STALINGRAD POCKET

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STALINGRAD POCKET

THE ADVANCE TO STALINGRAD AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SIXTH ARMY

FOREWORD

I first read about the battle of Stalingrad in a *Reader's Digest* edition when I was maybe 16. Excerpts from the book, *Last Letters from Stalingrad*, appeared at various parts of the narrative, exemplifying the best human reaction to courage, duty, betrayal and oblivion. But my interest waned over time and became sporadic. It returned after watching *Enemy at the Gates* (1998) despite the movie's sappy and contrived plot, and 1993's *Stalingrad*, an emasculating product of the German movie industry. The story is simple enough: crushing defeat for one side and grudging victory for the other. But this general impression misses the finer picture. The real battle contained such a tale of endeavor and inevitability that it makes celluloid grandiosity redundant in the face of genuine human ordeal.

I first started on this monograph in 2004, just before going off to college. The bulk of the manuscript was written then, complete with three or four maps, all of them in my opinion, detailed works of art — but maybe that is an exaggeration. Unfortunately, after I left, a hard drive crash wiped out all the information, leaving me with a draft version of the manuscript. This document represents the completion of what I had begun all those years ago. I am not entirely satisfied with my replacement maps but the bright spot is that I have had the benefit of new information and previously untapped sources.

My intention is that the reading of this material leave you with the same visceral impact that I felt after reading about the battle all those years ago. If I have done my job as I think I have, it should.

— September 2011

I must thank David Glantz (Lt-Col. U.S. Army Retd.), researcher John Calvin and that mysterious purveyor of colorized Eastern Front photographs, known only by his flickr handle, Za Rodinu, for their feedback and help regarding certain aspects included in this study.

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The dark smoke blotted out the sun, bathing the city with a dusky light. A large group of German pioneers assembled under the shadow of the massive Barrikady Ordnance factory, its tall smokestacks towering over the ugly gray-green buildings of the city's industrial district that dominated the skyline. Shattered freight cars once used to ferry munitions now lay rusting by the tracks. Metal pillars once covered by brick work lay exposed and walls scarred by shellfire displayed large sections of the interior to the outer world. The entire place had been scene of bitter fighting weeks before until finally relenting to the men of the 100th Jäger Division, a unit formed as a throwback to the traditions of the old Imperial German Army.

The Germans had been sheltering outside then, waiting in foxholes as artillery blasted the place. Russian snipers had picked off groups of men as they darted from one shell crater to the next. Tanks had been sent in; proving useless and every inch of factory had been cleared in painstaking room-to-room combat. Finally, the factory had been fallen and the Germans lay poised by the high cliffs over the river, able to dominate the vulnerable crossings across the sprawling River Volga. But the Russians stubbornly clung on to a scattering of buildings by the bluffs, hoping to buy time for reinforcements.

To prevent this the German Pioneers had a specific objective. Used as a substitute to cover heavy infantry losses over the past weeks, they had been ordered to advance beyond the factory and clear out

BUNDESARCHIV

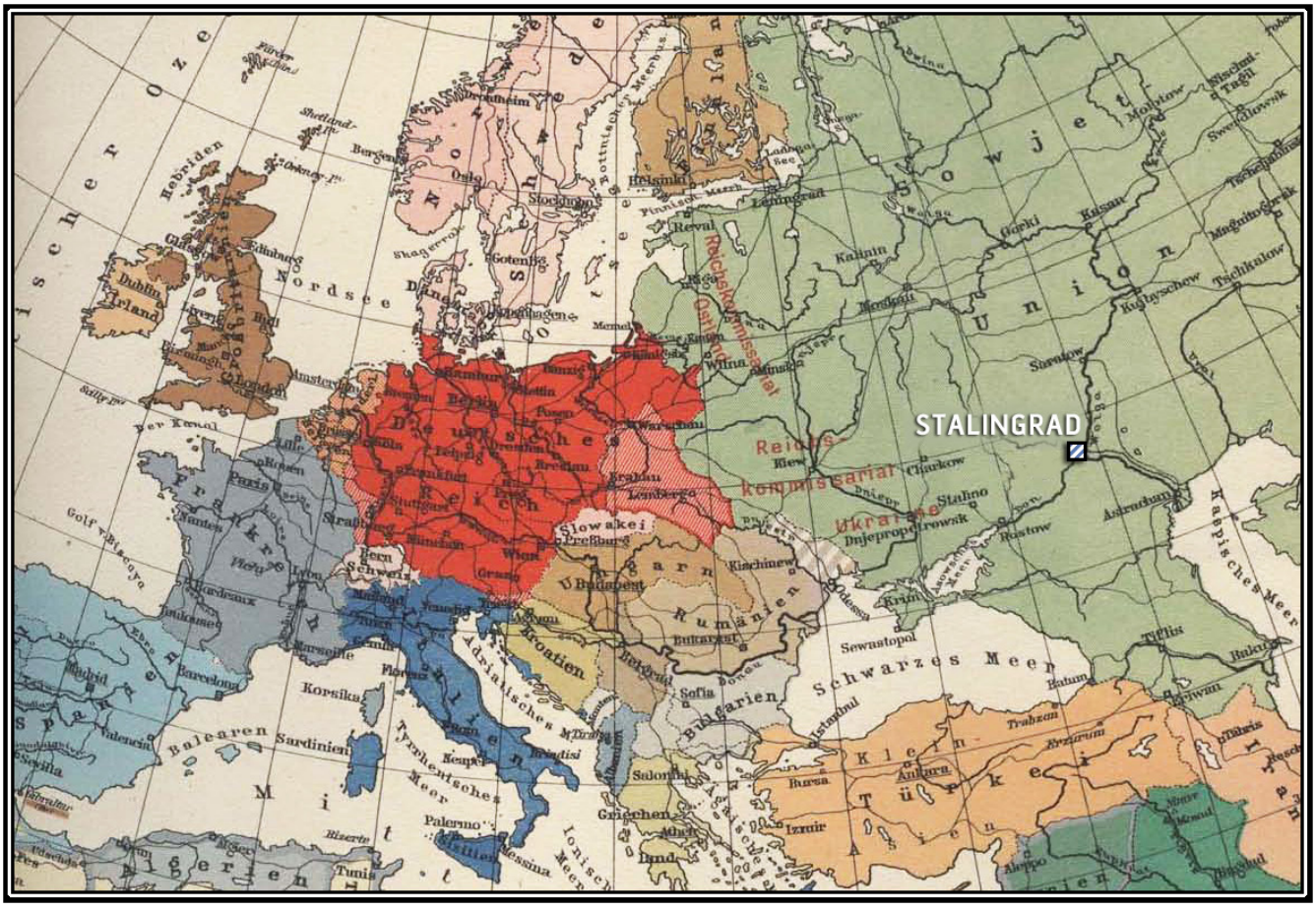
WEARY WARRIORS German Panzergrenadiers of the 16th Panzer Division move up to the Volga. In the lead a battle-weary machinegunner carries his MG34 on a shoulder. In the German Army, machine gunners were known as *Abzug* or trigger, as if they were simply a part of a mechanized entity.

the nearby settlement that bordered the river, a collection of ordinary buildings that had taken on a grave tactical importance. The most important of these were two structures nicknamed the "Pharmacy" and the "Commissar's House," both of which dominated the Volga bank. But the retreating Russians had booby-trapped the Barrikady's rooms and as the mass of Pioneers shuffled around, one of them trigged a charge. It exploded, killing eighteen men. The rest of Germans froze and stayed put until after 3 o'clock that early morning when the German artillery finally began to bombard the Russian lines. Then the Pioneers advanced, guns blazing.

A Russian joke had made the rounds a few weeks ago of how a soldier went into battle with 150 rounds of ammunition, and when he emerged to go to the field hospital afterwards, he went out with 151 rounds, without even having had a chance to fire his weapon. This nonchalant acceptance of combat proved typical of the Russian reserve which had slowed German gains over the past month. The Germans had no jokes. Only a relentless sense of destiny. Hitler, for whom many had a wide-eyed respect as the "greatest military commander of all time" — a title that would soon take on a sardonic tone as the weeks passed, had ordered the city crushed and in true German fashion, the troops attempted to do just that.

After they captured the Pharmacy, the Pioneers reached the Commissar's House only to find that the Russians had boarded up every window and door. Soviet rifle and sub-machine gun barrels stuck out of the gaps, shooting a brilliant hail of yellow-white fire. The Germans pushed on, taking heavy losses and by daylight had smashed their way into the house.

The Russians retreated to the cellar. Tearing up the floorboards, the Pioneers dropped satchel charges and Molotov cocktails. After the explosions subsided, a deathly silence descended. The Germans announced the place secured and moved on to the banks of the Volga. Victory was within grasp — of



STRATEGIC SETTING Stalingrad on the the grand scale. This map, albeit slightly modified, is from the 1943 *Deutscher Schulatlas*. Pre-war German territory is colored in red.

that they were certain. But the cost had been high. Almost the entire force of Pioneers had been wounded or killed except for one man, and as the Russians counterattacked, a patrol arrived to reinforce the engineers only to suffer all but three men dead or wounded.

In five days, the Pioneers suffered a thousand men killed or wounded and the force of five battalions was merged into one. On the other side, the Russian 138th Rifle Division, which had lost nearly 90 percent of its strength in the defense of the area, dug in. For the survivors of this division, later to be awarded the honorific title of "Guards" for their feats, this last bit of defensible ground measured just four hundred yards wide and a hundred yards deep, with the river behind them. Their mission was simple enough: hold on, and as their commander, General Vasili Chukov of the Sixty-Second Army was often fond of saying: time was blood. Continued resistance bought capital for a long-term Soviet investment in victory, but for the Germans, it dealt an unforgettable lesson in defeat.

LEFT The Guards Emblem. Units often won the coveted "Guards" title after proving themselves in combat.

BELOW German troops gather by the shattered remnants of a building in the Tractor Factory compound. On the road, two StuG assault guns rumble forward to support the infantry. Three major factories within Stalingrad became settings for ferocious clashes with the Russians throughout the campaign.

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A JOURNEY EAST

In the autumn of 1941, the spirit of the German Army on the Eastern Front was at its peak. In the immediate months after Operation "Barbarossa" (the gargantuan Axis invasion of Russia on 22 June) the German armies had swept 500 miles into Russian territory until on October 1, the frontline stretched 1,490 miles long from Leningrad in the north to the Crimean Peninsula in south. The advance had reaped a catch that few German generals could have believed: three and a half million Russian soldiers by the end of the year alone with another four million dead — most as they followed Josef Stalin's forceful urgings to fight to the death.

Common German soldiers were certain that there was no more of the enemy to bring them a proper fight. But they had disastrously underestimated the resilience of the enemy. That late July, as German troops advancing on the Russian capital carrying signs reading "To Moscow," the Russians were busy establishing *Stavka*, a new Soviet High Command to reverse the failings of the previous months. In August, three new commanders were designated to lead sectors opposite the German armies, including Marshals Voroshilov (North-West Front), Semyon Timoshenko (West Front) and Seymon Budenny (South-West Front). Orders were also sent out to create home-guard brigades, worker battalions and divisions of partisans behind the enemy lines. Much of the effort was designed to buy Russia badly needed time — time enough for Stalin to mobilize the country's massive resources for war and rebuild the army by bringing in sixteen million men of military age.

RIGHT A German reconnaissance column pauses before a burning Russian village.

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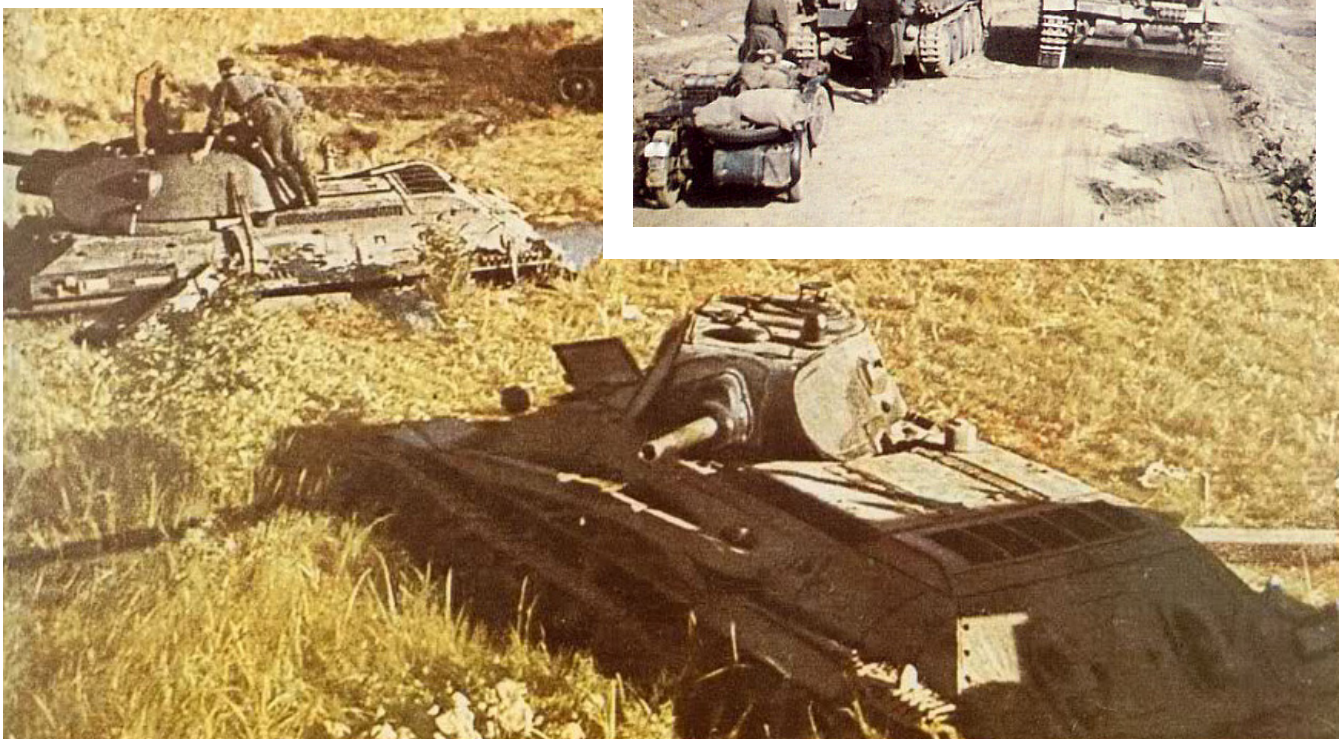
BELOW Although the Russians often outclassed the Germans, especially in equipment, they were poorly trained. These T-34 tanks have been abandoned after being driven into a bog.



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TANK EXPERT Heinz Guderian was the undisputed master of tank warfare, having written a pioneering work on the subject in 1937, *Achtung Panzer!* German tank forces in the Second World War were organized on the theories written in the book.

At the start of the war, Guderian saw action in Poland and France, famously being denied permission to crush the last British pocket at Dunkirk. After disagreements with Hitler over Moscow, he was relieved of command in December 1941 and went into semi-retirement. Although nominated as a replacement for a bedridden General Rommel in North Africa and denied, Guderian returned to active duty after the Stalingrad campaign, first as inspector General of the tank forces and then as Chief of Staff of the army. He was sacked in March 1945 over contentions with Hitler regarding operations, but later helped rebuild the army after the war.

