrong, as Stalin transferred over 18 divisions, 1,700 tanks, and over 1,500 aircraft from Siberia and the Far East. The Red Army had accumulated a 58-division reserve by early December, when the offensive proposed by Zhukov and Vasilevsky was finally approved by Stalin. Even with these new reserves, Soviet forces committed to the operation numbered only 1,100,000 men, only slightly outnumbering the Wehrmacht. Nevertheless, with careful troop deployment, a ratio of two-to-one was reached at some critical points.

On 5 December 1941, the counteroffensive for "removing the immediate threat to Moscow" started on the Kalinin Front. The South-Western Front and Western Fronts began their offensives the next day. After several days of little progress, Soviet armies retook Solnechnogorsk on 12 December and Klin on 15 December. Guderian's army "beat a hasty retreat towards Venev" and then Sukhinichi. "The threat overhanging Tula was removed."

On 8 December, Hitler had signed his directive No.39, ordering the Wehrmacht to assume a defensive stance on the whole front. German troops were unable to organize a solid defense at their present locations and were forced to pull back to consolidate their lines. Guderian wrote that discussions with Hans Schmidt and Wolfram von Richthofen took place the same day, and both commanders agreed that the current front line could not be held. On 14 December, Franz Halder and Günther von Kluge finally gave permission for a limited withdrawal to the west of the Oka river, without Hitler's approval. On 20 December, during a meeting with German senior officers, Hitler cancelled the withdrawal and ordered his soldiers to defend every patch of ground, "digging trenches with howitzer shells if needed." Guderian protested, pointing out that losses from cold were actually greater than combat losses and that winter equipment was held by traffic ties in Poland. Nevertheless, Hitler insisted on defending the existing lines, and Guderian was dismissed by 25 December, along with generals Hoepner and Strauss, commanders of the 4th Panzer and 9th Army,

respectively. Fedor von Bock was also dismissed, officially for "medical reasons". Walther von Brauchitsch, Hitler's commander-in-chief, had been removed even earlier, on 19 December.

A Soviet machine gunner covers attacking infantry near Tula, in November 1941.

Meanwhile, the Soviet offensive continued in the north. The offensive liberated Kalinin and the Soviets reached Klin on 7 December, overrunning the headquarters of the LVI Panzer Corps outside the city. As the Kalinin Front drove west, a bulge developed around Klin. The Soviet front commander, General Ivan Konev, attempted to envelop any German forces remaining. Zhukov diverted more forces to the southern end of the bulge, to help Konev trap the Third Panzer Army. The Germans pulled their forces out in time. Although the encirclement failed, it unhinged the German defenses. A second attempt was made against the Second Panzer Army near Tula, but met strong opposition near Rzhev and was forced to halt, forming a salient that would last until March 1943. In the south, the offensive went equally well, with Southwestern Front forces relieving Tula on 16 December 1941. A major achievement was the encirclement and destruction of the German XXXIX Corps, protecting Guderian's Second Panzer Army's southern flank.

The Luftwaffe was paralysed in the second half of December. The weather, recorded as −42 °C (–44 °F), was a meteorological record. Logistical difficulties and freezing temperatures created technical difficulties until January 1942. In the meantime, the Luftwaffe had virtually vanished from the skies over Moscow, while the Red Air Force, operating from better prepared bases and benefiting from interior lines, grew stronger. On 4 January, the skies cleared. The Luftwaffe was quickly reinforced, as Hitler hoped it would save the situation. The Kampfgruppen (Bomber Groups) II./KG 4 and II./KG 30arrived from refitting in Germany, whilst four Transportgruppen (Transport Groups) with a strength of 102 Junkers Ju 52 transports were deployed from Luftflotte 4 (Air Fleet 4) to evacuate surrounded army units and improve the supply line to the front-line forces. It was a last minute effort and it worked. The German air arm was to help prevent a total collapse of Army Group Centre. Despite the Soviets' best efforts, the Luftwaffe had contributed enormously to the survival of Army Group Center. Between 17 and 22 December the Luftwaffe destroyed 299 motor vehicles and 23 tanks around Tula, hampering the Red Army's pursuit of the German Army.

