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**Were the tactical errors made in Operation  
Barbarossa and the Battle of Stalingrad, the  
reason why the German Eastern Front  
failed?**



Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of a B.A in Conflict and War

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## **Abstract**

The Eastern Front was one of the bloodiest and costly conflicts in modern history. German desire to conquer Eastern Europe, brought an end to the Third Reich through a series of conflicts that damaged Germany, reducing her resources and quality of military leadership through multiple factors that will be discussed and analysed. The pre-planning of Germany's conquest of the USSR began in 1940, following the fall of France. Germany believed the Red Army was an inferior force and so prepared for a supposed weaker opponent under the misconception of an easy victory. Operation Barbarossa began Germany's planned Blitzkrieg invasion, catching the USSR off guard, with aim of achieving a victorious conquest before winter 1941, while allowing Germany to utilise more resources for her campaign in the west. However, the operation failed, Germany fought with less power because of this, while straining under the pressure of a war on two fronts, and eventually collapsing under the strain. Germany fought with less power, having allocated what the Wehrmacht believed would be sufficient resources for an easy victory. However, the Third Reich was defeated by the USSR who could continually replenish their frontline considering the close proximity of Soviet industry. The dissertation will analyse the reasons behind Germany's failure, through factors such as the German views of the Slavic people and how that affected German tactics alongside the strain on resources produced from faulty decisions and a lack of effective discourse between Hitler and his generals post 1942.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my father for supporting me throughout my academic career and for providing me a chance to experience a University education. Doctor Lester Mason for teaching the conflict aspects of history I found most interesting and supporting the dissertation through bringing about improvements. Also, Andy Coard for helping me overcome difficulties of dyslexia, improving my writing style for my final year and thus resulted in better marks.

## **Introduction - Aims and methodology**

The failures of Germany on the Eastern Front between June 1941 and February 1943, highlight the Third Reich's flawed war efforts, that arguably led to its fall in 1945. Operation Barbarossa and the Battle of Stalingrad will be used to highlight the faults regarded as the German Eastern Front's most notable failures, caused by a combination of factors including German attitudes towards Russians, short term planning and general incompetence. Operation Barbarossa was planned as a Blitzkrieg- style offensive that would seize Russia at a similar pace to the German conquest of France, all before the winter of 1941 which would have slowed and depleted German efforts. The Battle of Stalingrad which can be categorised as a guerrilla conflict centred around Stalingrad's symbolic name, is a prime example of German failures on the Eastern Front. These two failures are interesting for both accelerated Nazi Germany's decline through tactical mistakes that could have been avoided and witnessed the emergence of the USSR as a world power.

In my experience, the way World War II is taught in Welsh schools tends to emphasise the Western Front. Through a more original approach, the dissertation aims to change this through detailing major events on the Eastern Front, helping others learn how German faults on this front helped lead to their defeat. Furthermore, the Eastern Front witnessed a more racially charged conflict between the Germans and Slavic people. German soldiers believed in the propaganda that asserted that Slavs were an inferior race, while Soviet soldiers fought in defence of their land which raised patriotic spirits and fuelled a desire for revenge. In terms of originality, I will be focusing more on the poor pre planning of Barbarossa and Germany's judgements about the USSR, which led to pre-planning and underestimation of her fighting prowess that in my opinion caused their defeat. This can be judged alongside work such as *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East* by David Stahel.<sup>1</sup> Alongside Stahel other publications to be assessed include *War without Garlands* by Robert Kershaw, *Hitler* by Ian Kershaw and *The Third Reich at War* by Richard J. Evans.<sup>2</sup> These sources place less emphasis on the argument that Hitler's command was the main reason why Germany lost.

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<sup>1</sup> David Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, paperback edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Kershaw, *War without Garlands: Operation Barbarossa 1941 - 1942*, paperback edition (Surrey: Ian Allan Publishing, 2008), Ian Kershaw, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, Penguin Books edition (London: Penguin Books, 2009).

Previously historians have based their interpretation of the German Eastern Front failure on Hitler's incompetence as a war leader, such as Saul David's *Military Blunders* which I do agree was a major contribution to German failure, though in my opinion that failure is more attributed to judgements about the Slavs and conflict between Hitler and his generals.<sup>3</sup> I see the racial themes of this conflict as one of Germany's biggest flaws which is often not a major talking point in academic discussion. I intend to bring this forward, considering it affects the other factors through German underestimating of Slavs. German propaganda saw the Slavs as an inferior race, evident from political events in the USSR before 1941, including the Purges instigated by Stalin that affected Soviet industry and military, thereby weakening it. The effects of the Purges are reflected in the Winter War (November 1939 - March 1940), where the Red Army lost to Finnish troops utilising guerrilla tactics; this defeat was embarrassing and would lead to Hitler and Germany, judging Russia as a weakened power that could be overcome.<sup>4</sup> German miscalculation of the Soviets as a main discussion point will provide greater insight on how Germany failed to conquer Russia. The Luftwaffe's views influenced the Wehrmacht, producing orders for extermination, conflicting with some generals who would turn down some orders, contributing to Hitler's interference through Nazi ideas.<sup>5</sup> The distance created between Hitler and his generals, over attitudes towards Germany's opponents and tactical opinions contributed greatly to the German failure and so these two points are of equal importance.

The dissertation will follow a structure of chapters, each one building upon the last through an in-depth discussion of events alongside primary and secondary sources that highlight tactics and the experiences of soldiers in the conflict. Here I will outline the structure of the dissertation, chapter by chapter; Chapter one details Operation Barbarossa's initial framework, how it was conceived, Barbarossa's purpose and its logistical planning that would plague German efforts on the Eastern Front. Chapter two will then continue with Barbarossa throughout its implementation. The idea that German troops felt superior over the Soviets shall be examined through the accounts of German soldiers in the Campaign's early months (June - December 1941) that saw success for Germany with the Soviets in full retreat. Furthermore, other points will become prominent, logistical issues and Hitler's leadership that ultimately doomed German efforts in Russia will be examined alongside the supposed German superiority over Slavs.

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<sup>3</sup> David Saul, *Military Blunders*, revised edition (London: Robinson, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Kershaw, *War Without Garlands: Operation Barbarossa 1941- 1942*, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad*, Penguin Books edition (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p.15.

Chapter three covers the Battle of Stalingrad, where Hitler's desperation to capture Stalingrad and his reasoning will be covered. Stalingrad will represent the culmination of my core research questions that being an analysis of Soviet success and Hitler's tactical incompetence, for there followed multiple Soviet successful attacks. An example of a successful Soviet attack included a critical encirclement of German troops who fought alongside weak Axis troops with less arms and resources than Germans in Operation Uranus. Concluding with the surrender of Friedrich Paulus, Commander of the 6th Army, and the silencing of German fighting in Stalingrad by February 1943, alongside interpretations of this from primary accounts. These accounts are written by soldiers and commanders in the conflict, in the form of journals written during planning and the free time of soldiers before they went into battle. One such primary account is written by Paulus' senior ADC, Colonel Wilhelm Adam and also General Paulus, allowing insight in German planning and how soldiers acted towards orders from High Command.<sup>6</sup> Chapter four discusses further Eastern Front battles that saw repeated tactical mistakes originally made in Barbarossa and Stalingrad such as the Battle of Kursk (July - August 1943). Furthermore, chapter four will discuss how the tactical mistakes made in and Stalingrad contributed to Berlin's fall in 1945, with Soviet soldiers motivated by revenge against German desecration of their land.

All my information will then culminate into a conclusion that covers my aims and answers emanating from the core research questions. One core research question involves assessing if the German soldier and Hitler's interpretation of Russia, as a weak state, that would fall under Blitzkrieg tactics, was a major contribution to Germany's downfall in the Eastern Front? Such questions and the reasons why Germany failed in their conquest will be covered in these following chapters.

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<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm Adam and Otto Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, translated by reprint edition (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2017).

## **Chapter 1: The emergence of Barbarossa (1940-1941)**

Before Operation Barbarossa, Germany and the USSR were aligned through the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact which was signed August 1939, and kept the two powers from attacking each other. Stalin truly believed in this peace, but Nazi Germany had multiple reasons to conquer Russia. Hitler saw that if Russia was conquered, the land could be used as a tactical zone to conquer the West for Russia provided multiple resources such as oil from the Caucasus that would aid the German war effort<sup>7</sup>. Individuals such as Himmler who, like most in Germany, held anti-Slavic views, fed by official propaganda, wished to remove the pre-existing population of Russia and expel them to the Siberian Wilderness where they would die. Those who proved strong enough would be used as forced labour serving the new German populace in Russia. The decision was made to attack in 1941 to limit the time Stalin would have to strengthen the USSR, and due to their capability if a prolonged war occurred, an attritional war had to be avoided and a short conquest would be crucial.<sup>8</sup> A strengthened USSR would be able to contend with German forces for a long period, utilizing Russia's landmass to its advantage alongside its industrial capability, draining Germany as time passed. This justified a short campaign for 1941 to exploit the USSR's weakness which the German economy could endure.

The military aim of Operation Barbarossa was to trap and destroy the Soviet armies in a series of encircling movements, hoping to achieve this conquest before the winter of 1941, so a conflict fought on two fronts would not drain German resources rapidly. The German High Command planned to launch the campaign in May but it was later delayed until June, having only enough supplies for a six-month campaign which proved disastrous.<sup>9</sup> Barbarossa initially was the sole operation planned to conquer Russia, hoping for a quick conquest due to Germany's economic constraints through multiple attacks seizing important objections.<sup>10</sup> German troops aimed to complete a line sealing off Asiatic Russia running from the Volga river to Archangel, while other groups would seize important cities and areas including

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<sup>7</sup> Christian Hartmann, *Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany's War in the East, 1941 - 1945*, translated by Alexander Starritt, paperback edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.12.

<sup>8</sup> Duncan Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front* (London: Amber Books Ltd, 2001), p.12.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Jones, *Total War From Stalingrad to Berlin*, paperback edition (London: John Murray Publishers, 2012), p.6.

<sup>10</sup> Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.2.

Leningrad, Moscow and the Ukraine.<sup>11</sup> Planning for Barbarossa began in June 1940 shortly after the defeat of France, all this time to prepare would lead people to believe that Germany planned efficiently, but this was not the case.<sup>12</sup>

There were issues from the start of planning, statistical data could not match quotas set, leaving German forces with less force to utilise against the Slavs. Furthermore, tactics and plans missed opportunities for further success, for example it was decided not to capitalise on Ukrainian hatred of Soviets. This failed opportunity created more German enemies and combating them wasted resources that could have been allocated in other areas.<sup>13</sup> To the Germans, hatred of the Slavs was normal as it was conditioned in them from youth. The Germans perceived Slavic Bolshevik politics as the enemy of the Nazi party, individuals believed that the two conflicting theologies would have to destroy the other if conquest was to be successful. 'The situation is ideal for the Bolsheviks to launch their attack on Europe in furtherance of their general plan for world domination.'<sup>14</sup> This quotation, written by Heinz Knoke a Luftwaffe pilot, was indicative of the views held in Nazi Germany believing that the Aryan conquest would annihilate this prominent threat and that Barbarossa was necessary, attempting to justify a genocide for the Reich's sake. The operation's name is also connected to the racial agenda; Barbarossa was named after a twelfth-century emperor ruler of Germany's first Reich who dominated central Europe and led a crusade against so called infidels. The equivalent in 1941 would be Hitler's crusade against Bolshevism.<sup>15</sup> The hatred of the Slavs and their underestimation was one of the critical reasons why Germany failed, another critical failure was linked to their logistics which would plague efforts throughout the whole theatre.

During 1940, German generals and logisticians were dealing with multiple issues such as unfulfilled quotas and the sheer fact that they were not capable of conquering Russia's sheer landmass. In November 1940, German logisticians were calculating at best that German forces could be supplied within a zone of 600km east of the start-line, however, strategic planners were setting up objectives up to 1750km beyond the frontier and anticipated it would take only six to seventeen weeks to attain them. The strategic planners and Hitler at

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<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Total War From Stalingrad to Berlin*, pp.5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.33.

<sup>13</sup> Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.50.

<sup>14</sup> Max Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, William Collins edition (London: William Collins, 2019), p.140.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, p.587.

Command Headquarters who were separated from those who fought on the ground, expected the similar results achieved in the Blitzkrieg campaigns in Poland and France, this would never be possible with Russia's size.<sup>16</sup> The drastic gulf between the realities of logistics and desires of Higher Command would assist in Germany's failure to conquer Russia, multiple targets were set and never achieved, yet generals accepted it blindly, believing in prior successes. Throughout Barbarossa's preparations, German forces were blind to reality, victories in Western Europe and propaganda affected Germany's expectations for Barbarossa, detaching plans from fact. 'Hubris lay in its underestimation of the military and industrial capability Stalin had already achieved, reckless insouciance about Russia's almost limitless expanses, and grossly inadequate logistical support for a protracted campaign.'<sup>17</sup> Hastings and other historians have identified the connection between the underestimation of the Slavs and logistic mismanagement as both stemming from a perspective of arrogance. Despite the USSR being weakened from the Finnish War and the Purges, it was a strong industrial nation capable of producing many weapons and material, underestimating this and management of resources towards a Blitzkrieg offensive proved detrimental. Lack of consideration for the possibility of fighting lasting longer than the six months proposed for Barbarossa, damaged Germany's efforts for conquest.