BUNDESARCHIV

German losses began to mount. By 31 July, Hitler's armies had suffered 213,000 casualties — fifteen percent of their total attacking force while his panzer units reported the loss of 863 tanks to enemy fire and irreparable damage — almost twenty-five percent of the armored corps' original strength. Initially, the three main objectives of the attackers were Leningrad (for Army Group North), Moscow (for Field Marshal Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center) and Rostov (for General Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group South). In all places, stubborn resistance began to dog German ambition. At the ancient fortress town of Smolesnsk, on the road to Moscow, German units from the Fourth Panzer Army overran the city easily enough but then ran into a Soviet blockade 25-30 miles east of the city, reinforced by *Katyushas* ("Little Kates") rocket launchers and minefields. Behind this line, Russian units regrouped and began to organize the defense of Moscow.

In any case, Hitler was only vaguely interested in the Russian capital. He believed that the Russian capital was merely a "geographical expression," not a real center of power. In its place, he substituted the oil-rich Ukraine, an alluring prize from which the *Führer* could not avert his eyes. It was a fatal miscalculation. The Ukraine was important; the oil fields in the Caucasus were vital to the continued success of the German army, but they came second in importance after Moscow. The famed 19th Century military tactician Carl von Clausewitz had written that "It is not by conquering the enemy provinces… but by seeking out the heart of the enemy power…that we can strike him to the ground." Hitler considered himself a greater thinker than Clausewitz. History would prove him wrong.

Not only was Moscow the cradle of Bolshevism, it was the embodiment of Soviet Russia. More importantly, it was a vital armament center and was the nucleus of the Russian communication and transportation net. Stalin was determined to remain in the city until the end even as the majority of the government's offices were evacuated to Kuybyshev, 430 miles east. Most of the city's industries were also uprooted, their machinery, along with their workers, sent by train to Siberia where new plants were being built. Furthermore, in mid-1941, Moscow's defenses were in poor shape and only in October did work start on new defensive lines.

To the fury of his generals, including General Heinz Guderian of Panzer Group 2 (itself part of Bock's Army Group Center), Hitler seemed content with indecisive secondary objectives. Guderian, the

STAVKA ARCHIVES

CAPTIVE DESTINY A Soviet BT-7 tank crew is led away into captivity. Awaiting them were years of harsh imprisonment — if they first survived the callous treatment by their new German overlords near the front.

father of Germany's armored tactics, formulated his own strategy. He would drive a wedge through the Soviet blockade around Smolensk and reach Moscow. But on July 23 Hitler derailed this plan by ordering Guderian to first eliminate the Smolensk pocket, and then after this was accomplished on July 30, move south to join von Rundstedt's armies in an advance on Kiev in the Ukraine. At the same time, Bock's Panzer Group 3 (under the command of the able General Hermann Hoth) was detached and driven north to aid German troops attacking Leningrad. Guderian seethed at these orders, convinced that it was vital to get at Moscow first. He sent along a skeletal force towards Kiev while directing his main effort against the capital.

By late August, Hitler had grown wise to his scheme and in an official dispatch declared that, "The essential target to be achieved before winter is not the capture of Moscow, but the…Crimea and… Donets coal and industrial basin [in the Ukraine]." Hitler's reasoning for the directive was that he wanted to cut the Russians off from their oil supplies, weakening enemy forces around Moscow and Leningrad, now under attack by Army group North. Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, the commander in chief of the *Wehrmacht* was told to personally ensure that Guderian diverted south to the Caucusus, but Brauchitsch shared Guderian's sentiments in spirit. On top of his mind was the fact that the Russian transportation network was a shambles, ill-suited to support his armies over long-distances especially when winter or the autumn rains came. Then there was the fact that his armor had long advanced ahead of the infantry which was still slogging a hundred miles behind. Unfortunately, Brauchitsch was a weak officer hesitant to voice his reservations with Hitler. Guderian decided that the only way to push forward his argument would be to fly to Germany to have it out with Hitler. There, an irate Guderian was intercepted by Brauchitsch who forbid him to mention the question of Moscow. "The operation to the south has been ordered," Brauchitsch said. "The problem now is simply how it is to be carried out. Discussion is pointless."

Guderian however was backed his immediate superior, Field Marshal Bock and General Franz Halder, the Chief of the General Staff, but when he was announced into Hitler's presence, neither of these two officers followed him in. Guderian was alone, but he pressed his case. Strangely enough, Hitler did not interrupt him, even when Guderian pointed out the absurdity of his units in taking a 600-mile diversion to Kiev when Moscow was just 220 miles away. But when he had finished, Hitler responded.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

HOPELESS ADVANCE Scenes of fighting in Russia were almost always like these. Insane rushes by the Red Army across open Steppes towards heavily-armed Germans who almost always held their ground. One man has already fallen while a T-34 tank moves swiftly ahead. The common Russian practice of allowing the infantry to ride on the tank into battle seems to have been discarded on this occasion possibly because such tactics often resulted in high casualties.

In a calm, cold tone, he explained his reasons for the diversion, speaking of the need to secure raw materials and the agricultural basin of the Ukraine and of neutralizing the Crimean peninsula which the Russians could use as "an aircraft carrier for attacking the Romanian oil fields." By the time he had stopped speaking, Guderian had little illusion that the matter had been settled. The advance on Moscow would continue — but only after Kiev had fallen.

At any rate, Kiev only fell in mid-September, and although it was tremendously successful, yielding over 655,000 prisoners, 884 armoured vehicles and 3,718 guns, the Germans had let slip an important strategic advantage in Moscow. It is interesting to note that while Hitler called the assault on Kiev the "greatest battle in the history of the world," his chief of general staff, General Halder, a more pragmatic sort, called it, "the greatest strategic mistake of the campaign in the east."

Rundstedt of Army Group South, meantime, received fresh orders. He later recalled: "After accomplishing a first part of my objective, encirclement and destruction of the enemy forces west of the *Dnieper*, I was given my second objective. It was to advance eastwards and take Maikop oil fields and Stalingrad. We laughed aloud when we received these orders..." In fact, Stalingrad, on the sprawling Volga River would fast become a preoccupation of Hitler, as did Leningrad, which were considered by the Fuhrer as "two holy shrines of Communism," whose capture would cause Soviet "Russia to collapse."

An officer of the old school, Rundstedt detested his operations being interfered with by "that bohemian corporal" who was Hitler, but he nevertheless followed Hitler's orders and advanced. The city of Kharkov, the capital of Ukraine, fell to his panzers on October 24, as did Rostov on the Sea of Azov on 21 November. The seizure of Rostov, the so-called door to the Caucuses, was a major political coup for the German Propaganda chief, Josef Goebbels, who gleefully trumpeted the "opening of the gateway" over German radio and in the papers. Unfortunately, the city's seizure by German troops was only momentary. Five days later a ferocious Russian counter-assault drove back Rundstedt's troops. With winter coming, Rundstedt now prepared to dig for the rest of the year, and began withdrawing his

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

GERMAN HUBRIS Confident and boorish-looking German SS troops drink Schnapps and relax on the road to Rostov. Although they seem oblivious of it, a hard campaign awaits them, and after that, if captured, brutal Soviet retribution.

forward troops fifty miles to the rear where a permanent line was being established on the *Mius* River. Hitler would have none of it. "Remain where you are," came the stern message from Berlin. "Retreat no further."

Rundstedt was beside himself with rage. He wrote back, "It is madness to hold. In the first place the troops cannot do it and in the second place if they do not retreat they will be destroyed." Threatening to resign if the order was not rescinded, Rundstedt fully expected Hitler to back down. Instead, Hitler wired back: "I accept your request. Please give up your command." It was not be the last time that Hitler would put his own interests above the soldiers and the generals in the field, whose lives he held at stake.

Command of the Army Group South passed into the hands of Field Marshal Walther von Reichenau, who quietly carried out Rundstedt's withdrawal plan. Recriminations from Berlin were curiously absent. It is probable that Hitler had finally realized the soundness of setting up camp for the winter but more likely his attention was more focused on the belated German onslaught on Moscow, now raging on the capital's outskirts.

Operation "Typhoon" was the German plan for Moscow and was scheduled to jump off during the first week of October. On the other side of the line, the Russians had 800,000 men in the first of three defensive line leading up to the city. Impressive as they were in numbers, Stalin's troops were actually poor in morale, were inadequately armed and had just 770 tanks and 384 aircraft for support. Ever wary of Guderian's advance in the Ukraine, which Stalin believed to be a massive outflanking maneuver to come up behind Moscow, Stalin reinforced General Andrei Yeremenko's Bryansk Front in the south with orders to "stop that scoundrel." The legendary troubleshooter, General Georgi Zhukov, was also brought in to conduct the defense of the city in October.

Zhukov's arrival was timely. Guderian, no longer needed by Army Group South, was racing towards Moscow. His tankers took Orel, 75 miles behind Moscow's first line of defense on 3 October followed by Bryansk, 220 miles southwest of Moscow, three days later. At Orel, after an encounter with an old retired Czarist general, Guderian realized his worst fears — Russia; not even Moscow, would fall as easily as Berlin believed. "If only you had come twenty years ago, we would have welcomed you with open arms," the old General said. "Now it's too late. We were just beginning to get back on our feet and you arrive to throw us back twenty years…Now we are fighting for Russia and in that cause, we are all united." And united they were.

At Moscow, hordes of civilian volunteers had worked feverishly alongside the soldiers. They dug 60 miles of anti-tank ditches and 5,000 miles of trenches. "Our backs ached and at times we could hardly

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

CIVIL ORDER In the repressive Stalinist regimen, civilians were often made to work alongside the Red Army in the defense of the Motherland. These civilians are repairing a bombed railway line. Most were genuinely patriotic and volunteered for this sort of work.

lift our tools," wrote one worker, "…[but we toiled]…some, old and exhausted, simply laid down their tools and died."

Coupled with the spirit of the defenders, the ferocious Russian winter ("General Winter" as the Germans bitterly called it) derailed all hope of success for Bock's Army Group Center. No one had expected the campaign to last this long and the army faced a grave shortage of winter clothing. Worse still, the bulk of Bock's weapons were not winterized. The bolts of guns froze in their chambers, oil turned to paste, vehicle batteries iced over, and tank engines refused to start. On December 2, a single motorcycle reconnaissance patrol from the 62nd Panzer Engineer Battalion came within sight of the Kremlin's spires but no free German would get beyond that. On December 1, Bock was reporting that his troops were unable to break into the city. By December 5, it was all over. The assault had been called off. Guderian in a forlorn letter to his wife admitted that, "We have seriously underestimated the Russians, the extent of the country and the treachery of the climate. This is the revenge of reality." Unfortunately for the Reich, one singular person failed to grasp this message. Hitler's misunderstanding of the critical situations would continue a year later at Stalingrad.

PAVING THE WAY FOR STALINGRAD

The year 1942 began uncertainly for German soldiers on the front, although Germany stood high in the grand scale. Through the winter of 1941 and early 1942, exhausted German troops had endured both the weather and a massive Russian counterattack all along the line, stemming from the successful defense of Moscow. But by February 20, Stalin's offensive had run out of steam. With the onset of stalemate, both sides counted their losses. The Germans had taken a particular beating. An OKH (*Oberkommando des Heers*)[1] report of 30 March revealed that of the 162 German divisions in Russia, only eight were fit for action and that three were capable of operations, provided they were given time to rest; 47 others were capable of limited offensive action, 73 were only fit for defense, and 29 good only for limited defense. Two divisions were completely unfit for battle and had to be withdrawn from the field. The sixteen Panzer divisions in the theatre could bring to bear just 140 tanks between them. The *Wehrmacht* (German Land Army) and the SS had lost nearly 397,000 men killed in action and 50,000

1 OKH: High Command of the (German) Army.

men had gone missing since the start of "Barbarossa." The situation, in Halder's words, was "disastrous." Although Germany still had 2.8 million soldiers in the country, the Russians had even greater. Although their winter offensive had left the Red Army in bad shape, the losses were being replaced by the arrival of freshly-trained divisions from the east. As an indication of the seemingly inexhaustible reserves available to the Russians, in the battle of Moscow alone, Stalin had ushered in nearly thirty fresh divisions from Siberia.

In the south, 640,000 Russians had massed with 1,200 tanks, many of them dangerous T-34s which were more than a match for the German Panzer Mark III and Mark IVD. These troops, under Marshal Symon Timeshenko's South-West Front (comparable to a German Army Group), had a singular goal: recapture Kharkov. Unfortunately, the Russian offensive, which had started on 18 January, was cut short by poor tactics and astonishing German resistance. By May 17, Timoshenko's armies had been crushed, losing 70,000 men killed and over 200,000 captured. The Germans had lost just 20,000 men, and this success paved the way for an offensive deep into the Caucuses and east, towards Stalingrad.

On June 28, the waiting ended. That summer's day had been unusually heavily with dark clouds hovering ominously overhead. Loud thunderclaps broke out as if announcing the onslaught of rain, accompanied by distant flickers of lightning-like flashes. But instead of rain, a barrage of artillery shells fell upon the Russians. Before the Russians could gather their wits, a large wave of German infantry and armor surged through the lines. One entire Russian army (the Fortieth) was completely overrun by General Hermann Hoth's Third Panzer Army near Kursk. Ahead lay the industrialized city of Voronezh, controlling the river traffic on the River *Don*, and dominating the road and rail network into central and southern Russia.

It was the start of Operation "Blau" (Blue), an all-out drive for the Caucasus — launched under Hitler's direct order despite warnings by Halder that the depleted army should be rested for operations in 1943. Hitler had misjudged the situation, but not entirely. He had been intelligent enough to reinforce Army Group South (now under the command of von Bock) with almost half of Germany's troop strength in Russia, including nine of nineteen Panzer divisions, four of ten motorized divisions and 93 of 189 Infantry divisions. He also split Army Group South into two task forces, Army Group B, under General Maximilian von Weichs, and Army Group A, under Field Marshal Wilhelm List. While List's Army Group advanced in the south, Weich's forces were to hold the northern flank against possible Russian counterattacks.

In Directive No. 41, one of the most important documents of the Eastern Front Campaign, Hitler outlined the plan for his generals. In Section C of the directive, titled *The Main Operation on the Eastern Front*, he stated:

> The purpose is …to occupy the Caucasus front by decisively attacking and destroying Russian forces stationed in the Voronezh area to the south, west, or north of the *Don*. Because of the manner in which the available formations must be brought up, this operation can be carried out in a series of consecutive, but coordinated and complementary, attacks. Therefore these attacks must be so synchronized from north to south that each individual offensive is carried out by the largest possible concentration of army, and particularly of air, forces which can be assured at the decisive points.
>
> The general operation will begin with an overall attack and, if possible, a breakthrough from the area south of Orel in the direction of Voronezh. Of the two armored and motorized formations forming the pincers, the northern will be in greater strength than the southern. The object of this breakthrough is the capture of Voronezh itself. While…infantry divisions will immediately establish a strong defensive front between the Orel area…and Voronezh, the armored and motorized formations are to continue the attack south from Voronezh, with their

left flank on the River Don, in support of a second breakthrough to take place towards the east, from the general area of Kharkov.

The third attack in the course of these operations will be so conducted that formations thrusting down the *Don* can link up in the Stalingrad area with forces advancing from the Taganrog Artelnovsk area between the lower waters of the *Don* and Voroshilovgrad across the *Donets* to the east. These forces should finally establish contact with the armored forces advancing on Stalingrad. Every effort…[should] be made to reach Stalingrad, or at least to bring the city under fire from heavy artillery so that it may no longer be of any use as an industrial or communications center.