In the center, Soviet progress was much slower. Soviet troops liberated Naro-Fominsk only on 26 December, Kaluga on 28 December, and Maloyaroslavets on 2 January, after 10 days of violent action. Soviet reserves ran low, and the offensive halted on 7 January 1942, after having pushed the exhausted and freezing German armies back 100–250 km (62–155 mi) from Moscow. Stalin continued to order more offensives in order to

trap and destroy Army Group Center in front of Moscow, but the Red Army was exhausted and overstretched and they failed.

Aftermath

Medal "For the Defence of Moscow": 1,028,600 were awarded from 1 May 1944.

The Red Army's winter counter-offensive drove the Wehrmacht from Moscow, but the city was still considered to be threatened, with the front line relatively close. Because of this, the Moscow theater remained a priority for Stalin, who at first appeared to be in shock due to the initial German success. In particular, the initial Soviet advance was unable to reduce the Rzhev salient, held by several divisions of Army Group Center. Immediately after the Moscow counter-offensive, a series of Soviet attacks (the Battles of Rzhev) were attempted against the salient, each time with heavy losses on both sides. By early 1943, the Wehrmacht had to disengage from the salient as the whole front was moving west. Nevertheless, the Moscow front was not finally secured until October 1943, when Army Group Center was decisively repulsed from the Smolensk landbridge and from the left shore of the upper Dnieper at the end of the Second Battle of Smolensk.

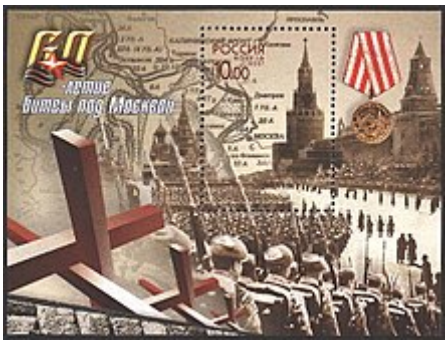
German soldiers surrender: still from the documentary Moscow Strikes Back, 1942

Furious that his army had been unable to take Moscow, Hitler dismissed his commander-in-chief, Walther von Brauchitsch, on 19 December 1941, and took personal charge of the Wehrmacht, effectively taking control of all military decisions. Additionally, Hitler surrounded himself with staff officers with little or no recent combat experience.

For the first time since June 1941, Soviet forces had stopped the Germans and driven them back. This resulted in Stalin becoming overconfident and deciding to further expand the offensive. On 5 January 1942, during a meeting in the Kremlin, Stalin announced that he was planning a general spring offensive, which

would be staged simultaneously near Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and the Crimea. This plan was accepted over Zhukov's objections. Low Red Army reserves and Wehrmacht tactical skill led to a bloody stalemate near Rzhev, known as the "Rzhev meat grinder", and to a string of Red Army defeats, such as the Second Battle of Kharkov, the failed attempt at elimination of the Demyansk pocket, and the encirclement of General Andrey Vlasov's army in a failed attempt to lift the siege of Leningrad, and the destruction of Red Army forces in Crimea. Ultimately, these failures would lead to a successful German offensive in the south and to the Battle of Stalingrad.

A documentary film, Moscow Strikes Back, (Russian: Разгром немецких войск под Москвой, "Rout of the German Troops near Moscow"), was made during the battle and rapidly released in the Soviet Union. It was taken to America and shown at the Globe in New York in August 1942. The New York Times reviewer commented that "The savagery of that retreat is a spectacle to stun the mind." As well as the Moscow parade and battle scenes, the film included images of German atrocities committed during the occupation, "the naked and slaughtered children stretched out in ghastly rows, the youths dangling limply in the cold from gallows that were rickety, but strong enough."