Assigned resources in 1941 were based on a weakened USSR rather than the USSR's normal state, ensuring Germany's Eastern Theatre lasted longer than planned due to hubris and underestimation of the USSR as well as the German belief in racial and military superiority.

There were two schools of thought prominent within the planning of this operation, the strategic elements that were favoured by generals and the policy of race annihilation supported by Nazis. Originally Hitler saw Barbarossa in light of strategy but later came over to the view held by his compatriots. Operation Barbarossa had racial elements from its start, Barbarossa was a nickname of Frederick I the Holy Roman Emperor of the Dark Ages who took part in the Third Crusade against Islam. Hitler was inspired by this historic figure and saw his operation as a crusade against his primary enemies, Bolshevism and Jews. The irony in comparing Hitler's policy with Frederick is that the latter's politics changed after his defeat

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Kershaw, *War without Garlands Operation Barbarossa 1941- 1942*, p.19.

<sup>17</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.141.

at the battle of Legnano in 1176 to one of conciliation and clemency, in hindsight naming the operation after a defeated ruler suggested it was to fail.<sup>18</sup>

Blind belief in success, hindered and certainly blocked efforts by those who were aware of Barbarossa's faults during pre-planning. General Paulus of the 6th Army, for example, was one individual aware of Barbarossa's faults, discovering its flaws through a war game following the chief of staff of the Wehrmacht, General Franz Halder's orders in December 1940. Paulus utilising maps and data on German armies tested divisions against Russian forces and Barbarossa's potential to continue longer than expected, believing the opening days would decide the campaign. The war game's results revealed that Germany could not fulfil their major objectives and could not match the number of Soviet reinforcements that would continually wear away German divisions if Barbarossa failed; a change of plans was required.<sup>19</sup> Paulus foresaw that the logistical mistakes would damage efforts to conquer Russia, but he did not share his results with other German commanders due to blind belief in victory shared by his comrades. The reasons why Paulus neglected these results suggest he was in fear of upsetting High Command which could have resulted in a loss of position or even execution. Blind fear and confidence affected many Germans, General Halder for example who pushed for Moscow, believed the Soviet front could be overcome with more ease than France through encircling the bulk of the Red Army. However, his views conflicted with Hitler which Halder chose not to argue with during planning leading Hitler to assume Halder had agreed. A conflict between Hitler and Halder occurred as Halder believed strongly that Moscow should have been the primary objective during Barbarossa's action phase following June 1941, aiming to push his decisions without the intervention of pre-planning. The conflict between commanders would hinder Barbarossa, Halder wanted to force his agenda when Hitler felt pressure as a result of the conflict, leading to the crisis in July to August 1941 between Hitler and his generals.<sup>20</sup>

On the 18th December, at the same time as Paulus was setting his war-game, Fuhrer Directive Number 21 was issued, stating that the Soviets must be prevented from retreating in depth into the Russian hinterland. This command would see 170 Red Army divisions within the first 230 miles needing to be destroyed in just six weeks, such a result would see a speedy

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War*, Penguin Books edition (London: Penguin Books, 2010), p.146.

<sup>19</sup> Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.59.

<sup>20</sup> Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.63.

offensive utilizing multiple resources such as oil.<sup>21</sup> Such a task would be difficult for Germany considering Russia's landmass and German resources, for mobile vehicles outpaced soldiers and a rapid engaging pace needing to catch so many Soviet divisions, would naturally drain resources quickly. If this objective failed, the German military would have reduced resources and that would damage future efforts in overcoming Bolshevism. Soviet troops could use Russia's land against their opponent and turn a Blitzkrieg campaign into a more prolonged conflict. Germany's economy and its weaknesses help highlight the hubris of Barbarossa, also Germany relied on produce and raw material shipments from the USSR prior to Barbarossa, for only seven of thirty raw materials for the armament industry were available within Germany in adequate quantities.<sup>22</sup> Without foreign aid, Germany's economy could not on its own finance a continual Eastern Front conflict so Hitler placed importance on economic objectives such as the Ukraine for its wheat fields and the Caucasus oil fields which would become controversial with his generals.

Germany's vulnerable economy, reflected in the logistic shortcomings of Barbarossa, was also evident in the fact that quotas set by the High Command were not being met. Tank production for example which was vital for the motorisation of the army, had a 30% shortfall in the quota, by January 1941 this was detrimental to Barbarossa.<sup>23</sup> Shortfalls in logistical areas doomed Barbarossa, unable to match quotas proves that the operation was too ambitious, German industry could not produce a wholly sufficient force that would fit the High Command's desires. The statistics for German equipment included 700,000 field guns, 600,000 motor vehicles, and 3600 tanks, set for Barbarossa's 130 - 140 divisions.<sup>24</sup> These statistics are important for consideration as resource management became more critical as the campaign progressed, for vehicles broke down through wear and tear among other issues, slowing down German soldiers. German tanks planned for Barbarossa had issues, such as the Panzer Mark II. The Panzer Mark II underperformed in France, having a slightly outdated gun in the 1940s along with thinner armour than the Mark III. The Panzer Mark II alongside

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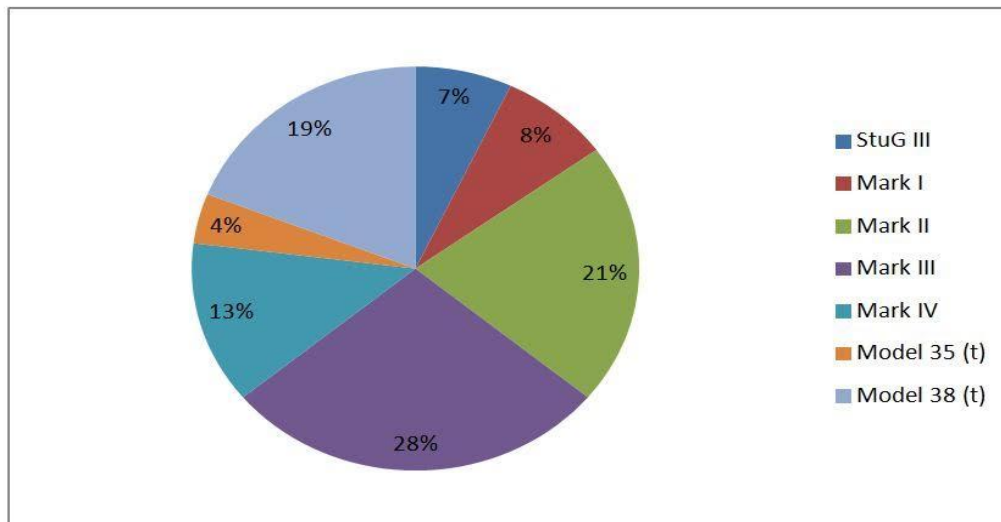
<sup>21</sup> Anderson, et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.12.

<sup>22</sup> Karl - Heinz Frieser, *Blitzkrieg - Legende*, English translation by John T. Greenwood, *The Blitzkrieg Legends*, reprint edition (Annapolis Naval Institute Press, 2013), p.20.

<sup>23</sup> Müller, "Von der Wirtschaftsallianz" p.156.

<sup>24</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, Penguin Books edition, (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p.178.

the Mark I, comprised twenty- eight percent of German tanks and were obsolete compared to Mark III, IV, etc, proving to be a detriment in Barbarossa.<sup>25</sup>



Panzer models available for Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941. Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Von der Wirtschaftsallianz zum kolonialen Ausbeutungskrieg*, p.185

Plate 1: Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.116.

The plans of the Nazi High Command in the East were fearful. Himmler devised an exodus of 31 million to 51 million Slavs towards the Siberia Wilderness where most would starve, while Slavs capable of Germanisation and slave labour were left behind. To Himmler, the Slavs would treat the Germans as a divine race, under a system of thirty-nine large 'defence settlements' and 'defence villages' connected to one another by motorways and railways with the eastern lands cordoned by an enormous wall.<sup>26</sup> Racial ideologies were an integral part of Operation Barbarossa, as resources were diverted between strategically needs and Nazi wants. If ideas such as Himmler's were not given resources until after the occupation of Russia, military logistics would have improved through further financing allowing more resources for later theatres of the conflict. Senior officers understood that Barbarossa presented major problems, particularly traversing vast areas of Russia. Road and rail links degraded by war would add to the problem, as would the need to cross natural barriers such as the Pripet Marshes.<sup>27</sup> The geography of Russia would prove difficult for motorised units considering both infantry on foot and vehicles had to travel, either one could forge ahead of

<sup>25</sup> Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East*, p.110.

<sup>26</sup> Hartman, *Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany's War in the East 1941 - 1945*, p.18.

<sup>27</sup> Franz Halder, KTB II, (4 September 1940), p.86.

the other depending on terrain, causing issues as resources had to move between groups that may be far away from another.

Pride and resource mismanagement hindered Barbarossa, throughout its preparation, Germans held expectations that conquering the USSR would prove as successful as France. Tactics were forged and resources managed in the belief that the foe was inferior. These expectations would conflict with reality, and those who were aware of issues with Barbarossa's preparation were unable to voice their grievances. Many Germans believed in ultimate victory, but the reality of fighting in the East would soon become apparent to Germany, just weeks into the campaign.

## **Chapter 2: The crusade against Bolshevism (1941)**

Operation Barbarossa, after delay, began on 22nd June 1941, on the border between Poland and the USSR. The offensive was successful, initially as German forces gained the momentum against Soviet troops who were ill prepared for the surprise attack and generally inexperienced. The Red Army, without many of its experienced soldiers resulting from the Purges and the Winter War, suffered many losses with German forces viewing Soviet troops as inferior. German generals, for example, belittled Soviet commanders for wasting troops' lives for little gain.<sup>28</sup> Barbarossa was composed of three major German army groups, namely North, Centre and South each with their own respective goals. The strongest group, Group North held Panzer Groups 2 and 3 was led by General Emil Leeb, who was ordered to encircle the Russian army and then secure a route to Moscow. Group Centre led by General Fedor von Bock, aimed for Leningrad and Group South headed by General Gerd von Rundstedt, aimed for Kiev. Barbarossa's tactics proved successful in its early stages, as Brest- Litovsk the frontier fortress, fell on 12th July which surprised German generals such as Halder who were not accustomed to the 'headless chicken' behaviour of Soviets.<sup>29</sup> At this point of Barbarossa, Soviet troops were almost leaderless, Keegan presents Germany exploiting opportunities provided, ensuring quick success. Furthermore, Keegan suggests if Soviet leadership equalled the Wehrmacht, there would have been more of a struggle, perhaps less German success. A sentiment I believe is correct considering the improved Soviet leadership during the Battle of Stalingrad, turning the conflict against Germany. On 29th June, the Wehrmacht overran over 400,000 Soviet soldiers causing Minsk to fall with ease under encirclement tactics; these tactics were repeated in Smolensk, the last major city before Moscow, which Germany seized on 16th July .

The Soviet defences fell with ease at this stage for multiple reasons, Stalin becoming leader of the USSR had its effects and it was not the only hindrance on Soviet forces. The Soviets lacked basic equipment, as the standard rifle dated from Tsarist days which were not fully replaced by automatics until 1944. Furthermore, radios were in short supply alongside communication issues with no radar available and tanks suffered supply issues due to

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<sup>28</sup> Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad*, 2nd edition, (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p.24.

<sup>29</sup> John Keegan, *The Second World War*, 1st edition (London: Hutchinson, 1989), p.186.

Germany's superior airpower. The Red Army at this time could not compete with Germany.<sup>30</sup> Germany's rapid success could also be attributed to the 700 reconnaissance aircraft which detailed the territory held by the Soviets. This aided the remaining 2070 aircraft in bombing important enemy areas including cities, strongholds and facilities.<sup>31</sup>

Stalin's ineptitude helped pave the way for Germany's early success, as he ignored multiple warnings of the impending attack from Winston Churchill and intelligence alike. During the evening of 21st June 1941, the deputy head of the NKVD reported thirty-nine aircraft incursions over the state border and a German deserter confirmed that an attack was impending. Despite being aware of an impending attack, Stalin was uncertain about its magnitude, placed anti-aircraft guns on standby, hoping that this attack during 5am on 22nd June, were rogue Germans thus a minimal threat.<sup>32</sup> Stalin naively believed in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, hoping Germany would not attack until its war with Western Europe ended, allowing the USSR to recover completely. Stalin's faults allowed Germany to push through quickly, and if the right precautions were taken the Soviet forces would have been able to respond to the June offensive and hinder German efforts. Furthermore, Stalin under stress, self-isolated during Barbarossa's opening weeks. The state was left aimless and only returning to normality on 3rd July, Stalin dubbed the conflict 'the Patriotic War', involving himself in every aspect of Soviet defence including the chairman of the Stavaka (Staff HQ).<sup>33</sup> Stalin also became the Supreme Commander of the Red Army on 8th August, wanting full control of the situation, taking every role possible so his wishes became reality. This would interfere with Soviet general tactical planning, continuing to hinder Soviet forces until they were allowed to format their own orders without Stalin's control. The handicap of Soviet commanders was noticed by German leaders such as Guderian, Soviet troops were acting on 'orders to carry out necessary measures, countermeasures in particular, are issued too late', actions decided by a man with little military experience were out of touch with what occurred on the battlefield.<sup>34</sup> Anderson and his co-authors referencing Guderian's memorandum, highlights Soviet weakness from a German perspective, avoiding the chance that Stalin controlled information that disapproved of him. Stalin's orders are presented from Guderian's perspective as reactionary towards Germans actions, similar to Hitler's orders characterizing

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, 2nd edition, (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p.87.