Once the three blows had succeeded, the units in the Stalingrad area would protect the final drive into the Caucasus. It was a grand scheme. Even the pragmatic Halder was impressed. He later wrote

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

BRUTAL MEASURES Two SS men from the Ukraine gaze upon dead women and children deliberately killed at Warsaw. The brutal German occupation sparked the ardent resistance movement in occupied Europe.

of seeing a vision of German tanks rolling through the Steppes of the Ukraine and linking up General Erwin Rommel's *Afrika Korps* in the Middle East. But German prejudice was doomed to thwart German ambitions.[2]

Operation "Barbarossa" was essentially a German plan for *Vernichtungskrieg*, a so-called war of destruction. The primary enemy was not only the communist regime or the Red Army but the entire population which was regarded as a sub-human Slavic race. The Russian peoples were to be turned into a subservient group, their numbers reduced by extermination and birth control. Most of the German troops in Russia were ordered to live off the land and plunder local resources, with industrial matter shipped back to Germany. Once the war had been won, Russia would serve as a *lebensraum* (living space) for a new generation of German settlers. In a speech on 30 March 1941, Hitler had made clear his ambitions for the country: "The war against Russia will be such that it cannot be conducted in a knightly fashion; the struggle is one of ideologies and racial differences and will have to be conducted with unprecedented, unmerciful and unrelenting harshness."

As a consequence, captured Soviet troops could expect little mercy. Commissars were to be shot on sight. Special energy was to be expended in killing "Bolshevik agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs [and] Jews," with a warning that the "Asiatic soldiers of the Red Army in particular are inscrutable, unpredictable, insidious and unfeeling."[3] With everything to lose, Russian resistance began to stiffen.

But initially "Blau" was overwhelmingly successful and doubts of Hitler's strategic prowess seemed settled. But Stalin, after sorting through initial fears that Moscow might be the target, acted

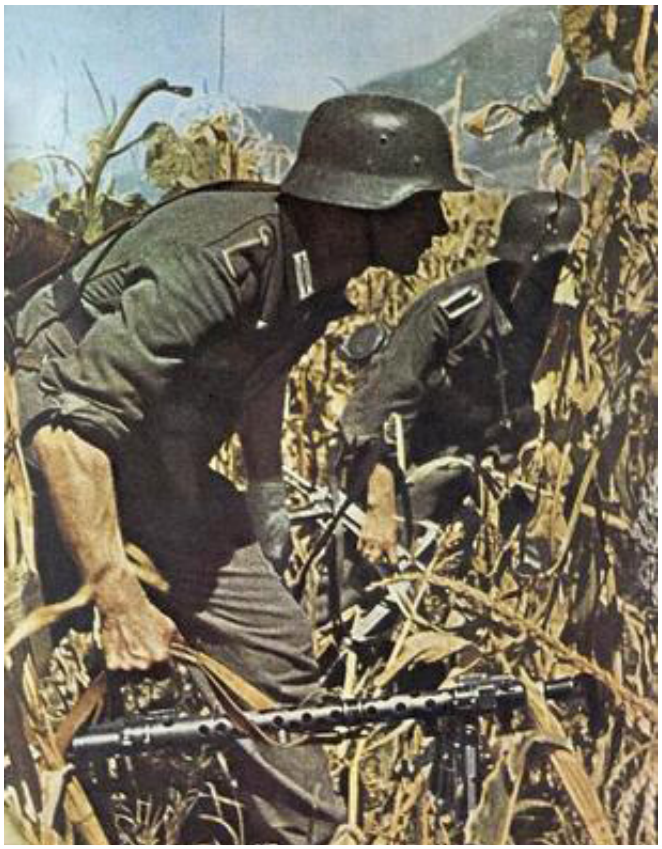
2 The historian, Robert Service, states that: "If it had not been for Hitler's fanatical racism, the USSR would not have won the struggle on the Eastern Front. Stalin's repressiveness towards his own citizens would have cost him the war against Nazi Germany, and the post-war history of the Soviet Union and the world would have been fundamentally different." (See *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia*, Penguin: London, p.290)

3 *Einsatzgruppen* (German SS special extermination groups) were ordered to weed out so-called "intolerable elements" among Soviet POWs. This meant killing all captured Jews along with Soviet party and state functionaries, and intellectuals – an estimated 140,000 in all between 1941 and 1945. Perhaps the most infamous instance of this program of mass murder was the "experimental" gassing of 600 Soviet POWs at Auschwitz in September 1941.

swiftly. He instructed Timoshenko to pull back to defensive positions along the Don River to escape encirclement. Without a doubt this belated order saved the entire southern front from annihilation. The Germans began to discover that their pincers were netting few Russians. In one notable case, a pocket created south of Kursk by the German Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies, was nearly devoid of enemy troops.

At Voronzeh, the German caught a lucky break when a forward patrol captured a bridge before Russian engineers could blow it up. To avoid being trapped, Timoshenko mounted a fighting retreat back towards the River Volga and Stalingrad. Still, since the start of "Blau," 130,000 Red Army troops had fallen into enemy hands.

The emphasis now fell on Stalingrad. Initially, no one foresaw the importance that the battle for the city represented. The city occupied a place on the bend of the Volga where the river curved inwards to within fifty miles of the most eastern bend of the Don River. By securing the river, the critical flow of Russian oil being transported up the Volga to central and northern Russia would be halted, while the capture of the city itself could yield supplies as it was an industrial hub in the region. The U.S. General Douglas McArthur would later say that the stake in the "Stalingrad campaign was Germany's ability to wage war against the Soviet-Western alliance for another 10 years." But the Russians themselves saw little worth to Stalingrad except that it was the next major Soviet city in the path of the German advance.



U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

THROUGH THE KILLING FIELDS German troops move cautiously through wheat fields. In the background is the peak of the Caucasus Mountains. Fierce Russian resistance would blunt the German advance here.

Stalin decreed that the city was to be held at all costs, and to hold it, *Stavka* established a new Stalingrad Front on 12 July, encompassing the Sixty-Second, Sixty-Third and Sixty-Fourth Armies[4] with a total of 38 divisions (of which 20 were below strength). Timoshenko initially commanded the new formation, but as he had already proven incapable of halting the Germans, was sacked a fortnight later. Lt-General V.N. Gordov took temporary command until another senior officer could be found. From that point on, Timoshenko found his star fading. Only his close friendship with Stalin prevented him from dipping completely into obscurity, although as a *Stavka* member he lost much of his influence.

On July 28, Order No. 227 came down from Moscow, with Stalin's personal command: *Na shagu nazad!* ("Not a step back!").[5] The order became a rallying cry for the defenders and was later transformed into the slogan: "There is no land beyond the Volga." In short, it became the embodiment of the Russian defense of Stalingrad. Any officer or political commissar who retreated was to be transferred to a punishment battalion.

Hitler, unaware that Stalin had forbidden the retreat of his troops, gleefully declared in private that the "Russians are in full flight! They're finished." If these were just euphemistic expressions, Halder

4 In the WWII-era Red Army, an army was comparable to a strengthened German Corps, a division to a reinforced brigade and so on.

5 See appendix for the full text of this order.

would have been content, but Hitler went one step further. Believing the "Blau" was as good as won, he put into motion Directive 45, arguably one of the most significant orders of the war. Issued on July 23, it called for the continuation of Operation "Blau," but now encompassed the capture of Stalingrad. "In a campaign which has lasted little more than three weeks," Hitler wrote, "the broad objectives outlined by me for the southern flank of the Eastern front have been largely achieved." Five divisions from General Erich Manstein's 11th Army in the Crimea (which had recently fallen) were transferred to the Leningrad sector. As it transpired, these units would be badly needed during the drive into the Caucasus. Two elite units, the 1st SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* SS Panzer Division and the *Grossdeutschland* Motorized Infantry Division were also moved — to France, where Hitler believed an Anglo-American invasion was imminent.

Halder was appalled. In his diary he confided that "the continual underestimation of enemy possibilities takes on grotesque forms and is becoming dangerous." Stormy scenes erupted between the Chief of General Staff and the *Fuhrer* at their forward headquarters at Vinnitsa in the Ukraine. Halder pressed for an immediate assault on Stalingrad but nobody cowed the *Fuhrer*. The Caucasus drive would continue to receive top priority but as parting gesture to Halder, Hitler ordered large-scale bombing raids on Stalingrad to disrupt the build-up. At the same time, he also made a mental note to fire Halder at the next agreeable opportunity.

Hitler also extended the scope of "Blau," which were initially the Maikop oil fields to entire oil-producing region of the Caucasus — extending from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. To the generals in the field this was clearly more than what their truncated units could muster. Just when things appeared unable to worsen, Hitler had compounded bad judgment with an enormous blunder.

The German Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies raced towards Stalingrad, unaware that the city had become a haven for retreating Red Army units. If allowed to run their course, Stalingrad might have well fallen into their hands that July. Instead, Hitler detached the Fourth Army and sent it south to aid General Ewald von Kleist's First Panzer Army in the crossing of the Don River. Left alone, the Sixth Army proved too weak to take Stalingrad — barely able to hold its own at times. Again, Clausewitz had something to say on the matter: "The condition in which an attacking force may find itself on attaining its objectives maybe such that even a victory may compel a withdrawal, because the attacker may not have enough offensive power left to enable the troops to exploit their victory or because he is unable to replace casualties." At one stage, the XIV Panzer Corps, under Lt-General Gustav von Wietersheim, found itself dangerously close to encirclement by the Russian First and Fourth Tank Armies. Another corps, the 51st (LI), under General Walter von Seydlitz-Kurzbach, became short on ammunition and fuel, could well have been routed if the Russians had struck back. Wietersheim, fearful that his corps would become unable to protect Paulus's northern flank proposed that all German units forging towards Stalingrad be withdrawn to an area behind the Don River, especially if no reinforcements were forthcoming. Denounced by Berlin as a pessimist, Wietersheim would eventually be relieved of command.

Kleist in the meantime was surprised by the sudden arrival of General Hoth's Fourth Army. His units had already crushed the bulk of the Russian armies in the south, especially after the capture of Rostov on 24 July. Rostov itself had been the scene of bitter street fighting. Unused to this type of combat, the Germans had been taken aback. Only the concentrated use of self-propelled guns, machine guns and grenades had cleared the neighborhoods, but the infantry had painstakingly cleared each house and building, one by one.

Beyond the Don itself were hardly any Russians, save for a few stragglers and retreating columns. As Kleist later said: "The Fourth Panzer Army could have taken Stalingrad without a fight at the end of July, but it was diverted to help me cross the Don. I did not need its aid. It only …got in way." Too late, Hitler realized this and sent Hoth racing back towards Stalingrad. By this time, Stalingraders had gained valuable time to organize their defenses.

Kleist, in the absence of serious enemy defense was racing towards Maikop oil fields, and for a time it seemed that Panzers might indeed break into Persia and Iraq. On 9 August, Maikop fell, but the Germans found that the Russians had destroyed the oil rigs. It was closest the *Reich* ever got to Russian oil. Ahead rose the snow-capped Caucasus Mountains. In this rugged area, 90,000 civilians had toiled around the clock digging trenches and building pillboxes in the key approaches through the mountains. There, on foothills of the mountains, Kleist's armored spearheads found themselves blunted by a wall of Russian determination. "Blau," for all its brilliance had ended in failure at its most crucial stage.

There would be no link up with Rommel in Persia, and no oil from the sprawling oilfields at Baku still more than 200 miles to the south. Field Marshal List of Army Group A was blamed for the debacle and sacked. Hitler now turned his full attention on Stalingrad in August. By this time, however, it was too late. The window of opportunity when the city could have fallen in late July had closed. The Germans now faced a stiff fight.

PLANNING THE ASSAULT

General Friedrich Paulus, the commander of the German Sixth Army had the honor of conducting the main attack on Stalingrad. Paulus, a World War I veteran was no dynamic leader. He was a mediocre officer at worst. A report from his commanding officer soon after World War I, when Paulus was still a Major, described him politely: "A typical staff officer of the old school. Tall, and in outward appearance painstakingly well groomed. Modest; perhaps too modest, amiable, with extremely courteous manners, and a good comrade, anxious not to offend anyone. Exceptionally talented and interested in military matters, and a meticulous desk worker, with a passion for war-games and formulating plans on the map-board or sand-table. At this he displays considerable talent, considering every decision at length and with careful deliberation before giving the appropriate orders."

BUNDESARCHIV

FLAWED COMMANDER Paulus was an urbane and respected commander, but his loyalty to the Nazi leadership would cost him and his command dearly.

An official army assessment report, however, was painfully candid: "This officer lacks decisiveness." How accurate this report would be clearly revealed twenty years later. Although he was not a diehard Nazi, Paulus was, however, an ardent supporter of Hitler, and because of his close links with people of influence, had risen swiftly through the ranks. At one time he had been a serious contender for the post of commander of the *Afrika Korps*, over the luminous star that was Erwin Rommel.

He had acquired the coveted post of Sixth Army leader in the winter of 1941 after recommendations by Field Marshal Walter Reichenau, then his immediate superior. Unfortunately, the Sixth Army's shaky battle at Kharkov in the summer that followed showed

STAVKA ARCHIVES

INEPT LEADER Anton Lopatin was the initial commander of the Sixty-Second Army, as the Germans approached in August 1942. Incompetent and jittery, he twice attempted to withdraw his army across the Volga, only to be prevented from doing so by his superiors. He was later sacked and despite his ineptitude, continued to command other armies until 1944 when he was finally demoted and given command of a rifle corps.

the mediocre skills of its unseasoned commander. Alarmed, Field Marshal Bock resorted to the drastic step of replacing Paulus' chief of staff with an experienced deputy, Major-General Arthur Schmidt. Unfortunately, Schmidt was a Nazi to the end — doubly disastrous for the men of the Sixth Army, as neither officer would dare question Hitler's orders when crisis came.

Paulus and Schmidt began to plan their assault. The attack was a twin pronged undertaking. While the Sixth Army hit the city in the north, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army would strike from the south. The twin assaults, it was hoped, would catch the defenders off guard and keep them dispersed. But Stalingrad was already showing signs of being a hard nut to crack. Holding the perimeter were three Soviet armies — the Sixty-Second, the Sixty-Fourth and the Fifty-Seventh. The Sixty-Second Army, under the egg bald Lt-General A. I. Lopatin, deployed in front, was the city's primary guardian. For this reason, Lopatin was heavily reinforced, his command comprised of nine rifle divisions, three Guards rifle divisions, six special independent brigades, a motorized Rifle Brigade, and three tank brigades — although some of these formations were still on the other side of the Volga, especially the elite Guards divisions. There was even an NKVD (*Narodniy Komissariat Vnutrennikh De* — The Ministry of Internal Affairs) Division — a formation largely composed of Red Army disciplinary cases who served as "expendables" on the battlefield. Their role was almost always suicidal, with typical missions involving men in distinctively colored uniforms drawing enemy fire away from regular army units, and "Tramplers" who were sacrificed in minefields so that their bodies would serve as a pathway for following troops.