2001 Russian stamp for the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Moscow

The defense of Moscow became a symbol of Soviet resistance against the invading Axis forces. To commemorate the battle, Moscow was awarded the title of "Hero City" in 1965, on the 20th anniversary of Victory Day. A Museum of the Defence of Moscow was created in 1995.

Casualties

Both German and Soviet casualties during the battle of Moscow have been a subject of debate, as various sources provide somewhat different estimates. Not all historians agree on what should be considered the "Battle of Moscow" in the timeline of World War II. While the start of the battle is usually regarded as the beginning of Operation Typhoon on 30 September 1941 (or sometimes on 2 October 1941), there are two different dates for the end of the offensive. In particular, some sources (such as Erickson and Glantz) exclude the Rzhev offensive from the scope of the battle, considering it as a distinct operation and making the Moscow offensive "stop" on 7 January 1942—thus lowering the number of casualties.

There are also significant differences in figures from various sources. John Erickson, in his Barbarossa: The Axis and the Allies, gives a figure of 653,924 Soviet casualties between October 1941 and January

1942. Glantz, in his book When Titans Clashed, gives a figure of 658,279 for the defense phase alone, plus 370,955 for the winter counteroffensive until 7 January 1942. The official Wehrmacht daily casualty reports show 35,757 killed in action, 128,716 wounded, and 9,721 missing in action for the entire Army Group Center between 1 October 1941 and 10 January 1942. However, this official report does not match unofficial reports from individual battalion and divisional officers and commanders at the front, who record suffering far higher casualties than was officially reported.

Museum of the Great Patriotic War

Established	9 May 1995
Location	10 Brothers Fonchenko St, Moscow, Russian Federation, 121170
Type	History museum
Collection size	75,090 items
Visitors	700,000 - 800,000 per year
Public transit access	Park Pobedy, Arbatsko-Pokrovskaya Line

The Museum of the Great Patriotic War is a history museum located in Moscow at Poklonnaya Gora. The building was designed by architect Anatoly Polyansky. Work on the museum began on March 3, 1986, and the museum was opened to the public on May 9, 1995. The museum features exhibits and memorials concerning World War II, known in Russia as "The Great Patriotic War".

Exhibits

The museum features 14,143 square meters of exhibit space for permanent collections and an additional 5,500 square meters for temporary exhibits. Near the entry to the museum is the Hall of Commanders, which features a decorative "Sword and Shield of Victory" and bronze busts of recipients of the Order of Victory, the highest military honor awarded by the Soviet Union.

The Hall of Commanders

In the center of the museum is the Hall of Glory, a white marble room which features the names of over 11,800 of the recipients of the Hero of the Soviet Union distinction. A large bronze sculpture, the "Soldier of Victory," stands in the center of this hall. Below lies the Hall of Remembrance and Sorrow, which honors Soviet people who died in the war. This room is dimly lit and strings of glass beads hang from the ceiling, symbolizing tears shed for the dead.

The upper floors feature numerous exhibits about the war, including dioramas depicting major battles, photographs of wartime activities, weapons and munitions, uniforms, awards, newsreels, letters from the battlefront, and model aircraft. In addition, the museum maintains an electronic "memory book" which attempts to record the name and fate of every Russian soldier who died in World War II.

Setting

The museum is set in Victory Park, a 2,424-hectare park on Poklonnaya Hill. The park features a large, paved plaza, fountains, and open space where military vehicles, cannons, and other apparatus from World War II are displayed. Also in the park are the Holocaust Memorial Synagogue, the Church of St. George, the Moscow Memorial Mosque, a triumphal arch, an obelisk, and a number of sculptures.

Dedicated to the Great Patriotic War or World War II as it is known in the west, this museum opened in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of the Great Victory. The museum houses a set of evocative battle dioramas on the ground floor, with excellent explanations of the scenes in English. Immediately as you enter, you see the Commanders Hall and Grand Staircase leading up to the Hall of Glory, a solemn memorial space.