<sup>31</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.89.

<sup>32</sup> Antony Beevor, *The Second World War*, 1st edition (Bridgwater, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012), p.191.

<sup>33</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.150.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.38.

both nation's faults coming from inept leaders who lacked awareness unlike generals. During 1941 when Stalin was in complete control, Soviet troops suffered not just from Germans but also Stalin's incompetence.

Barbarossa's quick progress slowed in July because of decisions made between Hitler and his generals, Hitler wished to stick to the strategic planning for areas such as the Caucasus while the generals wanted Moscow secured. Disagreement between both parties caused tension, Group Centre continued the argument to concentrate on Moscow against High Command's desires, while Hitler wanted the Caucasus, Kharkov and Leningrad's industry before winter settled in. Hitler grew increasingly tense during July, fearing the outcome, Group Centre was engaging with Soviet forces between Smolensk and Moscow while German intelligence discovered ever growing Soviet divisions and forces indicating reconnaissance during preparation failed.<sup>35</sup> Ian Kershaw and others regard Hitler's conflict with German generals as a major factor for Germany's failure to conquer the USSR, considering different views that diverted troops and resources around on a whim.<sup>36</sup> Hitler's control of the battlefield was directly influenced by emotion and became so erratic that his generals found it difficult to influence him.

The conflict highlights the struggle to command an invasion on such a scale with orders being delivered over such long distances which coupled with the lack of comprehension about the situation the Wehrmacht was facing. Furthermore, the debate between Hitler and the German generals presents the flaws, Hitler solely focused on areas he deemed strategically essential, refused to change his ideas, while some generals adapted depending on the changing situation as a conflict unfolded. Hitler's struggle with the idea of heading for Moscow reflected in the Führer Directive No.34, which officially rejected an attack on Moscow, despite seizing the Ukraine, Smolensk and the fact that German forces were very close to Leningrad. The lack of surprise aided the slower pace, fuel consumption was greater than expected with communication stretching too far. Anderson documents men and vehicles alike suffered with 400,000 casualties, resources were spent on creating new roads and railways which could have been attributed towards munitions.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, p.637.

<sup>36</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, p.648.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson et al. *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.33.

Germany's early success allowed a portion of the USSR to fall under German control, this ensured a power struggle between the governing bodies of these new territories. To govern such a land mass as the USSR would be of great difficulty for any leader. Sharing leadership with provisional governments was a threat in the eyes of Hitler, the Reich would tear itself apart over emerging factionalism.<sup>38</sup> Himmler and Martin Bormann for example, the two most powerful figures in the Reich behind Hitler, had a rivalry which continued into the Eastern theatre. Both figures made attempts to seize control over the Ostministerium (German governing power over conquered Russian land). While Bormann used the remaining SA and Himmler with the SS, Alfred Rosenberg was stuck in the middle of their conflict, having no personal elite corps and a weaker quality of staff. As early as April 1941, when the final plans for Barbarossa were being settled, Bormann warned Hitler that bringing the SS and the army together would be dangerous to the party.<sup>39</sup> The potential to use established Soviet politicians as puppets passed, as Hitler had no intention of keeping enemies alive. Political commissars were shot on sight, leaving Germans ruling over a people they could not fully control.<sup>40</sup> The struggle between Bormann and Himmler's agencies grew to a point that Hitler held a conference on 16th July, deciding to have areas shift from military to civilian administration, once they were pacified. All agencies were to be defined in separate agreements, with the hope that this would end conflict between the two agencies. In practice the conflict was not settled, Himmler appointed Reinhard Heydrich, a loyal servant, as "liaison officer" to the Ostministerium, while the Russian government was fragmented by German rule, with multiple SS interferences<sup>41</sup>. Clark mentioning this discord, desired to show the infighting already present in Germany that worsened during brutal conflict, that in my view aided Germany's fall with individuals fending for their own control.

The racial aspects of pre-planning came into force in the conflict, German treatment of Slavic populations would prove that. Initially during Barbarossa's beginnings, the Ukrainian population welcomed German forces, believing they would liberate the USSR from Stalin's rule, potentially these Ukrainians could also aid the German conquest. September 1941, the Abwehr a German intelligence unit, suggested to the OKW, the High Command of the Wehrmacht that a Ukrainian army could be created to assist German forces. The idea was rejected by Hitler who believed there was no need to use Slavs considering he had enough

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<sup>38</sup> Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian - German Conflict 1941- 1945*, p.60.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian - German Conflict 1941- 1945*, p.61.

<sup>40</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, p.182

<sup>41</sup> Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian - German Conflict 1941- 1945*, p.62.

troops.<sup>42</sup> Hitler wasted an opportunity to utilise a puppet state, sticking to the idea of exterminating Slavs; such determination to cling to beliefs rather than utilise strategic advantages would hinder Germany throughout the Eastern conflict. Slavic POWs were treated harshly, following their supposed inferiority, many were starved or shot which led to increased resistance against German forces with Soviet patriotic spirits rising for a cause of revenge, encapsulating a war of racial hatred. Some Germans themselves had a distaste for how the Slavic people were treated; Captain Wilhelm Hosenfeld, a Wehrmacht staff officer in German occupied Warsaw stated 'Our behaviour is cruel and inhumane, and will do untold damage to our cause.'<sup>43</sup> Failure to realize this by OKW would turn all of Eastern Europe against Germany. Those in high authorial positions were unaware of situations faced by foot soldiers, who dealt with the repercussions of orders first-hand, while command only received reports from distant bases.

Anderson focusing on the Eastern Front, suggests the extermination of Slavs was detrimental to Barbarossa and German efforts for its implementation consumed both resources and time, ultimately being counterproductive.<sup>44</sup> Taking a perspective of tactical efficiency, it was clear that pushing for an extermination of the Slavs across a vast land mass would be detrimental to planned resources for conquest. Underlining such an issue is of importance considering it was a blind ideology shared by Hitler and his chosen commanders, bringing this forward is paramount for understanding why the Soviet soldiers were underestimated. Roberts and Overy, agree that the racial policies were an unnecessary detriment to German forces. The drive for extermination contributed to Soviet desire for revenge and patriotic aggression, troops were motivated to stop the extermination of their people, pushed further with Stalin's 'Great Patriotic War', thus the racial elements of this conflict are of importance. Furthermore, resources wasted on the policies would have proven more suitable for the Wehrmacht itself considering the distance between forces over Russia caused issues. Racial politics affected German soldiers, draining their strength, an unnecessary activity for exterminating the Slavs could have been accomplished with more ease after the conquest, hence Nazi ideologies proved to assist in Barbarossa and Germany's failure.

The conflict between German Panzers and Soviet tanks such as the T-34s was another important issue, it highlighted strengths and weaknesses of both sides. Soviet tanks had

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<sup>42</sup> Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War*, p.163.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, *Total War: From Stalingrad to Berlin*, p.13.

<sup>44</sup> Anderson et al. *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.35.

advantages in quality and quantity, for Soviet factories were close with a rapid output. This is demonstrated by Robert Kershaw's figures for 1941 of 18,782 Russian tanks against 3648 German tanks.<sup>45</sup> The German Panzers suffered in weight, main armament, operating distances and speed against Russian tanks, but had an advantage in radio communications and experienced crews. The T-34s were fast, and due to its 60% sloping armour, it was able to break through obstacles like trees and provide protection against flat trajectory anti-tank shells, while providing Russian troops a way to contend with Panzers.<sup>46</sup> The tank battles between Germans and Soviets illustrated the industrial capability of both forces. The Germans relied on resources and were divided on two fronts, they had to overcome the Soviet forces to avoid a resource shortage. German logistics were caught off guard, reporting ever increasing numbers of Soviet tanks. Considering the industrial scope of Russia, Soviet soldiers had less concerns about resources and could continuously strain German soldiers over a period of time.<sup>47</sup> Soviet output of tanks by the end of 1941 stood between 20,000 and 25,000 while Germany could go beyond producing more than 18,000 tanks, displaying that Germany could not contend with Soviet tanks over a long period.<sup>48</sup> The USSR's industrial output was possible through the relocation of Soviet factories towards the Urals mountains where workers were safe from the conflict.<sup>49</sup>

Following the seizure of Smolensk, at the head of the advance into Russia meant that divisions had to stay behind to guard vital communication and supply routes and destroy isolated Russian pockets. Consequently, forces at the head of the advance were decreasing constantly while the land to be conquered expanded in depth and width. Robert Kershaw states there was a 2800km wide point and the front became 1000km deep.<sup>50</sup> To solve the depletion of forces as fighting continued, a decisive blow was required if Germany was to succeed and considering Hitler's refusal to seize Moscow, it proved difficult. It was clear Barbarossa's objectives were too ambitious. With fewer forces to contend with Soviet troops, conquering areas became more difficult as resources would be used to hold new German lands and thus the conquest would become more sluggish. I would agree with Clark that the

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Kershaw, *War Without Garlands*, p.176.

<sup>46</sup> BBC, *Decisive Weapons - T34. Queen of Tanks*, Sept 96. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWXTlndzfuk> (Accessed 18th March 2020).

<sup>47</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.53.

<sup>48</sup> Keegan, *The Second World War*, p.178.

<sup>49</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, 2nd edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.538.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Kershaw, *War Without Garlands*, p.257.

sheer ambition of Barbarossa was a detriment rather than a benefit, statistically Germany would be stretching thin by aiming to hold their gains and finishing the Soviet forces, thus further victories would be more difficult and almost impossible. Furthermore,, distancing troops and resources stressed soldiers in combat, commanders utilised less force meaning Soviets had greater chances of overcoming German attacks and halting their progress.

Attacking Moscow came from a desire to inflict a decisive victory following the slow pace that Barbarossa suffered in late summer of 1941. Group Centre with a force of 1.5 million began the siege of Moscow on 30th September, however, Group Centre was weakened due to diverting forces elsewhere and deteriorating environmental conditions affecting issues such as roads.<sup>51</sup> The harsh conditions hampered the siege, German troops were suffering supply issues due to the longevity of sieging lasting to April 1942, requiring fuel to prevent frostbite among other issues. The insistence on taking Moscow despite struggles, highlighted the flaws of Germany's plan. The Soviets exploited defensive tactics that would out-sustain German resources, while Hitler and German generals alike desired Moscow. Despite generals such as Halder desiring Moscow during earlier stages of Barbarossa as a decisive area for German victory, Anderson attributes the failure to Hitler.<sup>52</sup> This was because Hitler diverted forces at his own whim, stricken between his economic targets and the general's targets, while remaining stubborn over his desire to capture Stalingrad. However, Hitler was not solely responsible for besieging Moscow, German generals desired Moscow also. I believe the generals would have preferred attacking in mid- summer and autumn at Barbarossa's peak without the dividing of forces. This was because generals believed that taking Moscow cutted off Soviet communications and took away some of their power, pushing Hitler to attack throughout 1941, meant that both parties were responsible for the stalemate.

Barbarossa initially proved German confidence correct, however, later Barbarossa petered out without a decisive blow that would overwhelm the Soviet defenders. During Operation Barbarossa, infighting grew between Nazi officials and the German generals, over power and objectives, which wasted more resources as opportunities to strike at more beneficial times, were not utilised. Resource management became detrimental for Germany, failing to complete Barbarossa by December 1941 marked it as a catastrophe. The Wehrmacht was

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<sup>51</sup> Anderson et al. *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.44.

<sup>52</sup> Anderson et al. *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.49.

unable to take the Caucasus and other major points, draining German forces to a standstill against a determined Soviet army which saw the tide turn against Germany.

## **Chapter 3 - The Soviet Tide (1942-1943)**

By 1942, Germany had lost control of the Eastern Theatre, suffering re-supply issues, alongside a diverting of troops, stretching to breaking point. Germany's loss of control became apparent during the Battle of Stalingrad, lasting from August 1942 to February 1943, where the Soviets encircled Paulus' 6th Army. Stalingrad was symbolic to both Germans and Russians, for it bore Stalin's name and its capture would affect the Red Army's morale. Germans would feel resurgent by capturing and utilising Stalingrad's industry, seizing an important Soviet city. The Slavic defenders, if they proved successful, would feel more motivated, able to push back Germany. Hitler desired Stalingrad as a symbolic feat. Possessing its airfields and the Volga River would accommodate the dual objective of capturing Caucasian oilfields and Stalingrad, and so efforts continued to take it until defeat was certain.<sup>53</sup> Führer Order no.41 on 5th April 1942 laid Group South's goals. The 6th Army after passing the Danube river, as part of the proposed summer offensive known as Operation Blue with the 4th Panzer army, was to conquer Stalingrad and then aid efforts to take the Caucasus.<sup>54</sup> In July, Group South, one of the original three groups of 1941, was divided into two groups, Groups A and B. The 6th Army was a part of Group B under Maximilian von Weichs and possessed more troops than the three groups of 1941.<sup>55</sup>

In July 1942, just before the battle began, Stalin sacked Marshal Semyon Timoshenko and appointed General Gordov as commander of the Stalingrad front. A quick appointment like this indicates that the Soviet forces were still unbalanced, unable to create an efficient command system despite an upcoming attack. In issuing Führer Directive No.45, Hitler took economical risks in financing troops in Stalingrad and the Caucasus at all costs. Ian Kershaw claims that this drain on resources would grow to become one of Germany's greatest faults; he states ... 'The German war effort had set in train its own self- destructive dynamic'.<sup>56</sup> Germany under Hitler's leadership was too ambitious, determined to fulfil objectives at all costs, sacrificing resources and lives to do so, leaving Hitler with much responsibility for the failure to seize Eastern Europe. Hitler's sheer determination also brought about the 6th

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<sup>53</sup> Duncan Anderson, et al. *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front* (London: Amber Books Ltd, 2001), p.93.