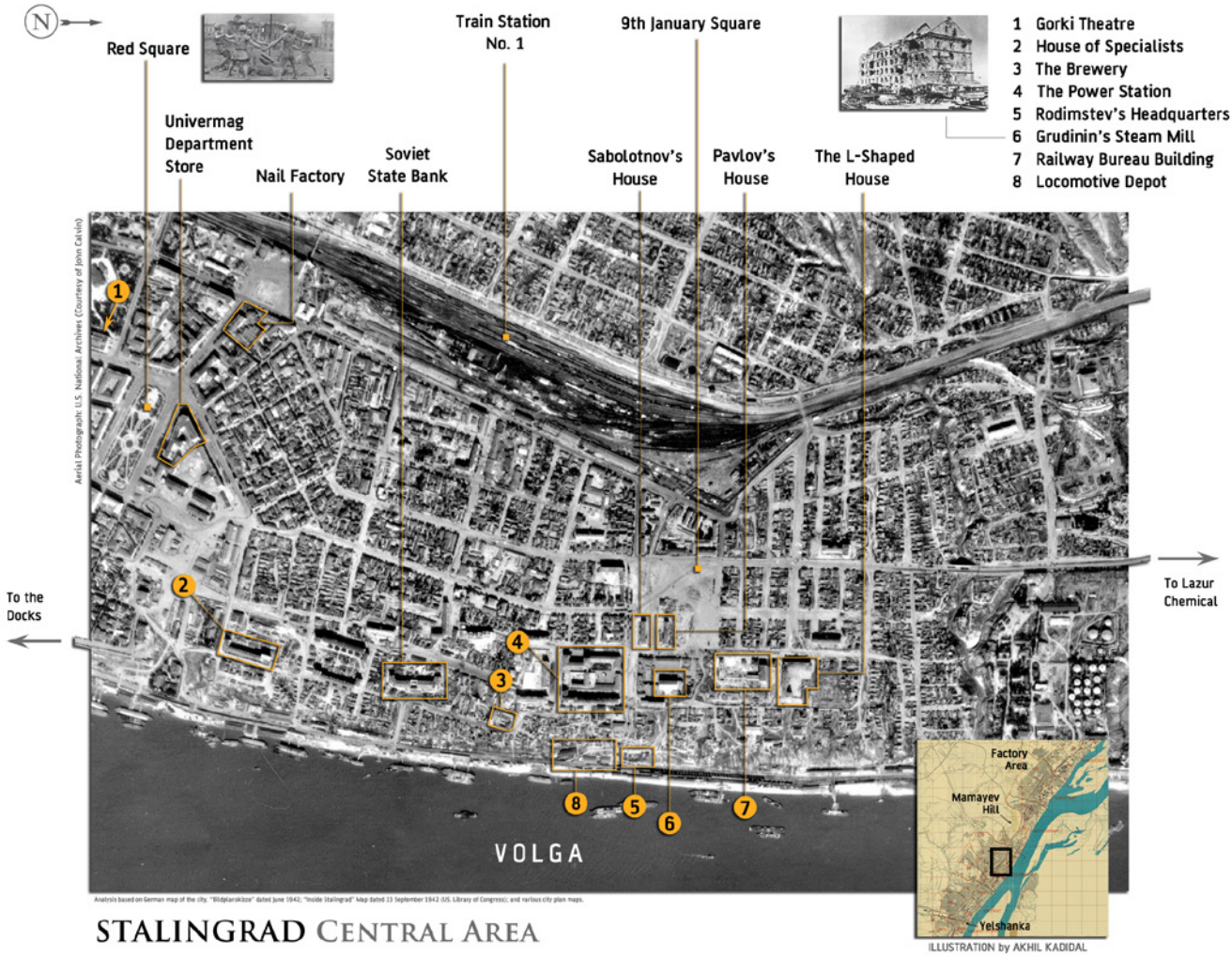
There was also the fact that the city was Stalin's special city. He had been its commander for four crucial months during the civil war of 1919-21 after the revolution. The city, then known as Tsaritsyn was renamed in his honor in 1928, and kept the name until 1961 when it was renamed Volgograd after Stalin's death. In appearance, the city, with a population of 500,000, was a curious mixture of an elegant European conurbation with overpowering industrial overtones. Stretching 20 miles long along the western banks of the Volga River, Stalingrad was composed of distinct parts. To the north was the drab, industrial basin dominated by four major factories — the Tractor factory (by now employed in building tanks), the Barricades (*Barrikady*) Factory, manufacturing small arms, the Red October Factory Steel Plant and the Lazur Chemical Works. In effect, the city was capable of manufacturing its own weapons if besieged and the plants were a major objective for Paulus. But the Russians knew their importance too.

To south was Stalingrad proper, with its many shops, offices, homes and avenues. Most prominent was the Square of Fallen Soldiers, more famously known by its German name of "Red Square." It occupied a sprawling area in what was deemed the center of the city, resplendent with parks, fountains,

statues and flags, and surrounded by neat, white washed government buildings, stores and offices. In the course of the battle, Red Square would change hands many times; its occupation a symbolic identifier for whoever held Stalingrad. In between the two sectors to the west was the *Mamayev Kurgan* (or Mamayev Hill as it was known), a large burial mound rising 330 feet above the ground, overlooking the central district and the Lazur Chemical Works. The main docks were also near Red Square. As there was no bridge connecting Stalingrad with the east bank of the Volga, the docks constituted the primary entry point for Russian reinforcements streaming over in ferries in the early phase of the battle. Two railways stations within Stalingrad proper normally kept the city connected to the outside world — only now the lines ran into German-held territory.

Stalin was determined that the city hold on. Initially, he even forbade the evacuation of civilians. "We shall evacuate nothing," he said. "We must tell the army and the people of Stalingrad that there is nowhere left to retreat. We must defend Stalingrad." In a shrewd observation, Stalin had recognized that the Soviet forces would be better pressed to defend a live city than a deserted one. And indeed, Stalingrad would continue to function as a normal city even as it crumbled under the relentless fighting. Electricity continued to run through the lines and the factories would remain operational, ignoring parts of the floor bombed or destroyed.

But most of all, Stalin feared that the capture of the city would allow the Germans to open corridors into the Soviet hinterlands and leave Moscow vulnerable to attack from the east. Taking advantage of the no retreat order, Stalin drafted the city's civilian population to build three strong

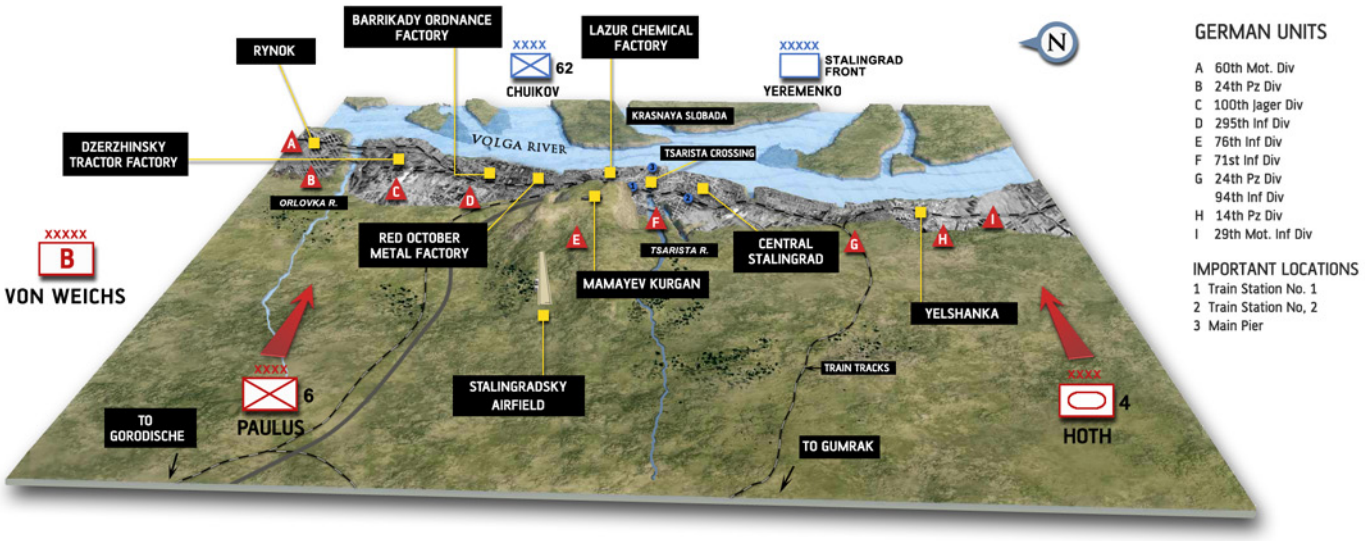


defensive lines in the shape of a wide cauldron in the area west of Stalingrad. To the east was the natural barrier of the fast-swirling Volga. He also pulled thousands of men and teenagers from non-essential work and threw them into the army. For many, a tearful parting was the last they ever saw of their families and vice-versa. Women were inducted as nurses and worked in a non-combat capacity as radio operators, translators and dispatch riders. Stalin later appointed the victorious Georgi Zhukov from Moscow as the deputy supreme commander at Stalingrad on August 27. Zhukov therefore was expected to manage the defense of the city as effectively as he had done at Moscow.

Stalingrad became a fortress. But defeatism was rife. On August 8, the Russian Sixty-Second Army fought its first major battle against the advancing Sixth Army. Lopatin's command was completely routed and the Russians lost at least 57,000 soldiers captured and a thousand vehicles destroyed. Lopatin was a jittery sort, secretly convinced that Stalingrad was indefensible. Fortunately, his immediate boss, the experienced General Andrei Yeremenko, recently appointed leader of the Stalingrad Front (he took over on the 13th), was a much more composed type and did much to restore troop morale.

On the German side, Hoth's Fourth army was three corps strong with a total of nine divisions (four of them Panzer), but his divisions had been racked by losses. Paulus's Sixth Army was five corps strong and had sixteen divisions, including two motorized infantry divisions, two panzer divisions, and the Italian "Celere" Division which could boast of the 6th *Bersagleri* Regiment, the Italian Army's elite troops. It was the largest Axis army in southern Russia with an established strength of 250,000 men, 500 tanks, 7,000 heavy guns and mortars, and 25,000 draught horses. But for all its impressiveness on paper, the Sixth Army was in worse shape than the Fourth.

Paulus had taken a beating ever since the start of "Blau" and twice upon approaching the Don, his advance had petered out because of fuel shortages. The first occasion was at the end of July, when his lead units had approached the Russian village of Kalach, just 3.7 miles from the Don. Since Army Group A's advance into the Caucasus had top call on all fuel reserves, it was not until August 7 that Paulus's tanks began moving again. Incidentally, Kalach was on the western-most proximity of the Russian Sixty-Second Army's lines. Seven days later on August 14, Paulus at last received the long-awaited order from Hitler to move on Stalingrad. It took the Germans two days to actually reach Kalach and its key bridge spanning the Don. Second Lieutenant Kleinjohann with units of 3rd Company, 16th Engineers Battalion, conducted a daring coup, whereby his men rushed the bridge. The defenders, from the Soviet 20th Motorized Brigade, opened fire and set off a conflagration at the center of the span to destroy it, but Kleinjohann and his managed to stifle the flames. Still, the damage was substantial, but it could have



THE STALINGRAD BATTLEGROUND, 1942

ILLUSTRATION by AKHIL KADIDAL

SUDDEUTSCHER VERLAG BILDERDIENST

DRANG NACH OSTEN (Drive to the East) Panzer IIIs from Panzergruppe Kleist advance. The Mark III, although a mainstay of the German Panzer forces in 1941-42, was no match for the Russian T-34 and KV-1. The above machine has attempted to improve its survivability by adding armor plates as is betrayed by the bolts on the front hull.

been worse, and as matters stood an intact bridge was captured between the villages of Kamenski and Verkhne-Kurmojarskaja in the north a day later.

The advance continued, but the Sixth Army had barely advanced five miles when it ran out of fuel on the 18th. Berlin promised fuel, and it came, but not in the quantity to support a combined drive. Accompanying the fuel was a declaration from Hitler to begin the attack on Stalingrad by August 25 at the latest. Hard-hit by the fuel shortage, Paulus planned a moderate assault against Stalingrad's industrial basin in the North. He would throw in just one corps against the city, with the rest of his units following only when more fuel arrived. Lt-General Wietersheim's XIV Panzer Corps with its three divisions (the 16th Panzer; 3rd and the 60th Motorized infantry Divisions), was given the difficult task of advancing ahead, clearing the way for the main force. Once this had been accomplished, Paulus planned to release LI Crops with three divisions to capture central Stalingrad, and XI Corps with the 100th Jäger Division to aid Weitersheim in mopping up in the north. To the south in the meantime, Hoth's Fourth Army would punch through the combined defenses of the Sixty-Fourth and Fifty-Seventh Armies to take southern Stalingrad.

Weitersheim had his work cut out for him. Ahead lay a tortuous 30 mile journey to Stalingrad through enemy infested steppes and fields and through temperatures reaching 104° F (40°C). In an address issued on the 19th to his top commander, Paulus detailed their mission. What Weitersheim read was far from comforting:

> The Russian enemy will defend the Stalingrad area stubbornly. He holds the high ground … west of Stalingrad and has built defensive positions there in great depth. It must be assumed

that he has assembled forces, including armoured brigades, ready to counter-attack, both in the Stalingrad area and in the area north of the isthmus between the Don and the Volga.

Therefore in the advance across the Don towards Stalingrad the army must reckon with enemy resistance in front and with heavy counter-attacks against the northern flank of our advance.

As soon as XIV Panzer Corps shall have advanced eastwards from the bridgehead [at Verctyachi], LI (51st) Army Corps will become responsible for …occupying the high ground west of Stalingrad, and will temporarily establish southwesterly contact with the advancing mobile forces of the neighboring [Fourth] army to our right. The Corps will then capture and occupy the central and southern parts of Stalingrad. XIV Panzer Corps…will push forward, advancing eastwards…to the Volga north of Stalingrad. It will prevent all river traffic and cut all rail communications immediately to the north of the city. Elements of the Corps will attack Stalingrad from the northwest and occupy the northern parts of the city. Tanks will not be used for this purpose. In the north a covering line will be established running along the high ground southwest of Yersovka and south of the Gratshevaia stream.

At last the battle for Stalingrad had started to take shape within the misty dreams of headquarters.

STALINGRAD UNDER SIEGE

August 23 marked the official start of the battle. Two days before, Seydlitz-Kurzbach's LI Corps had established a two-span bridgehead near the villages of Loetsjinskoi and Vertyachi, from where the whole of the Sixth Army would launch against Stalingrad. Weitersheim's XIV Corps had already smashed through the Russian outermost perimeter and was heading for the city. Slowly, the Russians began to awake to the threat. On the 22nd, the Russian Air Force made a rare appearance, dropping bombs on the newly erected bridgeheads. The attempt was a complete failure; not one of the bridges was knocked down. In desperation, the Russians brought up artillery, but German engineers had been thorough in their work. The bridges withstood the barrage, and by nightfall, the 14th Panzer Division, brought in from army reserve as a breakthrough force, was poised to cross over at Loetsjinskoi. That same day, Paulus received another boost of supplies and fuel needed to continue the advance. He planned to unfurl his units against Stalingrad, at 4.30 a.m. the next morning.