History

The first exposition which showed the military condition of the Soviet Republic and the Red Army was organised in Moscow in the building of today's State Universal Store, and was opened by Vladimir Lenin on the 25 May 1919, following a parade in Red Square.

On 23 December 1919 an order was issued on the formation of a museum-exposition "Life of the Red Army and Fleet" in the same location, whose purpose was to Inform the public about the achievements by post-October Revolution Soviet Russia in military education, culture and political discipline in the Red Army and Navy.

In 1920 another exhibition was organised and dedicated to the 11th congress of Comintern in Moscow about the life and deeds of the Soviet Republic and its young armed forces which defend the conquests of the proletariat. More than 150,000 people visited the exhibition. In 1921 the exposition was transformed into the Museum of the Red Army and Fleet, and it was moved to Vozdvizhenka 6 in 1922, into a building (demolished in the 1930s), opposite today's Russian State Library.

The largest events in the museum's first years was the fifth anniversary exposition for the creation of the Worker-Peasant Red Army (RKKA) between 23 February and 1 November 1923 which was visited by 500 groups and 70,000 individuals. In 1924, following the opening of similar museums across the country, it was renamed the Central museum of the Red Army and Fleet. It moved to the left wing of the Central House of the Red Army on the Yekaterinvskaya (now Suvorova), in 1928. In 1951 the museum was once again renamed the Central Museum of the Soviet Army and in 1965 moved to its present location in a new, special building designed by architects N. Gaygarova and V. Barkhin. It was renamed once again the Central Museum of the Armed Forces of the USSR; it was given its present name in 1993.

Exhibits

Over its history the museum has managed to accumulate the most prominent and important military relics of the Soviet period, creating a record of its military past. In total more than seven hundred thousand individual exhibits are now stored at the museum. The most valuable are displayed in the 25 halls of the main building.

The period of the Russian Civil War includes a photocopy of the original decree outlining the creation of the RKKA which includes Lenin's corrections; a banner of the 195th infantry regiment into which Lenin was officially conscripted; weapons, documents, awards and personal belongings of famous Red Army men such as Mikhail Frunze, Grigory Kotovsky, Vasily Chapayev and Vasily Blücher as well as others, all help to re-create the post-revolutionary atmosphere.

The most prized display is that dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, which includes the Victory Banner as well as all of the front banners and the captured Nazi ones that were used during the Victory Parade in 1945. The Great Patriotic War differs from World War II in that it began on 22 June 1941 with the German invasion of the Soviet Union. World War II (in Europe), started on 1 September 1939 with the co-ordinated attacks of Germany and the Soviet Union on Poland.

Part of the Great Patriotic War section is devoted to the Soviet Union's allies on the Western Front. There are examples of Soviet propaganda posters depicting Germany being crushed between the two fronts and maps of the Allied advance from Normandy into Germany. British and American small arms and uniforms are displayed. A life-size diorama includes a Jeep pulling a field-gun in front of a wall-sized photograph of Omaha Beach. The photograph is Omaha Beach as depicted in the movie The Longest Day (1962), not of Omaha Beach in June 1944. Among the collection are items that once belonged to Adolf Hitler and other Nazi officials.

The last halls display the post-war and modern developments of the Soviet Army and Navy, the Cold War section contains wreckage from the U-2 spy-plane that was piloted by Gary Powers[1]and the involvement of Soviet forces in Cold War conflicts. A special display is dedicated to the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and recent combat operations in Chechnya.

Outside the museum, there is an extended collection of military equipment and technology, including armour, artillery, railway cars, aircraft, and missiles.

Address: Ulitsa Sovetskoy Armii, 2, Moskva, Russia, 129272

Hours:

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10AM–5PM
Thursday	10AM–5PM
Friday	10AM–5PM
Saturday	10AM–5PM
Sunday	10AM–5PM

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