<sup>54</sup> Adam and Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, pp.17 - 18.

<sup>55</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.158.

<sup>56</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, p.721.

Army's end, preventing escape from Stalingrad despite certain defeat, due to Hitler's refusal to allow a tactical retreat.

German generals foresaw attacking Stalingrad as a tactical mistake. Hastings claims that...

'The strategic significance of Stalin's name-city was small, irrelevant to the main objective of clearing the Caucasus and securing its oil. Moreover, Hitler's eagerness for a symbolic triumph was matched by the determination of Stalin to deny this to him.'<sup>57</sup>

The German generals and Hitler's drastic perspective on Stalingrad's significance reflected Germany's in-fighting, causing Hitler to dismiss those disagreeing with him, while utilizing those who could not argue against him. Hitler may not have been the main reason why Germany failed at this stage, but his leadership greatly contributed to defeat, without a different perspective. Hitler was unaware of the flaws of his decisions and continued to follow his desires.

Alongside these weaknesses, Germany's failure to conquer Stalingrad can be understood through the guerrilla-like struggles between Germans and the Soviets. Resting on the western bank of the Volga, Stalingrad's geographical shape and setting prevented encirclement, hence fighting within the city was essential for success.<sup>58</sup> Attempts to encircle Stalingrad were made, including the 6th Army's first assault led by Lieutenant General Walther von Seydlitz Kurzbuch with the LI Corps, using a two-pronged assault towards the north and centre.<sup>59</sup> The attack failed, due to Stalingrad's shape and the guerrilla fighting which forced prolonged fighting in city streets and buildings. Wilhelm Adam, Paulus' Senior ADC, questioned the effectiveness of plans. Germany was not sending fully trained replacements until January 1943 to support lost companies of thirty to forty troops.<sup>60</sup> This meant over time, there would be less force over the course of 1942 to conquer Stalingrad as experienced troops died, while less experienced troops would be unable to make an impact. Risking troops in movements such as encirclements drained the 6th Army's strength and speedy conquests were not possible despite the High Command's wishes. A critique of German tactics also came from the foot soldiers. Heinrich Gerlach, a Lieutenant in the 14th Panzer Division at Stalingrad,

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<sup>57</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.303.

<sup>58</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.95.

<sup>59</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.97.

<sup>60</sup> Adam and Ruhle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, p.45.

wrote an account after his capture by the Soviets, describing tactical mistakes during the chaotic battle. Gerlach stated...

‘Any officer cadet who’d dared to suggest such an idea at training school would have been sent home for hopeless incompetence. And yet today such a thing was common practice here on the Eastern Front. The unshaken faith of all had made this possible, and it guaranteed victory. Doubting was tantamount to desertion.’<sup>61</sup>

Gerlach saw that the Wehrmacht in 1942 was desperate for a complete conquest, forgoing traditional tactical thought in favour of action. Questioning orders and not following High Command’s demands were not tolerated, German soldiers had to follow orders despite clear faults that hindered their war efforts; for Hitler and High Command it was victory or death. Poor timing and an arrogant attitude was also an issue, as Hitler believed that the 6th Army alone would be enough to conquer Stalingrad, sending the 4th Panzer Army southwards on 29th July, a week before the battle. Field Marshal Paul von Kleist reported that the 4th Panzer Army could have taken Stalingrad in July, if they were not diverted to help cross the Don.<sup>62</sup> This same critique was shared by Halder who tried to control Hitler’s over confidence to no avail, despite newly assembled Russian divisions that could threaten the 6th army. Halder described Hitler’s emotional leadership as; ‘characterised by a pathological reaction to the impressions of the moment and a total lack of any understanding of the command machinery and its possibilities.’<sup>63</sup> This assessment of Hitler proved to be correct, throughout the Eastern Theatre, as objectives shifted depending on the current situation, rather than tactical patterns. This has been argued by Clark, Beevor and both Ian Kershaw and his namesake Robert, alongside commonly held arguments as a major reason why Germany lost, validated further by quotes by those serving Hitler.<sup>64</sup> Such a view is valid considering German faults which continued after 1942 and the failure to conquer Stalingrad.

The fighting in Stalingrad epitomised both racial hatred and devastating destruction that characterised the war in the East, evident from decimated buildings alongside blazing oil

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<sup>61</sup> Heinrich Gerlach, *Breakout at Stalingrad*, translated by Peter Lewis, (UK: Apollo, 2018), p.21.

<sup>62</sup> Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War*, pp.316 - 317.

<sup>63</sup> *The Halder War Diary 1939 - 1942*, ed by Charles Burdick and Hans- Adolf Jacobsen (Presidio, 1988) p.645.

<sup>64</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian German Conflict 1941 - 1945*, Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, Robert Kersaw, *War Without Garlands*.

refineries which were targets of German forces, helping to create a hellish landscape produced from such intent.<sup>65</sup>

Luftwaffe bombardment decimated landscapes, while Soviet anti-air weapons were necessary to combat this. Civilians were victims of the assault on Stalingrad, Jones estimated 40,000 were killed on the first bombing of 23rd August, feeding the Soviet's patriotic desire for revenge. In his account of Stalingrad Jones highlights the words of Colonel-General Andrei Yeremenko, head of the Stalingrad front when he described the destruction; 'The city seemed to have been struck by a terrible hurricane, which whirled it in the air, showering the streets and squares with rubble.'<sup>66</sup> The ruined city allowed soldiers to utilise an ideal landscape to ambush and cripple tanks and other weapons; traditional combat was not viable and street fighting was necessary. Street fighting was unlike that experienced on traditional battlefields, there was less space to operate meaning troops could dig in, ready for a battle of attrition that would see both sides fight until one ran out of supplies.

There were a number of factors that explain Soviet success. Stalin's cessation of military leadership resulted in Decree No. 3, allowing generals during the fight for Stalingrad's defence full military control, countering the German threat. Stalin foresaw Stalingrad as a reflection of himself, its fall would damage his controlling image. Beevor states; 'the road to survival and glory lay with professional generals instead of his own impatient amateurism and his bungling cavalry men.'<sup>67</sup> On 27th August, Georgy Zhukov was ordered to Stalingrad and promoted to Deputy Supreme Commander which he refused, preferring to work alongside Vasilevsky, as one man could not command such a large force. Struggles to secure the Volga in September continued as both sides were determined to control it, despite the Wehrmacht's ability to pass command down to commanders, allowing flexibility in manoeuvring warfare. However German forward planning caused problems, made worse by differing desires between those on the ground and High Command, while the Soviets were given more flexibility over decision making. This allowed the Soviets to dictate the campaign's outcome; tanks could be hidden under rubble, to sneak on German troops who were not able to achieve a swift victory, causing dismay amongst the Wehrmacht.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, p.100.

<sup>66</sup> Jones, *Total War: From Stalingrad to Berlin*, p.36.

<sup>67</sup> Antony Beevor, *The Second World War*, 1st edition (Bridgwater, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012), p.366.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin The Court of the Red Tsar*, First Vintage Books edition, (Vintage Books, New York, 2005), p.429.

Controlling the Volga was integral to victory, as both sides utilised resources; however, the Soviet 62nd Army who defended the area, was provided enough resources to continue fighting, including additional troops alongside other sources, while winning the war of attrition.<sup>69</sup> Dwindling resources crippled the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, as the threat of encirclement became more apparent. The lack of awareness by High Command is apparent with their distance from Stalingrad, according to Adam, the organising force who declined suggestions from Paulus were 2000km away, thus High Command lacked proper awareness of circumstances.<sup>70</sup> High Command's lack of awareness undermined efforts to seize Stalingrad, as German troops in the city were unable to contend with a Soviet Army which, overtime, were better supplied; efforts to prevent a Soviet victory were not forthcoming, as victory at all costs dominated Hitler's thinking. Thus, the Soviet troops wore down German resistance over time, eventually bringing them to a point when they could be encircled, Operations Uranus and Little Saturn in late 1942 brought this to reality.

The indecision that allowed this was apparent in all aspects of the German military thinking during Stalingrad, as Hitler took more direct control of Germany's army, placing men who he could control like puppets. The dismissal of Halder as chief of Army General Staff on the 24th September 1942 for a lack of success at Stalingrad and the Caucasus, illustrated Hitler's desire for complete dominance. Hitler deemed criticism towards his decisions as unacceptable, while the General became less able to operate independently because of this, leaving Paulus who was supported by Halder to only follow Hitler's orders.<sup>71</sup> It can be seen that Hitler rejected different perspectives, and I believe this prevented the employment of a unique and purposeful set of strategies against Soviet troops. Hitler's strategy in sustaining the Wehrmacht drained resources, while reflecting his sheer stubbornness, to achieve a significant victory.

Operation Uranus used German weakness to its advantage, based upon a Soviet plan to encircle the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, alongside German allied troops such as Romanians. According to Beevor, Hitler's overall command strategy prevented Paulus taking action, who was unable to aid his allies, while continuing the push for Stalingrad while regarding lives needed to achieve this goal as expendable.<sup>72</sup> Victory was the only thing that

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<sup>69</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.101.

<sup>70</sup> Adam and Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, p.83.

<sup>71</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, pp.145 - 146.

<sup>72</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, p.245.

mattered to Hitler, sacrificing troops was not an issue nor was the number of resources it took to support this conquest. This took the 6th Army to the point of collapse, allowing further Soviet success and German failure. Zhukov and Vasilevsky planned Uranus's launch for 19th November, keeping it secret to avoid leaks and utilizing a midnight deadline to their advantage.<sup>73</sup> Overy highlights the use of surprise with similarities to Barbarossa's early success. The Soviets achieved the tactical edge once possessed by Germany's generals before Hitler's full control. Thus, the tide of battle turned in the Soviets' favour, which explains why this conflict is a necessary part in understanding Germany's defeat. Zhukov used six armies against the northern Axis perimeter with a thrust westward from the Stalingrad front on the 20th November, causing 600,000 Romanian casualties; this did not bother Hitler considering his steadfast beliefs that placed Germany above all nations, utilizing all means necessary for victory. Furthermore, Uranus' point of attack was so far to the rear of the 6th Army, that German mechanized forces in and around Stalingrad would not be able to turn in time to make a difference.<sup>74</sup> Hitler's disregard for life and retreat was evident again during December when the Volga had thick enough ice to bear trucks, allowing Soviet tanks to complete a double envelopment behind the 6th Army.<sup>75</sup> The Axis forces suffered great destruction; Hastings covers this in the chapter 'The Furnace', illustrating that Axis forces were under severe pressure, close to almost certain defeat, suffering from mismanagement, surprise, and superior enemy tactics.

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<sup>73</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.178.

<sup>74</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, p.226.

<sup>75</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, pp.315 - 316.