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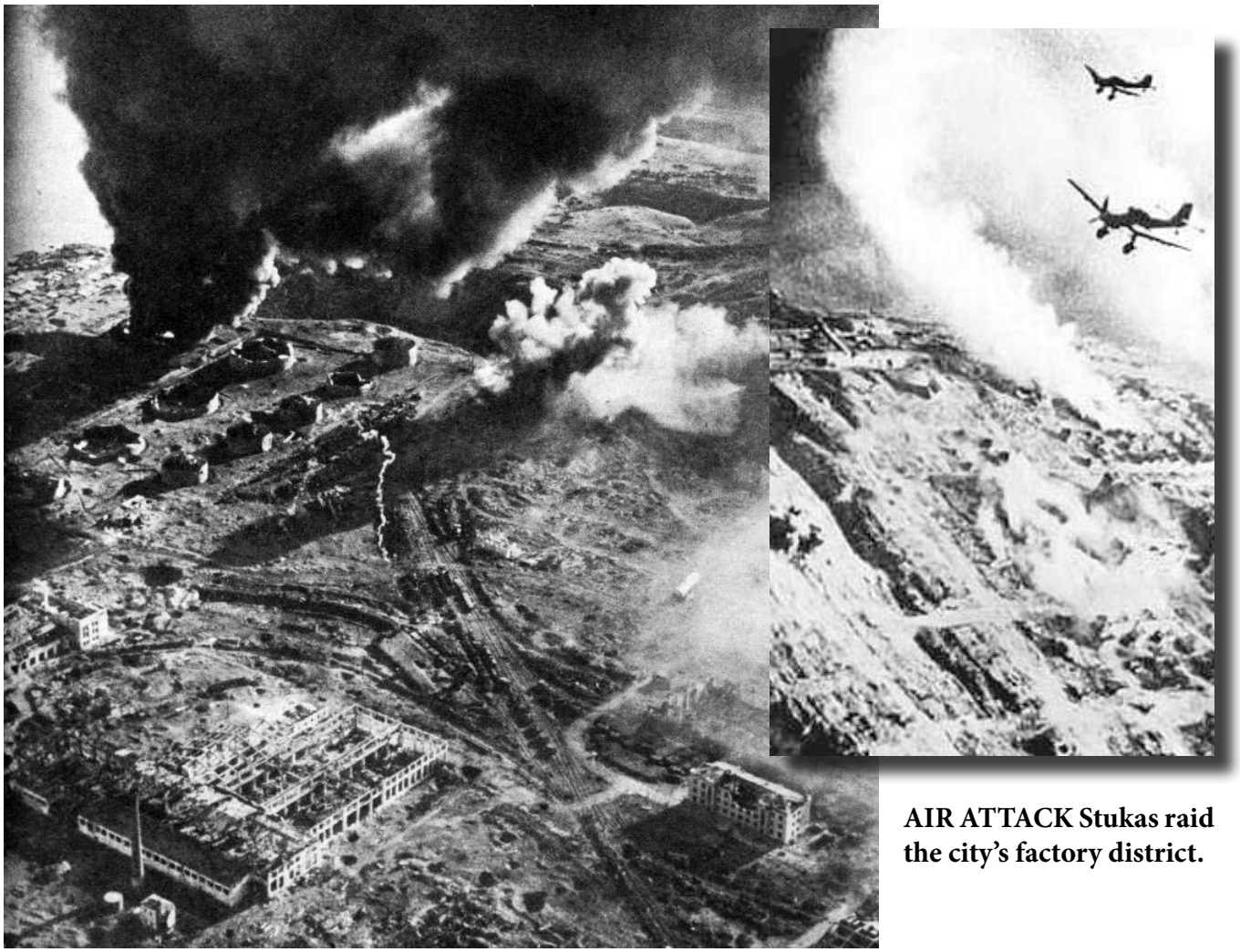
TWO STARS, ONE BATTLE Paulus watches the battle with one of his corps commander,s Lt-General Seydlitz-Kurzbach (left). At the later stages of the campaign, both men would be given quasi-equal responsibility over the affairs of the Sixth Army. Both would also become anti-fascists.



BOTH PHOTOS: BUNDESARCHIV

AIR ATTACK Stukas raid the city's factory district.

At the appointed hour, the attack began. Weitersheim's 16th Panzer Division carried out blocking maneuvers in the front of the Sixty-Second Army, to prevent the Russians from counterattacking Paulus' s infantry. By dusk, Weitersheim had successfully blocked Russian counter-assaults and by nightfall, his tanks emerged in front of the low cliffs above the Volga. Just south of them was the enemy-held suburb of Rynok. Dismounting from their tanks for the night; the Panzer crews watched in awe as the *Luftwaffe* took over, setting Stalingrad ablaze. Six hundred attack aircraft from *Fliegerkorps VIII*, mainly Ju87 Stuka dive-bombers, were active over the city that night, bombing indiscriminately over a wide area. Some specially-designated targets were knocked out, including the water works and the telephone exchange. The power station was also hit and would eventually be destroyed. Thousand of terror-stricken civilians were forced out into the streets, and fled to the docks with the hope of catching a ferry out. In the open they were easy prey for the bombs; at least 40,000 lost their lives or were wounded by the night's end. So intense was the bombing that thirty miles away, people were reportedly able to read the newspaper by the light thrown up by the fires.

To any German who witnessed the attack it seemed like nothing could have survived the assault. Yet, on the morning of August 24, when the 16th Panzer rolled against Spartanovka, in the industrialized basin, it came against stiff resistance from Russians still holding out in the rubble. To General Lopatin, the Germans seemed to have an incredible array of men, tanks and airplanes, backed up by an impressive logistical line. In reality, the Germans were still precariously low on supplies and Weiterheim's tanks, encountering numerous low hills and ravines, were nearly stalled.

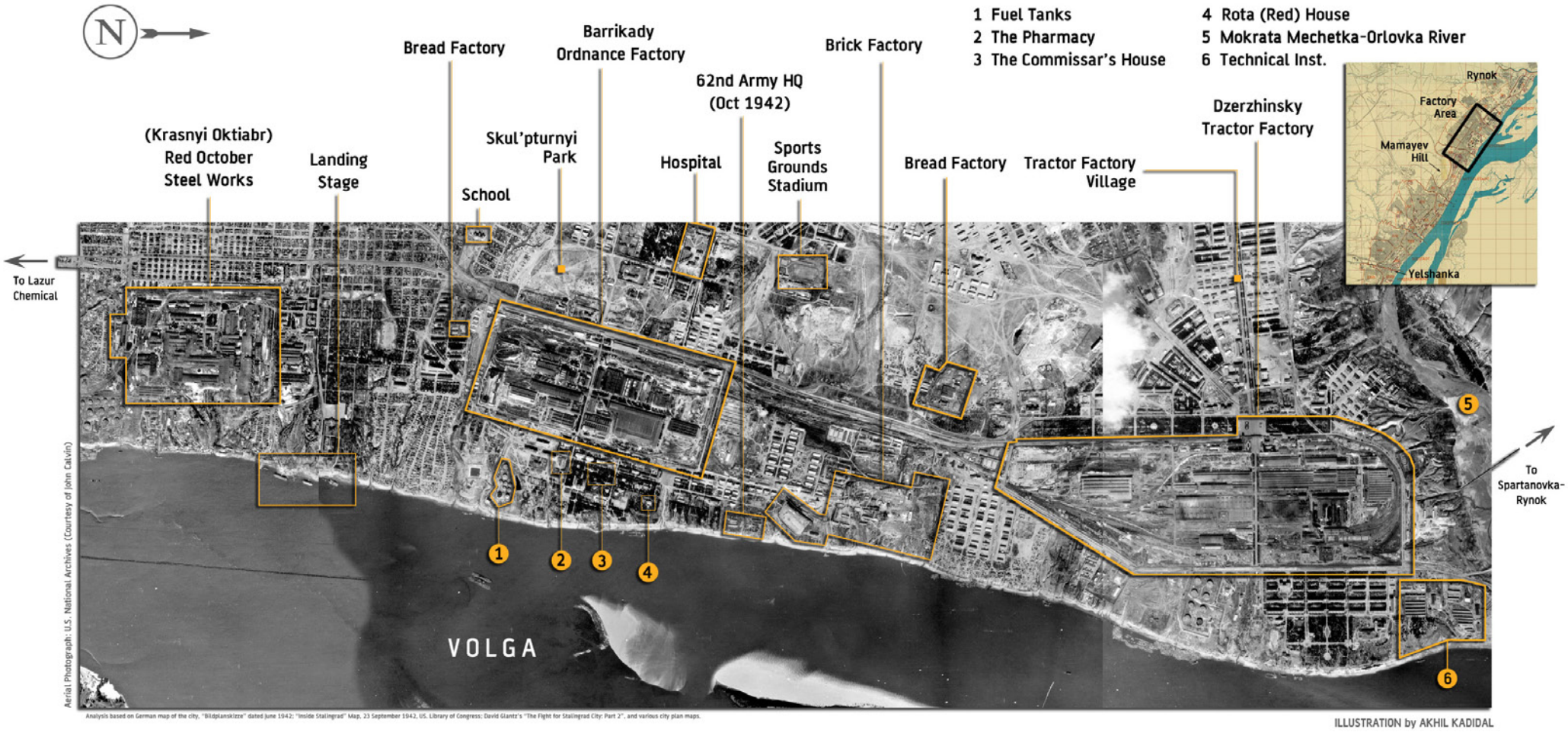


ILLUSTRATION by AKHIL KADIDAL

STALINGRAD FACTORY DISTRICT

SUDDEUTSCHER VERLAG BILDERDIENST

LOST ARMOR A Russian KV-1 heavy tank from the 133rd Tank Brigade burns at the village of Spartanovka on August 24, after a duel with tanks from the 16th Panzer Division. Here, the Russians counterattacked and punched through the German lines, getting as far as the headquarters of the 64th Panzergrenadier Regiment before being stopped. On 11 September, the brigade had a top strength of 14 KV-1s.

On August 28, the 16th Panzer ran out of fuel and was about to expend the last of its ammunition when unexpected help arrived in the form of German trucks delivering captured American and British military supplies destined for the Russians. It is unknown what the Germans could have done with Allied ammunition which was of a different caliber, but with the trucks also came the 3rd Motorized Infantry Division. Weitersheim now had all three of his divisions on the front, but a dangerous gap of eighteen miles separated him from LI Corps. Lopatin could have attacked along this salient and driven the Germans back, but he did not. His troops had taken heavy casualties and supplies were running thin. To his relief, Zhukov arrived personally at the Stalingrad Front headquarters on the 29th bringing ammunition and replacements. But the Sixty-Second Army had barely refitted when a new threat arose in the south.

Hoth's XLVIII Panzer Corps, initially contained at the town of Abganerovo (38 miles southwest of Stalingrad), broke out of its positions on the 29th and swooped northwards at astonishing speed. General M.S. Shumilov's Sixty-Fourth Army was completely outflanked, and desperately pulled back to avoid being trapped. By the end of the day, Hoth had advanced 21 miles and linked up with the Sixth Army on the River *Chervienaia* on the 30th. Stalingrad was in danger of being surrounded. Paulus quickly transferred the 24th Panzer Division from the rear to Karpovka, on the railroad to Stalingrad in anticipation of a breakout towards the city, and by the last day of August, the Russians had been squeezed into a pocket just 18 miles deep and 34 miles wide. If Paulus had sent in LI Corps as he had planned, the Russians might well have been routed. But he was too cautious. Concerned about Russian jabs to his flanks, he held back for nearly two weeks.

The respite was Godsend for Zhukov. On September 3, following a request by Stalin to counterattack, Zhukov launched the First Guards Army against Weitersheim's XIV Corps. The attack was a disappointment. The Guards failed to assemble properly and attacked the German in piecemeal fashion. The failure convinced Lopatin that the battle had been lost and he began an unauthorized withdrawal of his army. Yeremenko, in his headquarters on the other side of the Volga, was horrified. Lopatin was summarily sacked, making way for Lt-General Vasily Ivanovich Chuikov.

Chuikov, then a little known Red Army officer recently returned from China, would assume command on September 12. He was the perfect man for the job. Ruggedly handsome and rough, of peasant stock, the 42 year-old former mechanic would use the harshness of his heritage to mould the Sixty-Second Army into a formidable fighting force. He had first gained the attention of Stalin during the fighting at Tsaristin (Stalingrad) in 1919. Chuikov had been only nineteen years old then, but he was already a communist party member and a keen student of military affairs. During the Second World War, he would emerged as the outstanding Russian commander at the army level, leading his force (later

renamed the 8th Guards Army) through the Ukraine and Poland in 1944-45 before being the first general to enter Berlin. It was an honor made even greater when Chuikov personally accepted the surrender of the capital on 1 May 1945.

Paulus, meantime, was under tremendous strain. He was being overwhelmed by constant reminders from Hitler to take Stalingrad at the soonest, "at least by September 15th." In frustration, Paulus confided to his chief of staff, Maj-General Schmidt, that the "Sixth army is not strong enough to take the city" — an important remark considering that he had 100,000 men. The attack was postponed until he could personally meet Hitler to request reinforcements. But if things were difficult in the German camp, it was havoc on the Russian side.

By now Stalingrad was in chaos. Civilians crowded the ferries in order to escape the burning city. As the slow moving ferries crossed the Volga, they came under constant attack by German fighters and Stukas. Hundreds perished in the swirling waters of the river. Soldiers too might have broken from the line if it were not for Political Commissars, under orders from Moscow to shoot deserters. But the Commissars were themselves part of the problem, often interfering with army orders and divisional operations (command of a major Red army unit was shared between an army commander and a Commissar). On September 9, Stalin decreed that Commissars would no longer have control over Red Army forces in the field and would instead concentrate on raising morale. It was a step in the right direction. Already, to raise the flagging spirits of citizen and soldier alike, Yeremenko had issued Order No .4 on September 1.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

READY DISCIPLINARIAN Vasili Chuikov was the perfect man to command the Sixty-Second Army. Initially, after taking command, he allowed subordinates to conduct the battle, but was quick to to identify stalwarts and ineffectual leaders who were promptly sacked. Although a popular leader, he was not above resorting to harsh methods, including executions to maintain discipline.

Comrade fighters, commanders and political workers, heroic defenders of Stalingrad! The bitter fighting for the city of Stalingrad has been raging for months. The Germans have lost hundreds of tanks and planes. Hitler's brutalized hordes are advancing towards Stalingrad and the Volga over mountains of dead bodies of their own men and officers.

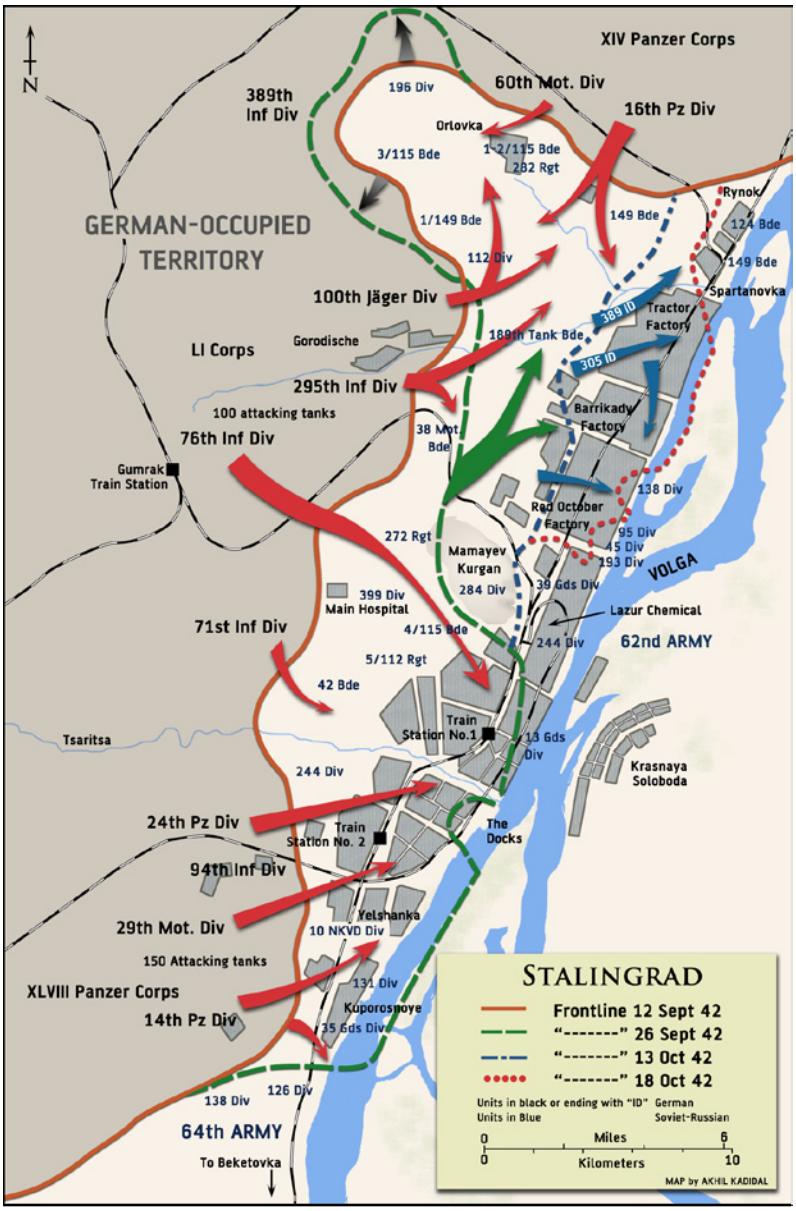
Our Bolshevik Party, our nation, our great country, have given us the task not to let the enemy reach the Volga, to defend the city of Stalingrad. The defence of Stalingrad is of decisive importance to the whole Soviet front. Without sparing our strength and with scorn for death, we shall defy the Germans the way to the Volga and not give up Stalingrad. Each one of us must bear in mind that the capture of Stalingrad by the Germans and their advance to the Volga will give our enemies new strength and weaken our own forces.