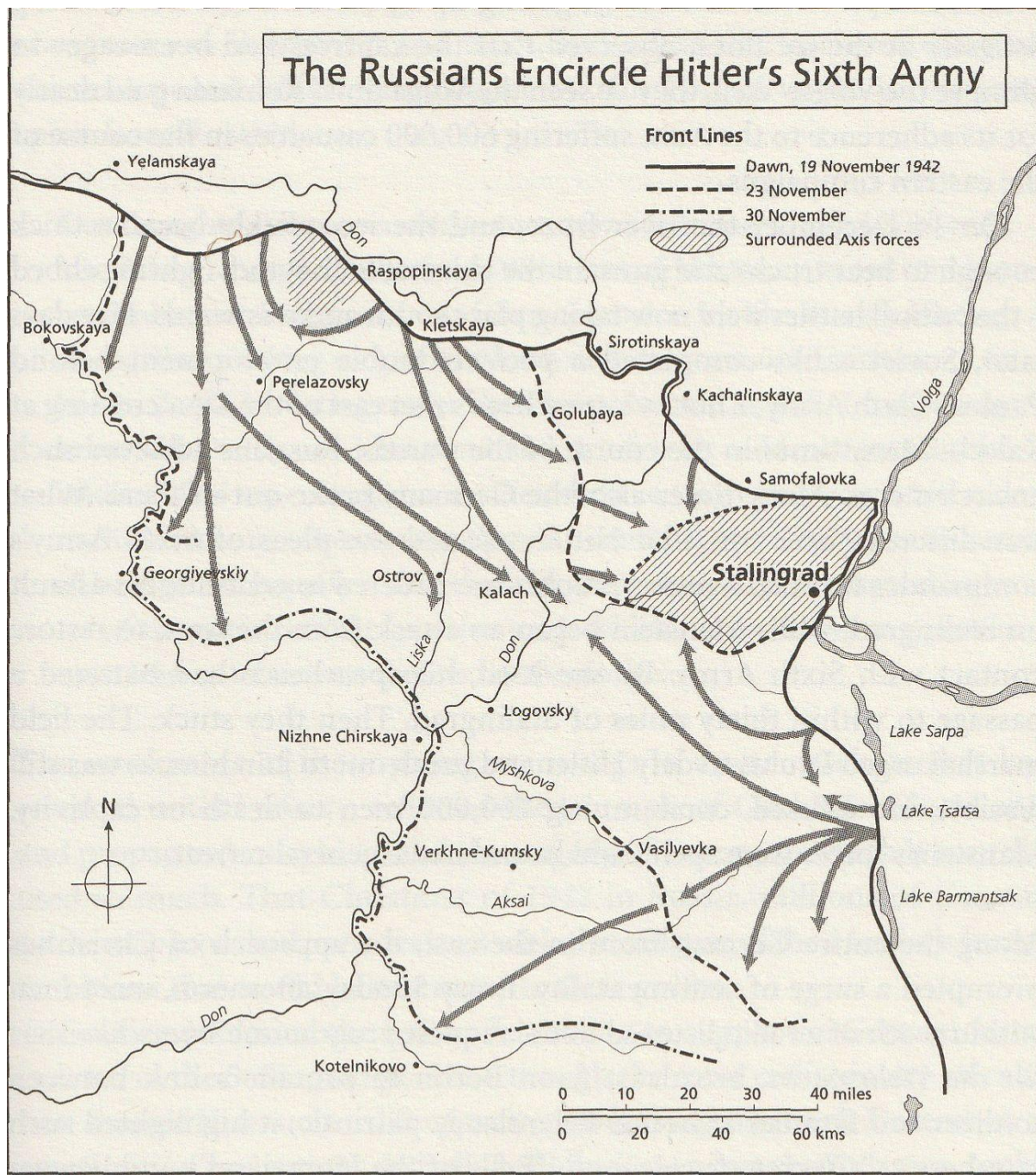


Plate 2: Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.315.

The battle was not to end in Germany's favour. Gerlach, as a soldier, knew of the harsh conditions that occurred, with a ration of only 115 grams of bread a day, while sustaining an offensive is insanely difficult.<sup>76</sup> Soldiers on the ground despised the High Command for good reason, with dwindling resources and command issues, failure and imprisonment were certain. Gerlach's perspective allows insight into the 6th Army's fate. Adam, echoes this

<sup>76</sup> Gerlach, *Breakout at Stalingrad*, p.367.

gloom; ‘They had put us in this hopeless situation because they had thrown all requests and warnings into the wind’, mismanagement ended the 6th Army.<sup>77</sup> Paulus and his staff were in a hopeless situation, needing to be saved from the combined effects of Uranus and Little Saturn which were essentially the same considering their shared goal of encirclement. General Erich von Manstein and General Hermann Hoth were tasked with rescuing Paulus, sending supplies from December onwards, while doing what they could to secure an escape route, but Paulus himself caused difficulty. Paulus was loyal to his men and obeyed orders, while abiding by Hitler’s unwillingness to retreat despite Manstein’s insistence. Having only fuel for armour and transport for twelve miles, it meant that if Paulus was to escape, he would need to sacrifice a portion of his army.<sup>78</sup>

For the 6th Army to retreat, more resources were required, efforts were made to make this fantasy a reality, for example Field Marshal Hermann Goring made attempts but failed. Goring wanted to supply the 6th Army with ‘everything humanly possible’ but lacked the efficient aircraft, only able to deliver a quarter of promised materials.<sup>79</sup> Accounts from the encirclement, illustrate the dread felt by German soldiers who struggled to survive. However, with the mistakes made by High Command and Paulus alike, alongside other limitations, escape was not possible and so Adam’s account shows the slow acceptance of defeat. Manstein was caught in a struggle, unaware of Paulus’ thoughts, and having to rely on reports via a short radio link while fending off Soviet troops to allow a German breakthrough, risking himself and his troops. Manstein would be overwhelmed if he did not retreat in time.<sup>80</sup> Manstein’s relief column pressed too deep into the Stalingrad theatre meaning he faced encirclement with no choice but to retreat on Christmas Eve, leaving Paulus to himself.<sup>81</sup> Paulus remained in Stalingrad until his surrender on 31st January 1943. Paulus was “an obedient soldier and facilitated Hitler’s criminal destruction of the 6th army.”<sup>82</sup> From Adam’s account, it was clear that Paulus was too loyal a soldier for his own good, unwilling to escape from a combination of loyalty to his men and fear of Hitler, while following orders no matter their quality, causing himself among many others to become POWs. Fighting continued after Paulus’ surrender, only settling on 2nd February when all resistance ceased, with 90,000

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<sup>77</sup> Adam and Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, p.106.

<sup>78</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, p.413.

<sup>79</sup> Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian - German Conflict 1941 - 1945*, p.266.

<sup>80</sup> Adam and Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, p.134.

<sup>81</sup> Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War*, p.333.

<sup>82</sup> Adam and Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, p.193.

Germans from the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army imprisoned, which was an embarrassing defeat.

THE CAULDRON BOILS: STALINGRAD, 1942-43

Table 1 Soviet and German wartime production 1941-45

| A: MILITARY OUTPUT                                                                                                          |             | 1941   | 1942    | 1943    | 1944    | 1945   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Aircraft                                                                                                                    | USSR        | 15,735 | 25,436  | 34,900  | 40,300  | 20,900 |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany     | 11,776 | 15,409  | 28,807  | 39,807  | 7,540  |
| Tanks*                                                                                                                      | USSR        | 6,590  | 24,446  | 24,089  | 28,963  | 15,400 |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany     | 5,200  | 9,300   | 19,800  | 27,300  | —      |
| Artillery                                                                                                                   | USSR**      | 42,300 | 127,000 | 130,000 | 122,400 | 62,000 |
|                                                                                                                             | (over 76mm) |        | 49,100  | 48,400  | 56,100  | 28,600 |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany**   | 7,000  | 12,000  | 27,000  | 41,000  | —      |
| * figure for USSR includes self-propelled guns. German figure includes self-propelled guns for 1943 and 1944.               |             |        |         |         |         |        |
| ** artillery pieces of all calibres for USSR (separate figures for pieces over 76 mm). German figure for pieces over 37 mm. |             |        |         |         |         |        |
| B: HEAVY INDUSTRY<br>(m. tonnes)                                                                                            |             | 1941   | 1942    | 1943    | 1944    | 1945   |
| Coal                                                                                                                        | USSR        | 151.4  | 75.5    | 93.1    | 121.5   | 149.3  |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany     | 315.5  | 317.9   | 340.4   | 347.6   | —      |
| Steel                                                                                                                       | USSR        | 17.9   | 8.1     | 8.5     | 10.9    | 12.3   |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany     | 28.2   | 28.7    | 30.6    | 25.8    | —      |
| Aluminium                                                                                                                   | USSR        | —      | 51.7    | 62.3    | 82.7    | 86.3   |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany     | 233.6  | 264.0   | 250.0   | 245.3   | —      |
| Oil                                                                                                                         | USSR        | 33.0   | 22.0    | 18.0    | 18.2    | 19.4   |
|                                                                                                                             | Germany*    | 5.7    | 6.6     | 7.6     | 5.5     | 1.3    |
| * synthetic oil production and natural crude oil production and imports.                                                    |             |        |         |         |         |        |

Plate 3: Overy, *Russia's War*, p.155.

The catastrophic failure to seize Stalingrad is of paramount importance when discussing the Eastern Front, especially since it was the first of Germany's major defeats. The Red Army improved and pushed back the Wehrmacht, allowing an advance on Berlin itself over time due to German mismanagement, alongside supply and leadership issues that remained beyond February 1943. Hitler's stubborn desire for Stalingrad doomed troops that would have fared better if allowed to retreat when the Soviets had the upper hand. Without generals like Halder

to keep Hitler from being too ambitious, Germany suffered as Hitler made orders without opposition which hurt war efforts, ultimately causing defeat.

## **Chapter 4 -The turning of the tide: The Red Army advances westward to victory (1943-1945)**

Defeat at Stalingrad revealed Germany's weakness, her armies unable to operate under neglectful command and without sufficient resources. The year 1943, saw the War turn in the Allies' favour, with a defensive Germany allowing an Allied push. I will highlight, what in my opinion, are the two most important Eastern Front conflicts following February 1943, the Battle of Kursk and Berlin. The Battle of Kursk shows Germany making a final push against the USSR, while the Battle of Berlin culminated in the Red Army's desire for revenge, ending this racial conflict with the Third Reich's destruction.

Germany amassed as much power as possible with Operation Citadel, aiming for one final push at Kursk, aware of the possibility of the Allies in the west using Italy or North Africa as springboards to attack the Reich, meaning victory on the Eastern Front became a necessity. The Battle of Kursk began on 5th July 1943, with Zhukov bombarding Germany's lines without waiting on Stalin, catching the Germans off guard.<sup>83</sup> Despite Stalin calling Zhukov for an explanation, Zhukov did not care, stating that the 'symphony from hell' spoke for itself.<sup>84</sup> Hitler postponed Citadel by six weeks which allowed the Soviets to strengthen a defensive line with a depth of forty-seven miles.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore,, the Soviet defence line also possessed a minefield of 400,000 mines six miles deep while scattered across 3000 miles of trenches.<sup>86</sup> Overcoming these defensive lines meant demolishing Soviet tanks which distinguishes this battle from others. Known for being the biggest tank conflict during World War II, Kursk was where the German Tiger and Panthers were introduced, contending with the T-34s.<sup>87</sup> Jones like myself is interested in these tank battles considering they highlight how the Soviet forces improved from 1941 when they were disorganised. In 1943 a contest between both forces was more apparent, either could overcome the other, in this case, the Soviets would win once they matched the standard of German troops. Germany risked losing

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, Penguin edition (London: The Penguin Press, 1998), pp.202 -203.

<sup>84</sup> Georgy Zhukov, *Marshal of the Soviet Union G. Zhukov Reminiscences and reflections*, Volume II, English translation edition (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1985), p.183.

<sup>85</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of the World War: The Eastern Front*, p.145.

<sup>86</sup> David M. Glantz ' Toward Deep Battle: The Soviet Conduct of Operational Manoeuvre', in *Transformation in Russian and Soviet Military History: Proceedings of the Twelfth Military History Symposium U.S. Air Force Academy 1-3 October 1986*, ed. by Reddel W Carl (Washington, D.C, United States Air Force Academy, 1990) pp.194 - 202.

<sup>87</sup> Jones, *Total War: From Stalingrad to Berlin*, p.83.

a great number of tanks, Beevor presents Kursk like a chess game, Germany with fewer pieces across two fronts, risked more by initially going on the offensive.<sup>88</sup> Applying this mindset, Germany used their 'knight' pieces, with multiple Panzer divisions including 'Death's Head', one of the three strongest SS divisions who, it was believed by the Germans, would ensure victory. Manstein at German headquarters hoped that all these powerful Panzer divisions would crush the Soviet Front, however, they were halted on the 9th July allowing a Soviet advance.<sup>89</sup> The German push failed because 916 fighting vehicles, almost half of the 4th Panzer, were disabled or wrecked meaning German forces were severely harmed and so less effective.<sup>90</sup>

German failure to push Soviet forces ultimately doomed their chances to secure their front. With overwhelming Soviet superiority, German troops went on the defensive while the Soviets used all their power to crush Germany. Overy lays great stress upon the Soviet improvements that allowed this, however, he also highlights mistakes lingering from 1941. Stalin replaced Zhukov, who was commanding this offensive, with Vasilevsky, the Red Army chief of staff.<sup>91</sup> Overy does not give Stalin's reasoning for this replacement, focusing on the tactics in Kursk instead. My theory is that Stalin was agitated by Zhukov's early aggression, who attacked without his permission, thus Zhukov's replacement allowed Stalin to oversee the command of Kursk Front. Anderson believes Citadel should have been cancelled, being one of Germany's greatest faults for wasting many armoured divisions which could have been allocated in a defensive front against an inevitable Soviet offensive.<sup>92</sup> This view is valid considering how many Panzer units were used and lost in Kursk, such losses allowed the Red Army to move forward aggressively.

The clash on the 12th July was the biggest tank battle in history, with over 1200 tanks engaged. The Soviets used ramming tactics and hiding spots, hoping to overcome Germany's new tanks, which ended the day with over 700 tanks disabled. Such destruction demonstrates the extent of Citadel's failure, causing its cancellation (13th July) and a stalemate (15th July). With heavy losses on both sides, Germany was doomed.<sup>93</sup> The grim results were hard to

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<sup>88</sup> Beevor, *The Second World War*, p.469.

<sup>89</sup> Erich Von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, reprint edition, (Monch, Bernard & Graefe Verlag GmbH & Co.KG, 2000) pp.498 - 500.

<sup>90</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.390.

<sup>91</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.208.

<sup>92</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.159.

<sup>93</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.209 - 210.

predict, the Soviet forces, however, could carry on 'bruised' considering its superior numbers and industrial capability and ability to replace the losses. Germany, however, had to contend with a war on two fronts, as resources were stretched to breaking point. Losing troops and tanks at Kursk meant that the Soviets advanced more readily. Eventually, Germany would succumb due to heavy and continuing losses. Despite these setbacks, Germany learned from its failure in Stalingrad, Hitler allowing withdrawal in August away from the Soviet counteroffensive, Operation Kutuzov, aware that the Soviets were able to take back their conquered lands.<sup>94</sup> Hitler's decision to withdraw speaks volumes of the situation Germany was in, needing all forces to defend their country, having to defend on two fronts, with diminishing power. Also, crippling tank losses meant more resources were needed to produce new vehicles. Germany were essentially delaying their ultimate defeat, unable to push back, and Hitler's refusal to surrender would lead to the ruination of Germany.

Academic discussion of this battle often focuses on the Soviet soldiers performing better than the German. In my opinion, German realisation of their predicament in late 1943 needs further scrutiny. Roberts describes Citadel's failure from a German perspective; '.... anything less than a stunning breakthrough was now a disaster for the Germans by that stage of the conflict; pyrrhic victories were of no use to the Reich.'<sup>95</sup> Germany needed a victory that pushed back the Soviets, and allowed the Wehrmacht time to regroup and rearm, little victories would not allow a proper recovery needed to fend off enemies if the war was to turn in their favour. Failure to break through ultimately ended Germany's chances of victory, unable to deter the USSR from continuing their aggressive push. Manstein, according to Hastings, hoped that success could convince Stalin to acknowledge a stalemate and accept a negotiated peace rather than a fight to the end.<sup>96</sup> Integrating Roberts and Hastings statements, German forces hoped to push back the Soviets before the downfall of Nazi Germany. Hitler refused due to his crusading mentality, but he would have only one front to deal with if success at Kursk ensured peace. However, the destruction of the USSR's land and people, created a deep-seated determination for revenge that ensured peace was never possible. Soviet revenge demanded justice. The depth of German failure is reflected in Kursk's losses from 23rd August, 170,000 Germans were injured or killed, the Soviet casualties numbered 1,677,000 despite this loss, discord among Germans continued.<sup>97</sup> The conflict would not end

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<sup>94</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.393.

<sup>95</sup> Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War*, p.424.

<sup>96</sup> Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.397.

<sup>97</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, p.490.

without the enemy's annihilation, its effects still impacts upon the mindset of the Russian people today. German losses could not easily be ignored, having fewer troops and allies to rely on, Kursk sounded the last moments of Hitler's rule.

The Battle of Berlin was Hitler's twilight, as over April and May 1945, Nazi Germany collapsed. The Soviets entered Berlin on 21st April 1945, putting Hitler in despair, a similar situation to Paulus, both unable to escape certain doom. Dramatic irony is featured in Anderson's account among others, as he highlights this situation which was similar to Paulus unable to escape due to Hitler.<sup>98</sup> The attack on Berlin was led by Zhukov's troops from the First Belorussian Front, with a total strength of 1,500,000 soldiers against Berlin's commander, General Helmuth Weidling.<sup>99</sup> Weidling struggled to organize an efficient defence, understandable considering the Wehrmacht was collapsing, only able to delay its fall. Battles were fought block by block, Chuikov by 24th April was close to the city centre, racing with Zhukov to avenge the USSR, incorporating Stalin's patriotic ideals.<sup>100</sup> Overy approaches the battle from a Soviet perspective, who realised conquering Berlin was the finale which could be solved by rapid action. commanders were eager for victory. Further glory would be given to who conquered Berlin first. Hitler by 29th April decided to end his 'crusade', ordering his commanders to never surrender, denying the Soviets a chance to glorify their victory with his body.<sup>101</sup> Hitler's death is where the 'crusade' ended, although fighting continued, until the last remnants of German power was snuffed out. However, it is with Hitler's death that I end this here. Without Hitler, the instigator of this war, who utilised as much force as possible to ensure conquest, the dream of Nazi dominance together with its destructiveness, died. The target of the 'Great Patriotic War' was dead, Soviet sacrifice was 'necessary', avenging their losses while Stalin benefited from his propaganda image of an excellent leader, being justified through victory and shared patriotic values. The war was the antithesis of Hitler's expectation in 1940, Germany was ruined and much of it fell under Soviet control. The Battle of Berlin was the result of the blind pursuit of victory, coming at a grave cost to the German people from a combination of flawed decisions.

Between 1943 and 1945, German efforts made during Barbarossa were reduced to nothing, an ambition to create a German Empire stretching across Europe collapsed with brutal

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<sup>98</sup> Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, pp.246 - 247.

<sup>99</sup> Jones, *Total War: From Stalingrad to Berlin*, p.284.

<sup>100</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.272.

<sup>101</sup> John Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (New York, Doubleday, 1976), p.878.

fighting that cost millions of lives. Racial hatred characterised the conflict and it had to end with the enemy's destruction. The USSR was victorious, destroying Berlin was necessary to end their war, Germany would have done the same to Moscow if they were the victor.

## **Conclusion**

The Eastern Theatre highlighted Nazi Germany's tactical and strategic weakness that led to her fall, as naked ambition created an operation that simply could neither be fully financed nor sustained, causing further issues throughout the conflict. Operation Barbarossa's failure drew the fighting out long enough for the USSR under Stalin to create a force that evenly contested with Germany, which became apparent during the Battle of Stalingrad. Overy argues that is more historically accurate to state the Red Army's overall improvement and ability to adapt to changing circumstances was why Germany failed, rather than Germany's mistakes<sup>102</sup>. Overy's arguments can be justified in some respects; Soviet improvement allowed an even contest, eventually outdoing Germany, but he ignores flaws such as resources, among other mistakes, neglecting historical facts that explain these flaws. I believe that Soviet tactical and strategic improvements best explain Germany's failure, however, Germany was nearing success during Operation Barbarossa, and was close to complete conquest, but failed because of their misjudgements, allowing the Soviets to improve and prolong the fighting. Through my research, it is undeniable that German mistakes doomed their aims of conquering Russia. Resource mismanagement created during pre planning and partly due to initial over confidence and oversight, worsened as the fighting continued and this finally dawned on Germany when Paulus was forced to surrender.

Primary accounts including those highlighted in Adam's work, illustrate the consequences of Germany's mistakes, such as their refusal to accept the Red Army's offer of surrender in Stalingrad on 8th January 1943, which could have saved thousands of lives and three weeks of fighting and starvation<sup>103</sup>. Even without hindsight, Germany's tactical flaws were clear. Hitler contributed to the failure by rejecting retreat and wasting resources while trying to sustain Paulus. Manstein could not save him and more lives were lost. The 6th Army's collapse highlighted Germany's flaws, as a determination to win outright came at a grave cost. Defeat at Kursk made it obvious to the Germans that these flaws cost them certain victory and they slowly accepted defeat which Manstein also did following Operation Citadel's failure.

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<sup>102</sup> Overy, *Russia's War*, p.187.

<sup>103</sup> Adam and Rühle, *With Paulus at Stalingrad*, p.216.

German assumptions about the USSR in 1941, was not entirely misplaced, Soviet flaws also caused unnecessary deaths, contributing to a lengthened conflict. Evans argues that the Soviet attacks were ill-planned, using frontal assaults against enemy lines, causing such casualties that even the USSR's resources were stretched. 'The result was that the war on the Eastern Front took far longer to win than it would have done with more intelligent and less profligate military leadership.'<sup>104</sup> Evans references Freiser to validate his argument, exploring the negligence of both nations which lengthened the conflict. Barbarossa's opening months proved this to be correct, costing numerous lives that could have been avoided if the leadership was better. Poor Soviet leadership during 1941 justified, in Hitler's mind, racial stereotyping of the Russians. This encouraged him in his quest to take Stalingrad while generals like Halder were against it. Ignoring his generals' warning and replacing them with 'yes' men, Hitler's sheer focus on ideologies associated with his 'crusade', hindered Germany at the cost of victory. I believe the assumptions about the Soviets and her fighting men by Germany undermined her bid for conquest from the beginning, as resources were set aside for victory by winter, without considering a significant Soviet challenge. This lack of foresight hampered Germany's campaign, while the Soviet fight back undermined her confidence. A long struggle continued with dwindling resources on the German side against a nation with a massive and expanding industrial base, providing an advantage to Soviet troops.

Tactical faults were the reason why Germany failed; evident in the conflicting perspectives emerged between Hitler's lust for the USSR's natural resources and his generals' more tactical insights. Germany's determination to take targets at the expense of lives, among other flaws, gave opportunities for the Soviets to overcome Germany, motivated by fears of what lay in store if a regime hell bent on subjugating the Slavs were to triumph. The combination of German tactical faults and flawed racial views ensured the failure of Nazi plans.

Awareness of these facts need to be raised and made known to audiences today and with this dissertation, that goal will be closer. I have contributed to the historiography, detailing how Nazi Germany viewed the Slavs, allowing over confidence to affect planning, ensuring a defeat caused by faulty decisions. The methodology adopted here makes this apparent.

German troops faced more difficulty than expected. Hitler took full command, producing further mistakes. Ultimately Nazi ideals doomed German conquest. My focus on this, will expand and enrich the existing historiography and is a unique work that provides an understanding on how German ignorance and negligence caused Nazi Germany's collapse.

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<sup>104</sup> Karl- Heinz Frieser, 'Die Schlacht', pp.200-208.

Even today, the impact on Russia, demographically, is still apparent, with fewer males. Germany is hesitant to use military force, restricting their influence in international politics and peacekeeping operations. Tensions remain between Russia and Germany, evident in the disagreements involving the EU over the Ukraine among other issues that will carry on for the foreseeable future.

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## Appendix

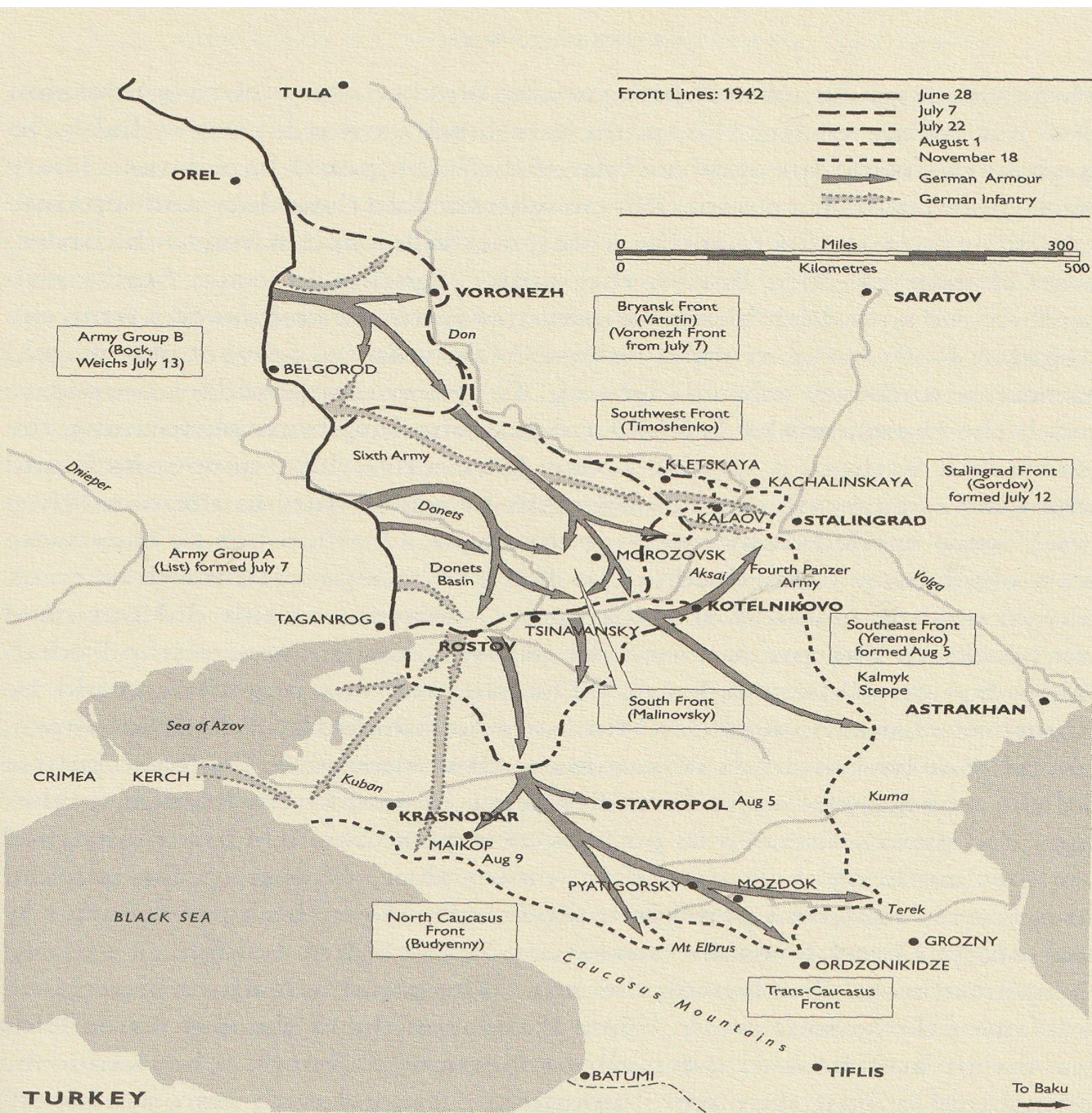


MAP 1. Utopia. The 'Greater Germanic Reich of the German Nation'

Hartmann, *Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany's War in the East 1941 - 1945*, pp.16 - 17.