Not one step back!

The War Council expects unlimited courage, tenacity and heroism in the fight with the

onrushing enemy from all the fighters, commanders and political workers, from all the defenders of Stalingrad. The enemy must and will be smashed on the approaches to Stalingrad. Forward against the enemy! Up into the unremitting battle, comrades, for Stalingrad, for our great country!

Death to the German invader!



But there was still much work to be done. Most worrying of all for Stalin was the relentless progress of Hoth's Panzers. On September 10, the right wing of Hoth's pincer reached the Volga. The last link in the wire had been made. On the following day, Paulus made his fateful journey to meet the *Fuhrer* at his headquarters in Vinnitsa. Far from receiving the promise of reinforcements, Paulus attracted Hitler's ire upon learning that the Sixth Army was still bivouacked in its positions around the city. Paulus returned to his headquarters with orders to launch the attack on the next morning, September 13. As this was going on, on the other side of the Volga, Yeremenko and his political counterpart, Chief Commissar Lt-General Nikita Khrushchev (the future Soviet leader) received Lt-General Vasili Chuikov who had come to take up his new command. Chuikov told Yeremenko: "We shall hold the city or die here." He was good as his word.

In Moscow with Stalin, Georgi Zhukov detailed his long term plans for Stalingrad. Like masterful chess players, the Russians were already two steps ahead of their opponents. Zhukov had coldly evolved a strategy in which Stalingrad became the bait of a mighty trap. To keep the Germans hemmed in, the city would be reinforced — but only just enough to keep the defenders fighting (Zhukov needed every man he could get to strengthen his "trapping armies"). Once these armies were ready on the northern and southeastern flanks of the frontline, Zhukov would spring his trap. In his own words: "As long as an active defense can be maintained in the city, large reserve forces can be massed to…mount a counteroffensive against the German flank, cutting the umbilical cord of supplies and reinforcements; encircling the Germans."

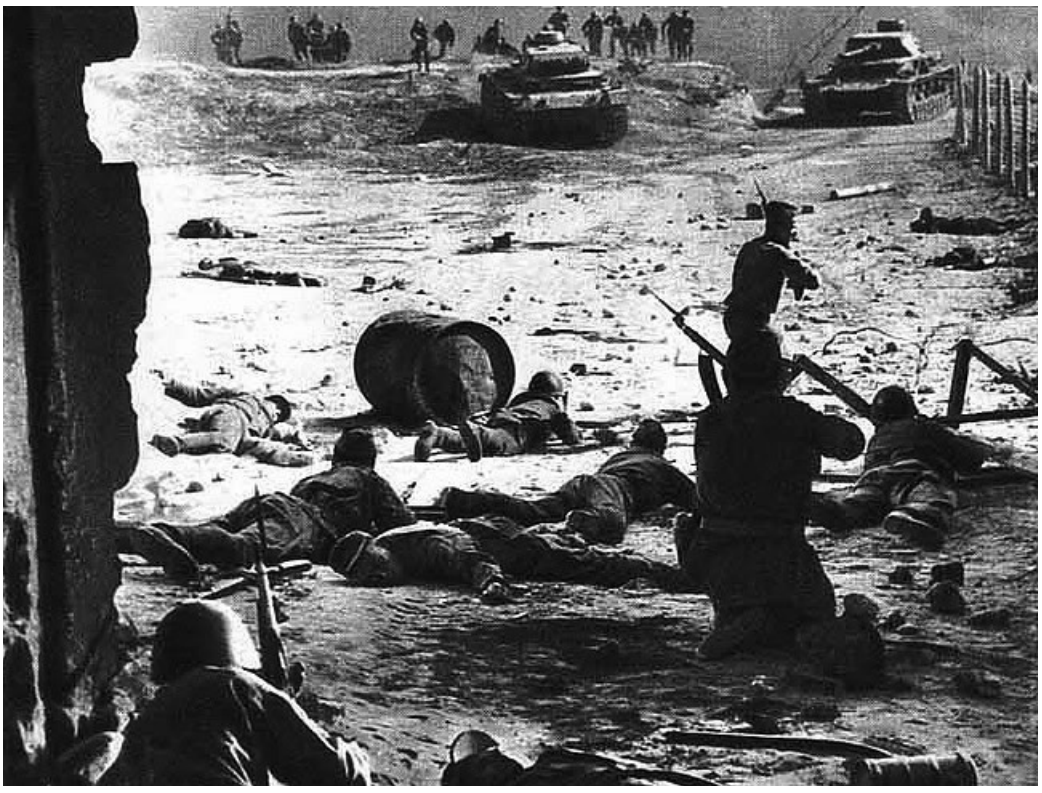
Unaware of what had been planned for them, the Sixth Army rolled towards the city. On September 14, Paulus's infantry, moving in massive file, five miles wide, railroaded their way through Gumrak on the outskirts of Stalingrad. This small town, with its important airfield and rail center fell

quickly and the Germans marched on Stalingrad's central sector. The predominant defensive feature in this area was Mamayev Kurgan (Hill 102 on German maps), where Chuikov's first headquarters was situated. Watching the approaching Germans with field glasses, Chuikov's heart filled with dread. He had known the Germans before, as friends, while serving as a corps commander during the Russo-Germanic invasion of Poland in 1939. This time they were the enemy.

In the lead were three of Paulus' infantry divisions and four of Hoth's Panzer divisions — 200,000 men, 2,200 guns and mortars and almost 500 tanks. Against this armada, Chuikov's motley army had just 50,000 men, in poor morale, and with almost no tanks. His three tank brigades (each with an established strength of 65-80 tanks) had been wracked by combat losses; one brigade had been reduced to a single vehicle.

Advancing behind their artillery and Stukas, the Germans pushed forward. In the north, the 100th Jäger Division held a salient south of Orlovka. Fighting was heavy everywhere. In the south, Hoth's 24th Panzer Division bludgeoned its way towards Red Square and Train Station No. 1, while the 94th Infantry and 29th Motorized Division advanced on Train Station No. 2. Further down, a second echelon of the 24th Panzer Division moved towards the mining suburb of Yelshanka.

The vicious street fighting that erupted proved far worse than anything the Germans had encountered before. Compared to the fighting here, the battle for Rostov had almost been a walk in the park. Mamayev Kurgan in particular, became the setting for bitter fighting between German and Russian infantry, and changed hands constantly. Bitter fighting eventually forced the Russians back until they hung precariously to a strip of land by the river, pushed to the brink of defeat by the appearance of the Romanian Third Army on the 15th. Only the prompt arrival of the 10,000-strong 13th Guards Division by ferry that morning saved the city from collapse. Guards divisions were regular Red Army units that had earned their "Guards" titles in combat and being highly-experienced units, were often better equipped and contained a larger compliment of men. As a further incentive, Guardsmen also enjoyed higher rates of pay. By the end of the day, the division had suffered 30 percent casualties. By day two, the unit had been battered as a fighting force and was forced back from Train Station No. 1 by the 24th Panzer Division. Still, in an incredible feat of arms, tinged by desperation, the Guardsmen, led by their redoubtable commander,



STAVKA ARCHIVES

COMBAT FORCES
In this astonishing photograph, Russian infantry oppose an incoming German pincer of two PzIIIs accompanied by Panzergrenadiers.

Major-General Aleksander Rodimstev, re-took Mamayev Hill on the 16th, effectively blocking further thrusts into central Stalingrad. The cost was heavy. By the time the battle ended, only 320 Guardsmen were still alive. Chuikov was grateful. He would later write in his memories: "had it not been for Rodimtsev's division the city would have fallen into enemy hands approximately in the middle of September."

On the 18th, the fighting switched to the Grain elevator — a squat, ugly building with a storage pillar, located opposite Train Station No. 2. The fighting here exemplified the dogged courage of the Russians. The Germans held the bottom floors while the Guardsmen held the top, and the battle was waged in the only place where it could be: the stairs. Flamethrowers, sub-machine guns and grenades became the weapons of choice, with each side pouring a hail of lead and fire up and down the stairs in an effort to drive the other out. One of the Russians later recalled: "We sensed and heard the enemy soldiers' breathing and footsteps, but we could not see them in the smoke. We fired at smoke."

Zhukov, in an effort to relieve the pressure on the Stalingraders, launched another attack in the north on Paulus' VIII Corps. His intelligence officer had pointed out what appeared to be a weakness in the German lines and Zhukov threw in the weight of his First Guards Army. Unfortunately what the Russians had expected to be a chink in the enemy's lines was only a forward position and soon the attacking Russians found themselves deep in enemy lines, pressed in by strong German forces on all sides. By the 19th, the counter-attack had petered out. Thousands of Red Army soldiers had lost their lives, but they had succeeded in easing some of the pressure off Chuikov.

COURTESY OF ZA RODINU/FLICKR

GUARDS LEGEND Aleksander Rodimstev outside his command bunker in the city. An intellectual and a veteran of the Spanish Civil War where he first won the coveted award of "Hero of the Soviet Union," Rodimstev brilliantly conducted the operations of the 13th Guards Division at Stalingrad, winning his second "Hero of the Soviet Union" award there. After the battle, he became a corps commander.

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE FIGHTING A Guards flamethrower team assaults a German position in the ruined nest of a collapsed building. Note that the men are wearing SN-42 bullet-proof armor. Unlike the popular image of the Red Army unanimously using men as cannon fodder, great care was actually taken to protect special units and troops.

RATTENKREIG

The brutal street fighting evolved its own tactics. The Russians became unbeaten masters in this sort of fighting, using rubble and broken buildings to their advantage. They evolved the concept of killing fields, in which broken and wrecked buildings, covered by machine guns and snipers, became sites for hidden minefields through which only the Russians knew their way. Red Army soldiers also became adept in the art of silent movement and killing, using knives, cloth-covered boots to deaden noise and sharpened shovels to cleave the skulls of their enemy. Special bands of "storm squads" were formed, men unanimously armed with submachine guns and explosives, who then infiltrated the lines in small groups. The Germans, who were relative novices at this sort of urban combat, found that they had to adapt rapidly. Special *Kampfgruppen* (battlegroups) of specialists came into existence, also equipped with automatic weapons and grenades, and for a time, the Germans even brought in specially trained Police squads to match the Russians in this sort of the fighting.

On the 21st, the Grain elevator finally fell to the Germans. Using tank support and heavy weapons, German troops clawed their way to the top floors to find only 30 Guardsmen and 18 Soviet Marines alive. One Russian survivor later wrote: "...We heard the ominous sounds of tanks. From behind a neighboring building, stocky German tanks began to crawl out. This clearly was the end. We said goodbye to one another. With a dagger, I scratched on a brick wall: 'Rodimstev's guardsmen fought and died for their country here.' The tanks pushed the walls of [the grain elevator] down.

"That night five other Guardsmen and myself, all wounded, escaped. We staggered toward the Volga but ran into a patrol which fired flares. Knifing a German guard got us away unmolested. Later we encountered another patrol and I silently knifed a German. We crossed the railroad line, went through a minefield and reached the Volga. We built a raft from pieces of wood from the wreckage of a building. We went into the river… drifting for days until we were rescued."

With the collapse of resistance at the Grain elevator, Paulus believed the fighting in the city would collapse. Even Hitler in far-away Vinnitsa declared that the battle of Stalingrad was a good as finished. They were both mistaken. True, Germans troops controlled most of Southern Stalingrad, including the city center, but Chuikov's men were still in force in the north.

BUNDESARCHIV

GRIM COMBAT An officer (right) keeps watch as his sergeant extols the rest of the squad to move up. Both men are armed with the MP.40 submachine gun, as are likely the squad. The Germans quickly realized that automatic weapons and explosives were the best arms for street fighting.

On the 23rd, just as the Germans seemed poised to push on and capture the docks and the main ferry landings, the 2,000-strong 284th (Siberian) Division, led by Lt-Colonel Nikolai Batyuk, landed near the main docks to reinforce the defenders. Despite the gallantry of the Siberians, the German took the area around the docks. Chuikov's army was now split in two. His northern forces were still intact, but his southern remnants were compressed into a one-mile pocket on the other side of the docks. A greater blow for Chuikov was enemy command over the ferry landings. Replacements could now only arrive by small boats if they first survived the gauntlet of Stukas marauding over the Volga. Despite the odds stacked against river crossings, General F.N. Smekhotorov's 193rd Division landed between 27-28 September in the factory district, while General S.S. Guriev's 39th Guards Division and General L.N. Gurtiev's 308th Division arrived on 1 October to defend the Barrikady ordnance and the Red October steel factories.

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

PROLETARIAT ARCHITECTURE The utilitarian Grain elevator became a major objective for the Germans who finally captured it on September 21. In this photograph, German troops are shown taking a breather from combat, as is the crew of a PzIII.

Hitler, irate at the delay, demanded to know why the Sixth Army still had not taken the city. Paulus replied that the Sixth Army was too battle-weary. At this moment, General Halder, Hitler's Chief of Staff, decided to offer his own view of the matter saying that if Hitler had only refrained from his "Caucasus adventure" there would have been reinforcements available for Stalingrad. Hitler was furious at this insubordination. Halder had to go. On this issue, Hitler was unmovable.

Officially, Halder was removed on September 24 because he was no longer "equal to the mental demands of his positions." Privately, Hitler told him, "You and I have been suffering from nerves. Half of my nervous exhaustion is due to you. It is not worth it to go on." Halder's replacement was General Kurt Zeitzler, who was believed to be a more pliable sort. Instead, the bald, clerkish-looking Zeitzler would grow to protest Hitler's conduct of the war as Halder had done.

Also sacked was Lt-General Weitersheim after he had complained once too often of the heavy attrition suffered by his corps. His command was taken over by one of Hitler's favorite Generals, Lt-General Hans Hube, formerly of the 14th Panzer Division. By this time, Paulus had lost nearly 40,000 soldiers in the fighting and badly needed replacements. One bright mark was the hoisting of the swastika over government buildings overlooking Red Square. But German soldiers despaired of ever reaching their objectives. All day they fought to clear a block only to have the Russians infiltrate in by night, forcing them to re-take it again. As one German officer wrote: "We would spend the whole day clearing a

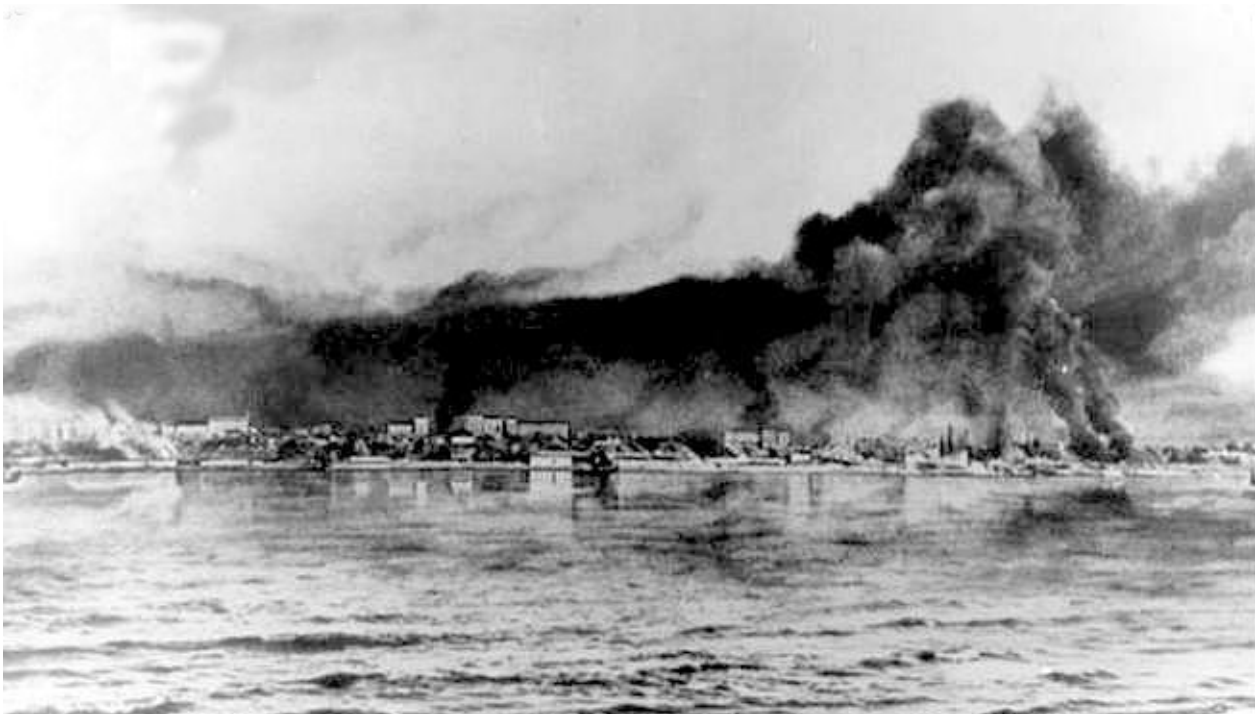
street from end to end. But at dawn the Russians would start firing from their old positions …They had knocked down walls between the garrets and the attics, and during the night would run back like rats in the rafters." The Germans soon coined a term for the fighting in the city: *Rattenkrieg* (War of the Rats)

The Luftwaffe set upon anything moving in the northern Russian zone. On the 27th, an oil reservoir was hit by German bombs, giving the Russians a much-needed respite from the Stukas when the smoke blanketed the city. But when one threat vanished, another took its place. German troops, backed by tanks, assaulted the sprawling Red October Factory on the 29th. By this time, the Russians on Mamayev Kurgan were also in danger of being ejected from their positions. Things were grim for Chuikov. Unaware of Zhukov's long-term plans, he wondered why *Stavka* did not reinforce his army with overwhelming force. By the end of September, he had lost 80,000 dead and wounded. Suffering from exhaustion, Chuikov also discovered that he was affected by a severe eczema in his hands, brought on by nerves. Paulus was in no better shape. He had developed a nervous tic around the left eye. He had expected the city to be his by now, instead the Russians held out in every hole and behind every pile of rubble. Even the presence of German troops near the ferry landings had not weakened Russian resistance.

By night, while the *Luftwaffe* slept, the Russians poured a mass of supplies and men into the city and took out the wounded and civilians using a large flotilla of ferries, tugboats, barges and steamers. Too often, when the battle reached frenzied heights, these vessels and their crews made the dangerous journey by day.

Replacements often made the journey quaking with fear. Most hardly felt the boat beneath their feet as it slowly chugged towards the embattled city. One solider vividly described his first view of city: "As you get close to Stalingrad, you begin to realize that this is no ordinary sector of the front and what you are going to see here has never been seen before, or described in any book about war. The road [to the Volga] itself is a reminder of this. The walls of the old wooden cottages are covered with inscriptions, in huge letters reaching from the eaves to the ground:

"Hold Stalingrad!



STAVKA ARCHIVES

CITY ON FIRE Stalingrad as it appeared to the troops on the other side of the Volga.

"There it was, in front of us. You could not see the town, only the fire. The houses, the streets seemed to float on a slow flame. Against the purple background of the sky you saw the skeletons of buildings, the formless mass of crumbling walls and the fiery yellow slits of doors and windows. It does not seem as if anything can be alive there. But up, out of the roaring flames, shoot green, red and white rockets; tracer bullets tear into the sky, the blue beams of German and Soviet searchlights grope about and then the bright sheaves of machine-gun bursts blaze out suddenly— there are men there …fighting."

As the days passed; the stories of courage and sacrifice in Stalingrad multiplied. The legend of the ferryman was a story that few Russians could forget. The ferryman was an old anonymous old soul who routinely made the voyage across the Volga with replacements. One night in October the ferry was caught in a Luftwaffe attack and hit by a bomb. In terror, all hands fled the sinking vessel for the gray-green waters of the Volga. A lieutenant, resplendent in his heavy army overcoat, was being pulled under the water when the ferryman came to his rescue. The old man took off his life jacket and gave it to the officer.

"Take it!" he growled.

The young lieutenant brushed him aside.

"Fool!" cried the old man. "I've lost an arm. I'm old and can't be of any use. But you can fight. Take the jacket!" Before the younger man could object, the ferryman had thrust the life jacket into his arms and pushed away into the night.

Another celebrated story was the story of Pavlov's House. Following the destruction of their division by German tanks, the survivors of the 13th Guards Division, forced into groups, still clung on to several pockets in central Stalingrad. In one such pocket,

STAVKA ARCHIVES

RIGHT: The divisional commander, Nikolai Batyuk, nicknamed "Bullet-proof Batyuk" for the apparently charmed life he led on the frontline. He died of a heart attack in 1943 and was buried at Mamayev Kurgan where his division had fought so valiantly.

RGAKFD ARCHIVES, KARASNOGORSK

THE SIBERIANS ARRIVE Men of the 284th Division come ashore at the main landing stage between September 24-25. Prohibited from bringing their heavy weapons to avoid congestion in the city, the division's heavy weapons compliment began using light AA guns.

HOUSE & PAVLOV: CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

STRONGHOLD Pavlov's House as it stood after the battle. Yacov Pavlov (right) became a "Hero of the Soviet Union" and was also awarded the Order of Lenin for his outstanding work.

members of the 42nd Guards Regiment were ordered to seize a tactically important building dominating 9th January Square, just 300 yards off the Volga. For some reason, although the Germans occupied several nearby structures, they had neglected this particular building, a large four-storied apartment block known before the war as No. 4, The House of Soviets. A single machine-gun platoon commanded by Lt I.F. Afanasyev was given the job of securing the apartments. No easy task. The approaches ran through the open ground around the square. But occupation of the building would afford Russian forces a valuable defense post.

But early on, the Russians suffered a setback when Afanasyev was badly wounded and unable to continue with the operation. His next in command, Sergeant Yacov F. Pavlov took command, and led the platoon forward. Moving by night on September 26, the Russians approached the square. Ahead lay the tall, elegant whitewashed building, blasted and torn by small arms and heavy fire. Initially, Pavlov and three men armed with sub-machine guns crept forward to reconnoiter the area. All was quiet and they moved in. The building was in near shambles. Part of the structure had collapsed on one side, probably during a German air raid; all the windows were blow out and some of the internal walls had been punched in. But Pavlov's men found civilians living there.

The sergeant prepared his men for combat. His men knocked firing ports through the walls, positioned machine guns and anti-tank rifles, and waited for daylight. On the following morning, after a smattering of Soviet

THE ORDER OF LENIN

gunfire ruined their breakfast the Germans were stunned to discover the presence of a Red Army unit just yards away. Pavlov and his group, reinforced by replacements and other Guardsmen from time and time, held on for the next 58 days against repeated armored and infantry attacks. "Pavlov" House became thorn in Hoth's side. Whenever he sent his Panzers to deal with the Russians; they fled to the basement to snipe with anti-tank rifles. The Germans tried many tactics to dislodge the Russians, including sending in combat groups equipped completely with automatic weapons. Later, snipers were used, but their employment backfired when the Russians brought in their own snipers. One soldier, Alexandrov I. Chehov (eventually to become most famous sniper of the 13th Guards), killed 12 Germans while staying at the house.

In one memorable battle on October 20, the house was attacked four Panzers accompanied by several platoons of German infantry. Within the house were a mere handful of Russians. Still, the Guardsmen managed to knock out one tank and scattered the infantry with machine-gun fire. The Germans withdrew.

Soon Pavlov's house had become a pocket of its own. The Russians even laid a minefield and threw barbed-wire around its perimeter. A 45mm anti-tank cannon was brought it from somewhere and mortars were deployed on the roof. The Russians held on until November 25. By then a wounded Pavlov and some of the original members had been relieved by fresh troops. Nevertheless, the house's unofficial nickname stuck, even appearing so on divisional and army maps. Pavlov went on to be made a Hero of the Soviet Union and after the war became the Archimandrite Kyrill at the Sergievo monastery, proving immensely popular there.

For Paulus, the prospect of breaking into the Russian sector was growing distant by the days. He placed his last hopes on a major push towards the factories, scheduled for the first week of October.

BUNDESARCHIV

VETERAN TROOPS A seasoned German NCO directs his men. He wears the Iron Cross First Class on his left tunic pocket with the Combat Assault Badge below, near the field glasses. One of the men on his right has armed himself with the Russian PPsh41 submachinegun which German soldiers believed superior to their own MP.40 machine-pistol. Although it had a tremendous rate of fire, the PPsh also had extremely poor penetration.

PUSHING THE SOVIETS BACK

The preliminary phase of Paulus' attack began on the first day of October. The XIV Panzer Corps, under Hube's command drove southwards towards to cut off the industrial suburb of Orlovka from the rest of the Russian-held zone. In a forewarning of what was the come, a trapped Russian battalion held out for nearly five days, fighting against overwhelming odds. Three days later, Paulus' final offensive began. Acknowledging repeated pleas for reinforcements, Hitler had finally sent help by positioning the V Romanian Corps north of the city. If necessary, the Corps' ineffective 37 mm gun-armed tanks were at least thought be suitable for infantry support in Stalingrad.

Chuikov had also been reinforced. On October 2, the paratroopers of the deceptively-termed 37th Naval Guards Division had arrived by boats to take up positions in front of the factories, although the division's heavy equipment and tanks were still on the other side of the Volga — being too heavy to be ferried over. In any case, the Guards reinforced with armor built at the tractor Factory.

As Paulus made last minute preparations, the *Luftwaffe* blazed a trail for him. On the 3rd, German bombers destroyed an oil reservoir in the north, just meters from Chuikov's headquarters. Then on the 4th, the full force of Paulus' assault went into action against the Tractor Factory, the Barricades plant and the Red October works. The advance was dramatic. A German officer later recalled that "tanks clambered over heaps of mountains or rubble and scrap…firing at point-blank range into rubble-filled streets and narrow factory courtyards." All day, the Germans struggled to make progress against determined Russian defenders. Even in far-away England, the momentous significance of the battle became clear. Commenting for the BBC was George Orwell, the famous writer:

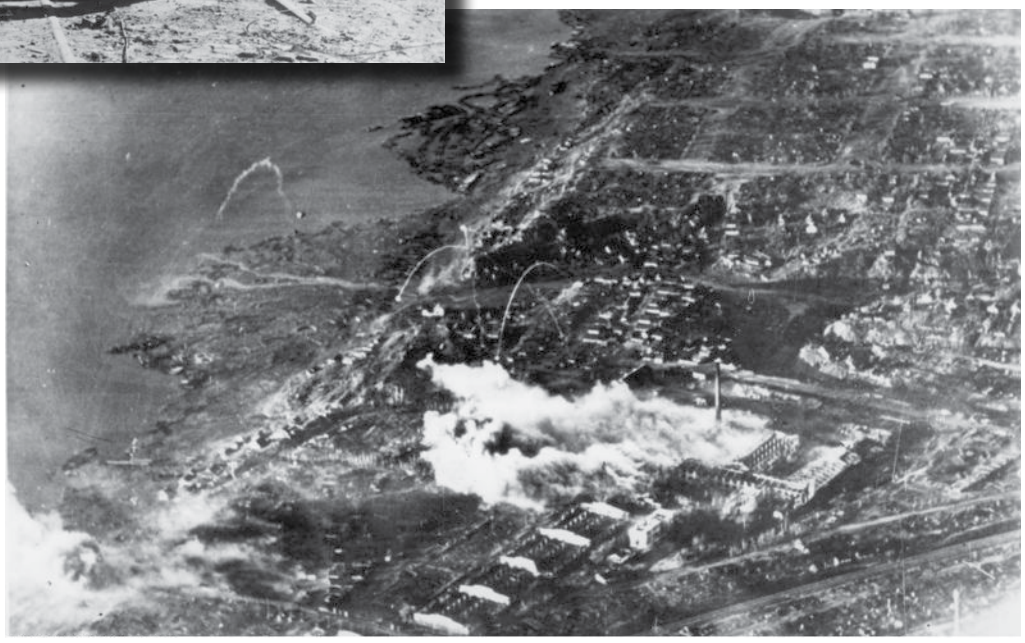
> The battle for Stalingrad continues. Since last week the Germans have made a little progress in their direct attacks on the city and savage house-to-house fighting is still going on. It is still uncertain whether or not Stalingrad can hold out. In a recent speech the notorious Ribbentrop [Germany's foreign minister], one-time ambassador to Britain and signatory to the Russo-German pact, was allowed to state that Stalingrad would soon be in German hands. Hitler made the same boast in his speech, which was broadcast on September 10th.
>
> Elsewhere, however, there has been a marked note of pessimism in German pronouncements and a constant emphasis on the need for the German

BRITISH BROADCASTING COMPANY

ANTI-TOTALITARIAN The British writer George Orwell, like many Soviet commanders at Stalingrad, was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War where his initial flirtations with Communism turned sour. During the Second World War, he frequently hosted programs for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and carefully watched events in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. His condemnation of totalitarian regimes reached its allegorical peak with the publication of *Animal Farm* in August 1945.

people to prepare themselves for a hard winter and an indefinite continuation of the war. Hitler's latest speech was broadcast on September 30. Although it mostly consisted of wild boasting and threats, it made a surprising contrast with the speeches of a year ago. Gone were the promises of an early victory, and gone also the claims made more than a year ago, to have annihilated the Russian armies. Instead all the emphasis was on Germany's ability to withstand a long war. Here for example are some of Hitler's earlier broadcast statements: On the 3rd September 1941: "Russia is already broken and will never rise again." On the third of October 1941: "The Russians have lost at least 8 to 10 million men. No army can recover from such losses." He also boasted at the same time of the imminent fall of Moscow. That was a year ago …and now, on 30th September, the final boast upon which Hitler ended his speech was: "Germany will never capitulate." It seems strange to look back and remember how short a while ago the Germans were declaring — not that they would ever capitulate — but that they would make everyone else capitulate.