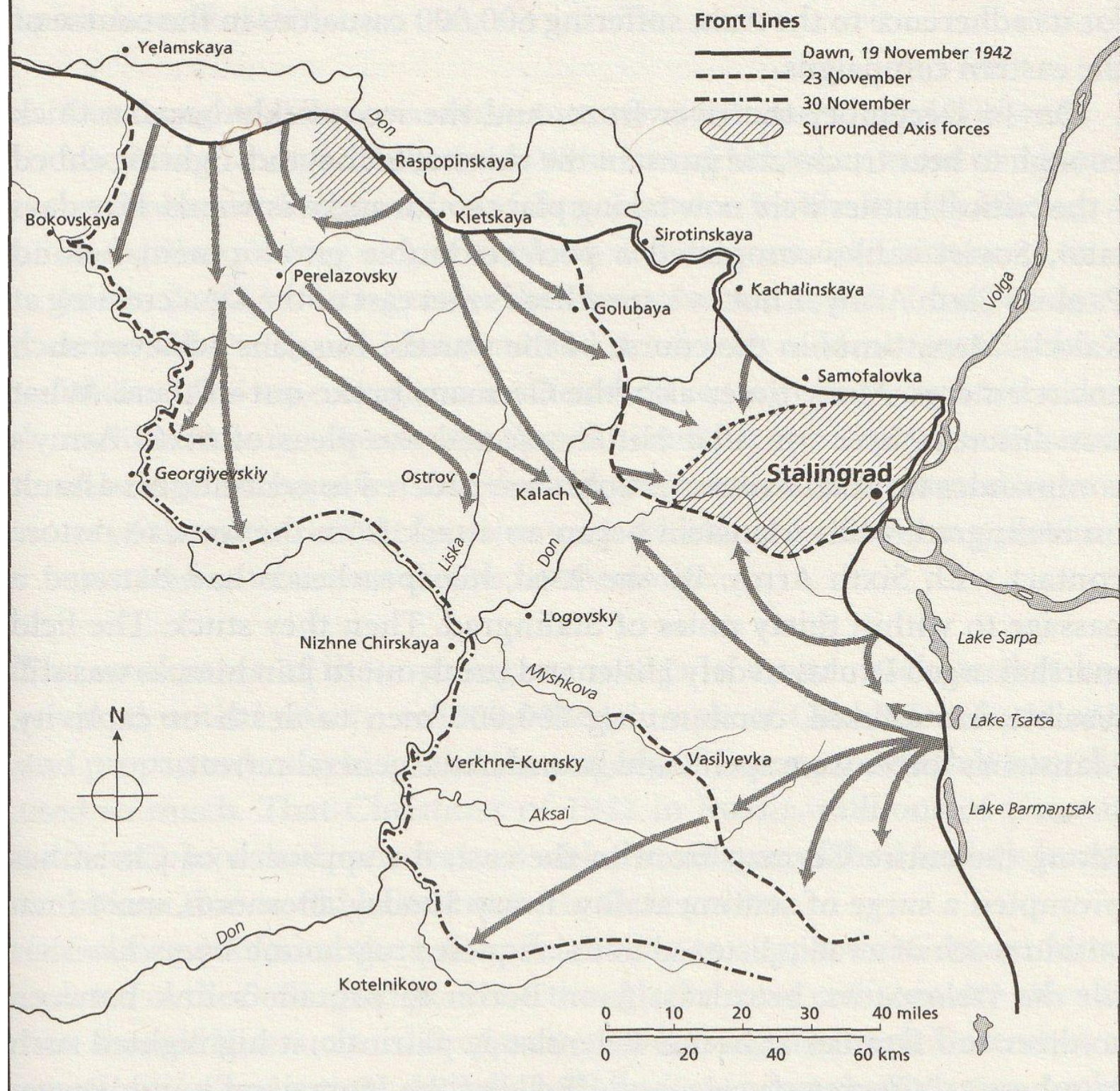
Hastings, *All Hell let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.157



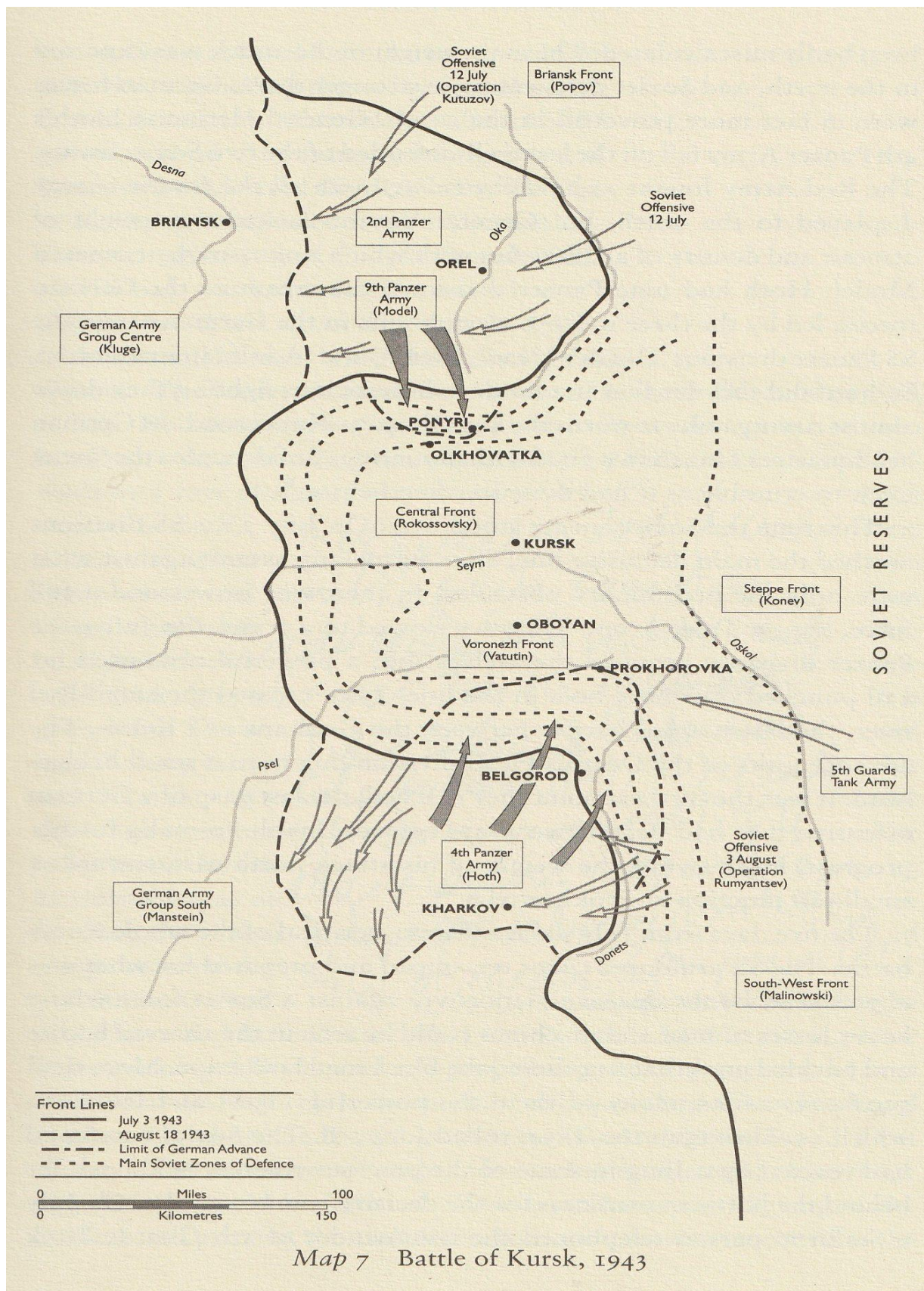
Map 5 Operation Blue: The German Southern Offensive, June–November 1942

Map 3: Overy, *Russia's War*, p.159.

# The Russians Encircle Hitler's Sixth Army



Map 4: Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939 - 1945*, p.315.



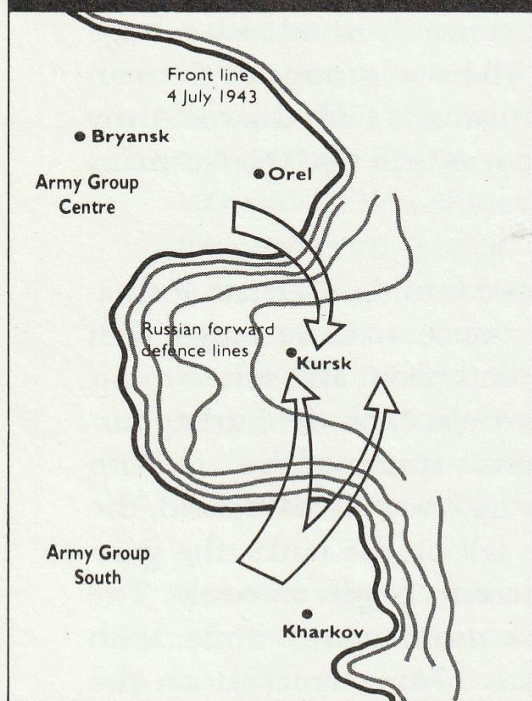
Overy, *Russia's War*, p.205.

# OPERATION CITADEL

## EASTERN FRONT SUMMER 1943

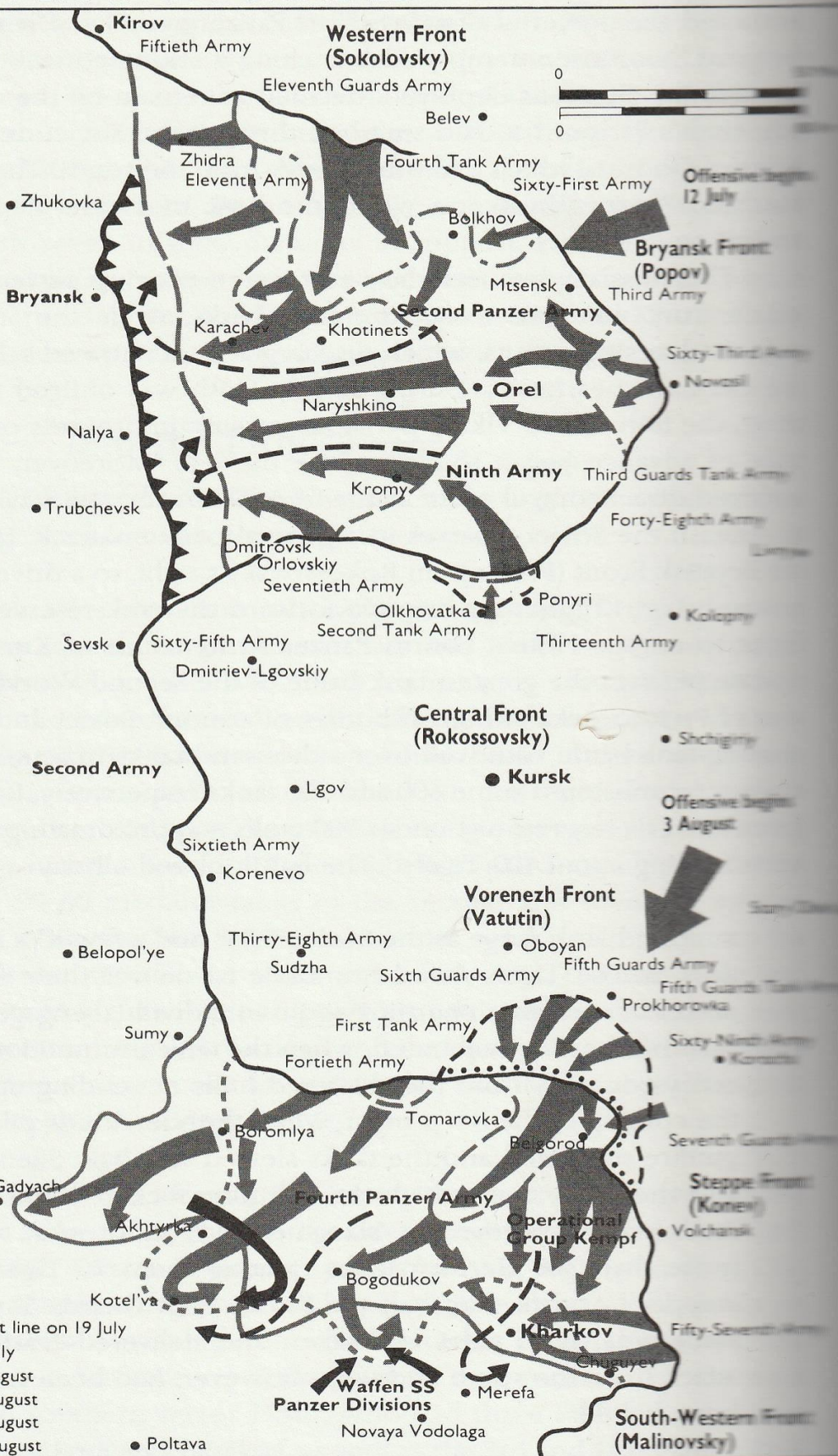


## THE GERMAN PLAN

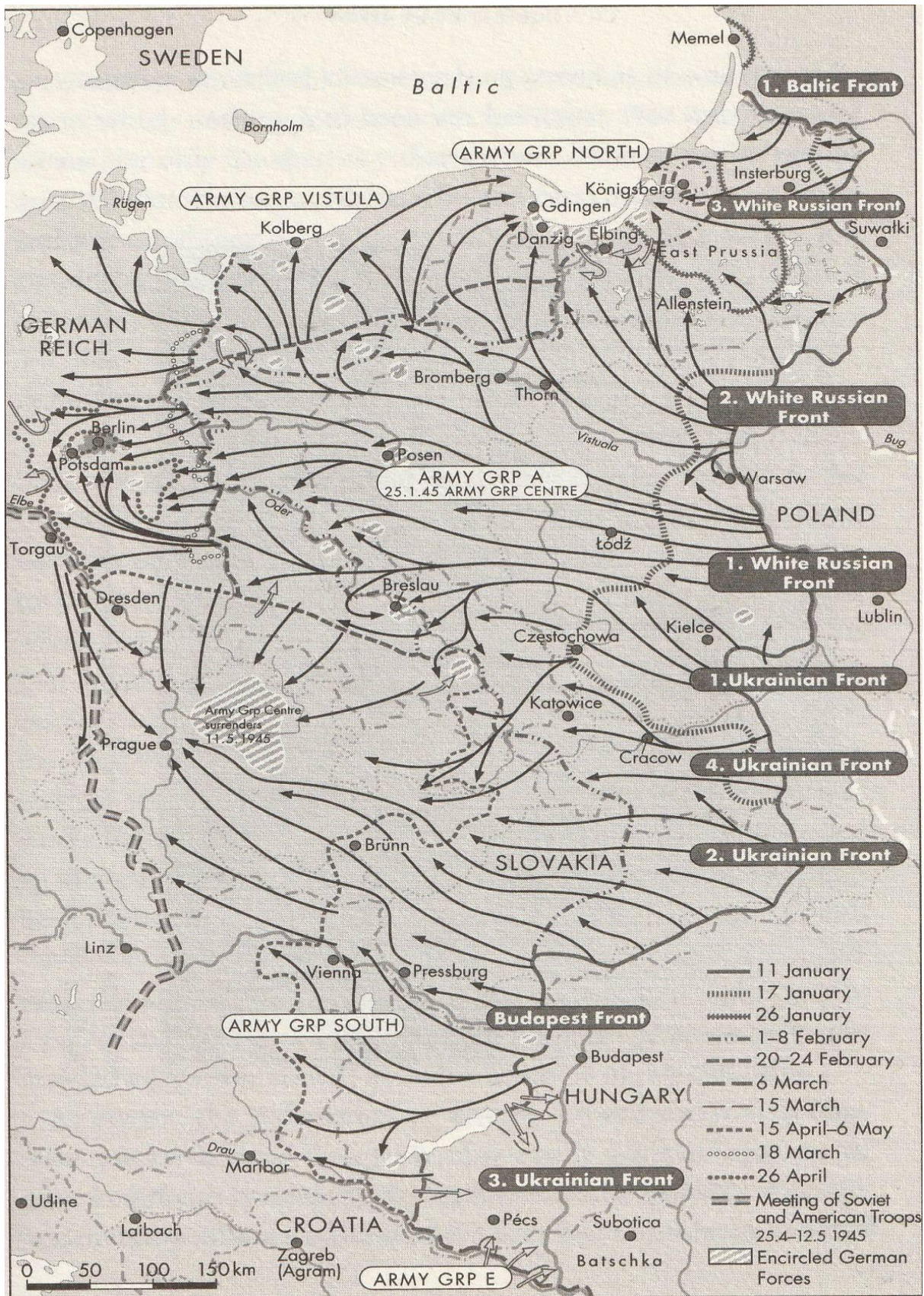


### Key

- |                                                        |                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| --- Limit of German advances before Russian offensives | --- Front line on 19 July |
| ➡ German counter-attacks                               | ..... 23 July             |
| ➡ German withdrawals                                   | --- 5 August              |
| ➡ Russian offensives                                   | --- 11 August             |
| --- Front line on 12 July                              | --- 18 August             |
|                                                        | --- 23 August             |



Keegan, *The Second World War*, p.470.



MAP 8. The Eastern Front in 1945

Hartmann, *Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany's War in the East, 1941- 1945*, p.143.

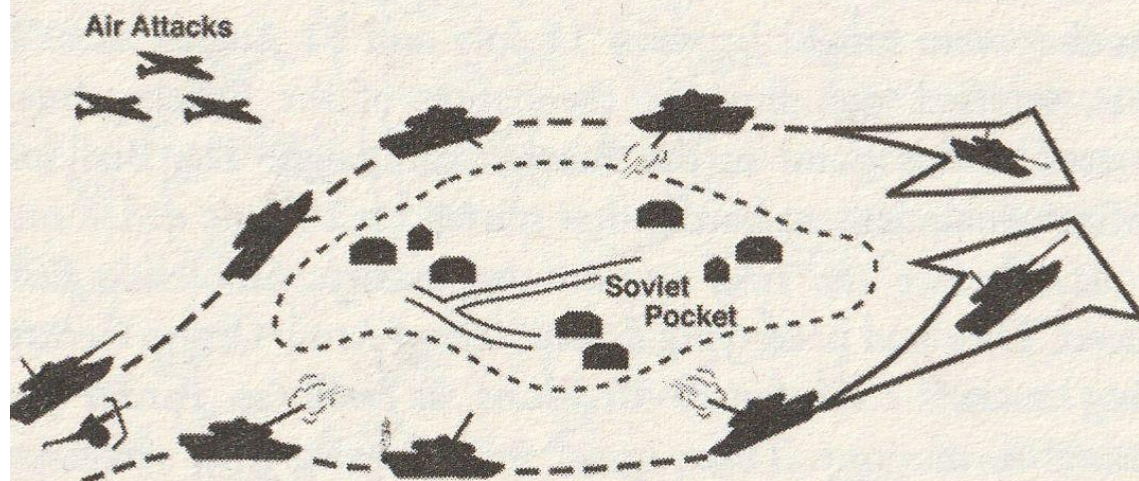


German soldiers waiting for the signal to attack on the first day of Barbarossa. Keegen, *The Second World War*, p.184.

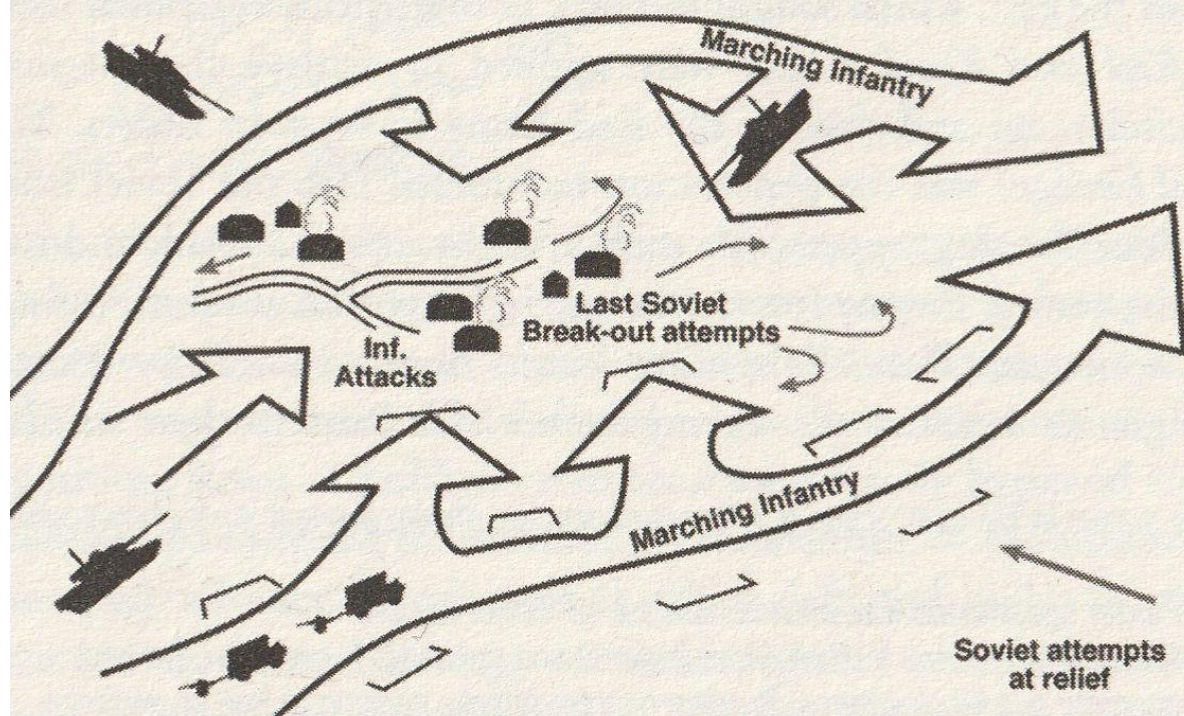


Soviet attack near Stalingrad. Anderson et al, *Campaigns of World War II: The Eastern Front*, p.127.

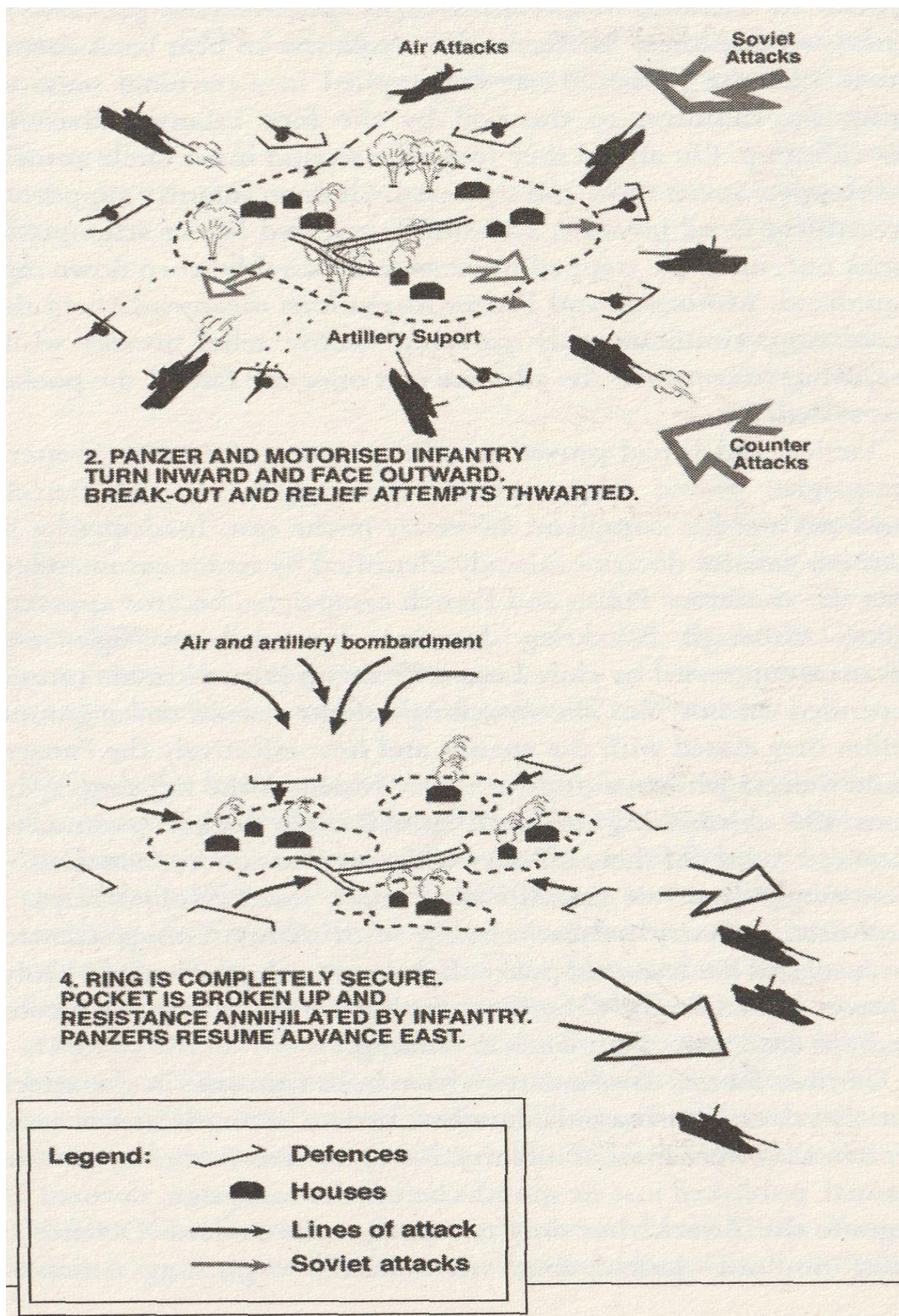
## THE DESTRUCTION OF A SOVIET POCKET



1. PANZER SPEARHEADS SURROUND POCKET.



3. INFANTRY ARRIVE AND RELIEVE PANZERS.  
POCKET SECURED AND ATTACKS BEGIN TO  
FRAGMENT RESISTANCE.



Robert Kershaw, *War without Garlands: Operation Barbarossa 1941 - 1942*, pp.226-227



Hitler examining the ruins of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin (March 1945). Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, p.886.