At night of the 4th, under the blanket of dark, the 84th Tank Brigade also slipped over into Stalingrad. The brigade's T-34s went into action against the advancing Germans but succeeded in only hindering the German onslaught. By October 6, Paulus had lost of equivalent of four infantry battalions in the fighting and sixteen Panzers, but his troops continued fighting. On the 7th, a bathhouse near the Red October factory fell to German troops, but it had been barely occupied when the Russians counterattacked, capturing and re-capturing it five times before finally being driven out. By the 13th, the Germans were breathing on the doors of the Barrikady factory and the Red October plant. Thankfully, the Tractor Factory was un-threatened for the moment. Russians workers, toiling around the clock, rolled tank after tank off the assembly. Determined to finish off this last menace, Paulus sent in the 305th German Infantry Division with tanks from the 16th and 24th Panzer divisions. The fighting was ferocious.



ABOVE A brand new T-34-76, presumably manufactured at the Tractor factory, knocked out on October 8.

RIGHT: German Stukas attack Stalingrad on October 2. Smoke is seen pouring out of oil reserves near the Tractor Factory.

BOTH PHOTOS: BUNDESARCHIV

On the morning of October 14, at 6 a.m., the German attack resumed. Every serviceable Stuka dive-bomber in General Wolfram von Richthofen's Fourth Air Fleet took off to attack the Russians. The sky became dark with them. The Russians opened up as the planes came over, with "every flak gun firing, bombs roaring down—" in the words of a German officer in the 389th Infantry Division "—aircraft crashing, an enormous piece of theatre which we followed with very mixed feelings in our trenches." In all, about 2,000 *Luftwaffe* sorties hit the besieged Russian defensive position moments. Then the panzers attacked.

Major-General Victor Zholudev's defending 37th Naval Guards Division was battered to a pulp; 5,000 of its 8,000 soldiers were killed or incapacitated. Zholudev almost became one of the casualties; buried alive in his bunker by an explosion. Some of his men dug him out and carried him to army headquarters. The remaining troops of the division could barely offer token resistance to the advancing Germans. Then what Chuikov had feared, happened. Two hundred German tanks shattered the forward Russian perimeter, and rolled into the factory. Ignoring bullets, the workers stayed at their posts, finishing the last batch of T-34s before the driving them into battle. Others dropped tools and seized rifles — women and boys among them. While the German 305th Division fought it out with the defenders, the 24th Panzer Division outflanked the factory to appear in front of the Volga.

On the next day, October 15, the Sixth Army sent the signal that "The major part of the tractor works is in our hands. There are only some pockets of resistance left behind on our front." The 305th Infantry Division continued to force the harried Russians across the railway lines, back to the brickworks. That night, the 14th Panzer Division's 103rd Panzergrenadier Regiment pushed on to reach the oil tanks on the banks of the Volga, while under constant fire from nearby Russians firing from trenches and gullies. They overran Sixty-Second Army's old headquarters nearby but Chuikov had already moved because communications had been bad at the location.

Stories of heroism rose from the Russian side. The Russian 84th Tank Brigade, which had held its position against overwhelming odds, reported that it had destroyed 30 heavy and medium German tanks for the loss of eighteen of their own. Another unit, the battery of a light artillery regiment was cut off and

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

IMMACULATE TROOPS Men from the 37th Guards Division in action in the Factory district. Despite the intensity of combat, the division forged a reputation for cleanliness. Most accounts portray the men as being disciplined, tough soldiers, always clean-shaven and their kit always in tidy order. On 14 October, the division met its match in the form of the 14th Panzer Division and suffered terrific casualties.

under siege. The defenders sent out a message to headquarters: "Guns destroyed. Battery surrounded. We fight on and will not surrender. Best regards to everyone."

Taking up rifles, grenades and sub-machine guns, the gunners now took on the Germans and miraculously restored the Russian lines. One of the unit's men, a Commissar by the name of Babachenko was made a Hero of the Soviet Union. Despite the strength of these feats, the situation was dire. In the six days from October 14, the *Luftwaffe* carried out a systematic program to reduce the Russian perimeter. Troops-carrying boats and ferries crossing the river were strafed and bombed, and Chuikov's forward positions repeatedly hammered with air strikes.

The political department of the Stalingrad Front sent a desperate message to Moscow requesting fighter support, but this point the Soviet Eighth Air Army had fewer than 200 planes of all types and only two dozen fighters. But the *Luftwaffe* found itself in awe of continued resistance on the ground despite the strength of German air power. "I cannot understand," one flier wrote. "How men can survive such a Hell? Yet the Russians sit tight in the ruins, and holes and cellars, and a chaos of steel skeletons which used to be factories."

By nightfall on the 15th, Chuikov's headquarters had been inundated with requests from the 112th Rifle Division and 115th Special Brigade for permission to withdraw across the river. Both units had been holding the line near the stadium and the Tractor Factory and both now reported that their regiments had been destroyed. Chuikov sent Colonel Kamynin from his staff to check the state of the units only to find that the 112th Division still had 598 men left while the 115th

ABOVE The positions of the Pro-German Croatian Regiment which had been charged with the defense of the Red October factory, dated October 24 — a page from the commander's diary.

RIGHT Two Croats shelter in a dugout outside the Tractor Factory.

BUNDESARCHIV

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

SPECIAL WORKERS Volunteers from the Stalingrad workforce who were not vitally important to the arms industry were formed into "Special Brigades." Here one such set of volunteers receives instruction of how to use a Mosin-Nagant Rifle, the standard Red Army Rifle. But training was poor and the quantities of arms limited, and the brigades proved notoriously unreliable.

Brigade had 890 men. The division's senior commissar, instead of rallying the defenders, had hid in his bunker all day coming out only to implore his commander to withdraw across the Volga. Most of the senior commanders and commissars from both units were later court-martialed by Chuikov. Their fate, although unknown, was undoubtedly grim.

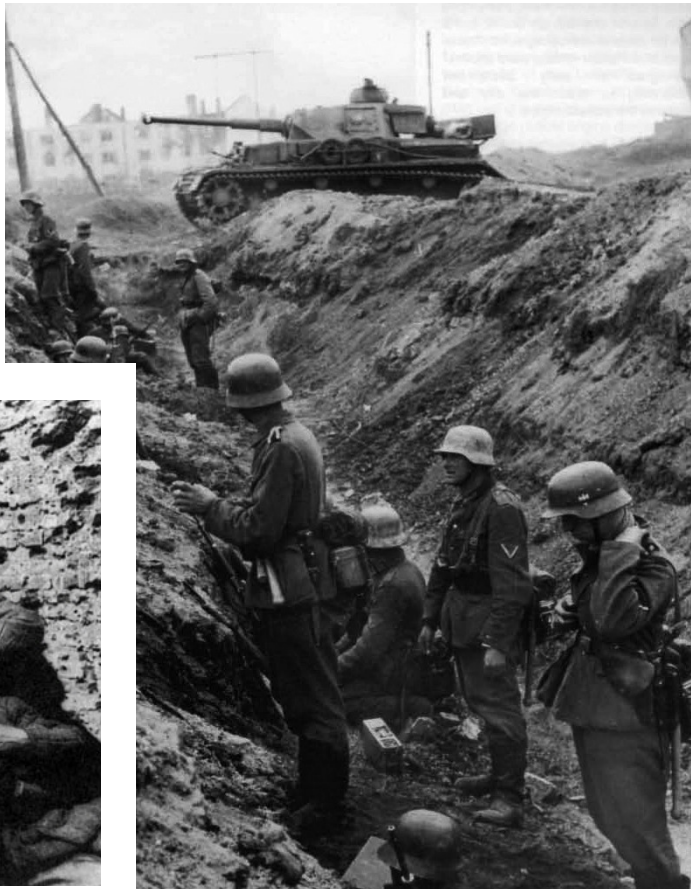
With the *Luftwaffe* dominating the river, supplies began to run low. Alarmed, Stalin finally ordered the Russian Air Force to drop supplies to the embattled defenders and attempt to gain air superiority. The arrival of the Russian planes on the 21st caught the Germans by surprise. Low-flying attack aircraft and bombers shot up German convoys and frontline positions as fighters attempted to hold back the *Luftwaffe*. German morale took a setback — as Chuikov learned from captured prisoners. Nevertheless, by the 23rd, Soviet resistance at the Tractor factory had been crushed and most of the Barricades Plant had fallen to the Germans.

The Russians still stubbornly held on to the Red October Steel works, but fierce-fights emerged between German and Russian infantry holding opposite ends of the foundry. But the entire line was tenuous and in danger of snapping. Some of the militia units were especially fragile. On the night of October 25, the 124th Special Brigade, formerly "workers of the Stalingrad Tractor Works" decided to defect to the Germans. This decision was almost unanimous except for one man, a sentry who thought the idea ludicrous. Threatened into the join the movement, he pretended a problem with a foot cloth, lagged behind and escaped under fire — only to be court-martialled by the Russians for failing to take "decisive measures to inform his commanders of the forthcoming crime and preventing the traitors from deserting."

But if Chuikov faced grave issues with his troops, Paulus faced a jarring issues with numbers. Incessant close combat was consuming his infantry at a rate of a division every five days. But he decided to throw in his reserves to overrun the last enemy remnants at the Barricades Plant. The 100th Jäger Division was given the task but a fatalistic incident of friendly fire destroyed all hopes for success when air-support Stukas mistakenly dropped their bombs on the Germans below. Undaunted, Paulus tried again on the following day, October 26. This time, artillery, substituted in place of the *Luftwaffe*, pummeled the Russian lines for half an hour. The approaches to the factory became a moonscape of no-man's land. German troops gingerly advanced through dazed pocket of Russians to seize the factory.

RIGHT A long-barrelled PzIVF2 trundles past a group of German infantry waiting in a ditch, most likely dug by Stalingrad civilians that summer. The PzIVF2's 75mm long cannon gave the Germans a valuable weapon against the T-34.

BELOW A Red Army trooper bandages a wounded comrade as other Red Army men assault a German position nearby.



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

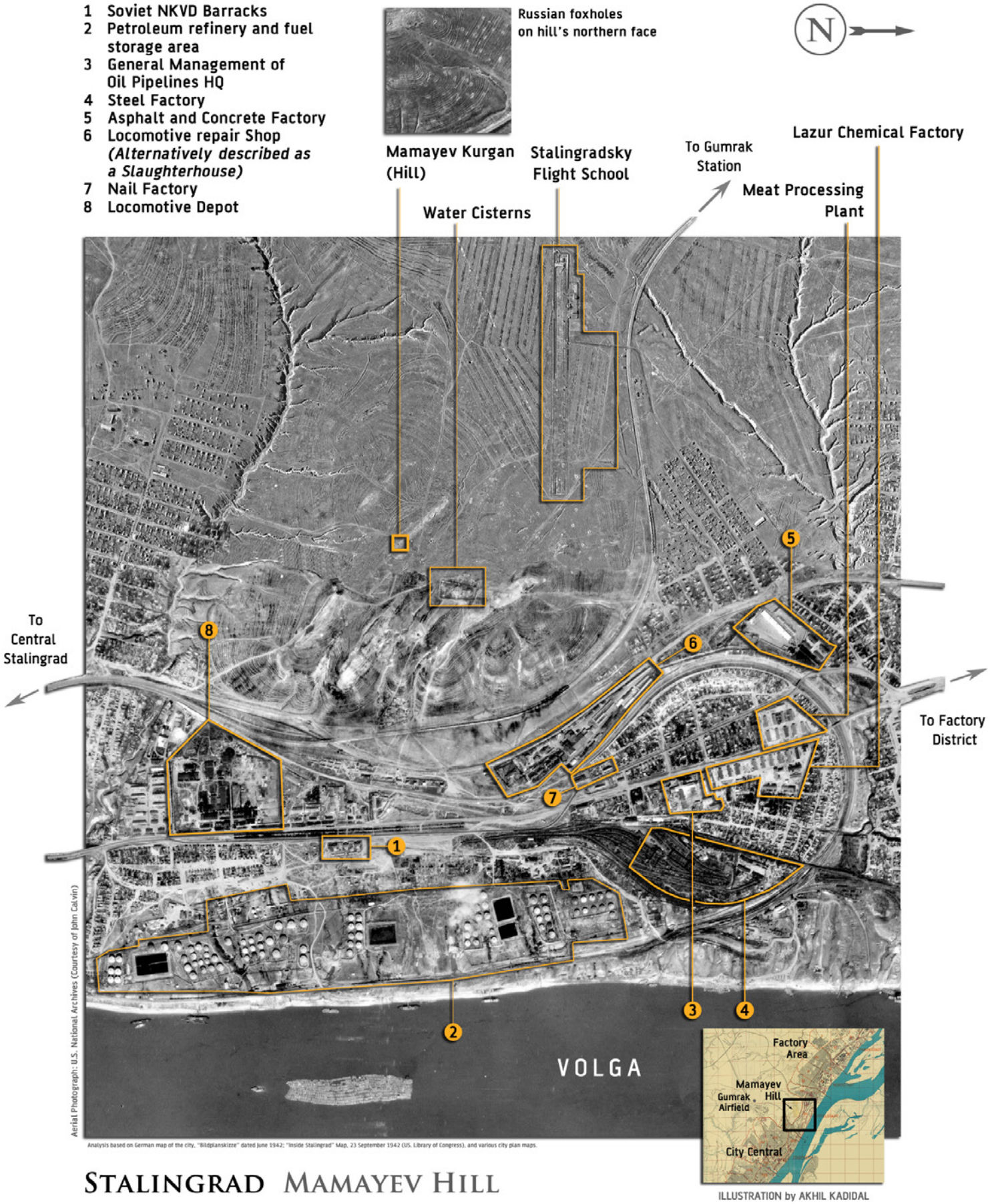
The fall of the Barricades also imperiled a nearby emergency ferry wharf, established by the Russians after the main docks in the south came under siege. The Jägers were overjoyed, certain that the battle for Stalingrad was reaching its end. Even Paulus enthusiastically radioed Hitler on the 25th that he expected to completely capture Stalingrad, at least by November 10.

Paulus had good reason for such cheer. Chuikov's troops had been compressed into slim pockets along the low cliffs bordering the Volga; their largest pocket was an enclave (two miles deep and 3½ miles wide at its longest along the river) around the Lazur chemical works. But all was not at a loss for the Russians. Incredibly, a cut-off Red Army unit (the Siberians of the 284th Division) held on to a few buildings atop Mamayev Hill against overwhelming odds. Even better for Chuikov, he was being reinforced. Before dawn on the 27th, the Soviet 45th Rifle Division made its way towards the factories to join other Russian forces desperately hoping to hold their positions.

The Germans tore a gaping hole through the right flank of the 347th Rifle Regiment and reached the eastern part of Mezenskaia and Tuvinskaia Streets. The regiment's parent division, the 308th Rifles, fought on, under orders from headquarters. By the end of the day, only 30 men remained within the entirety of the 347th Regiment, while its sister regiment, the 339th, had only 53 men. The 45th Rifles, who had moved to reinforce the 193rd Rifle Division on Mashinnaia, Matrosskaia and Malaia Streets had arrived with 1,588 men.[6] The Germans attacked it in force. By 10:30 that morning, two battalions of German infantry with seven tanks had attempted to batter their way towards the Smokestack while another battlegroup of a battalion and 12 tanks thrust towards the Russians along Tsentral'naia Street, capturing the northwest section of the Red October factory. By the day's end, the inexperienced division, outflanked from the left, had lost 70 percent of its troops.

By the 29th, the Germans controlled 95 percent of the city but their offensive was running out of

6 Its armaments amounted to 1,127 rifles, 11 heavy machine guns, 42 sub-machine guns, and 36 anti-tank rifles.



STALINGRAD MAMAYEV HILL

ILLUSTRATION by AKHIL KADIDAL

STAVKA ARCHIVES

LITTLE KATES The launch of a battery of Katyusha rockets was a tremendous sight as evinced by this photograph. Despite the relative inaccuracy of the weapon, it could be used to bombard a large sweep of enemy-held territory.

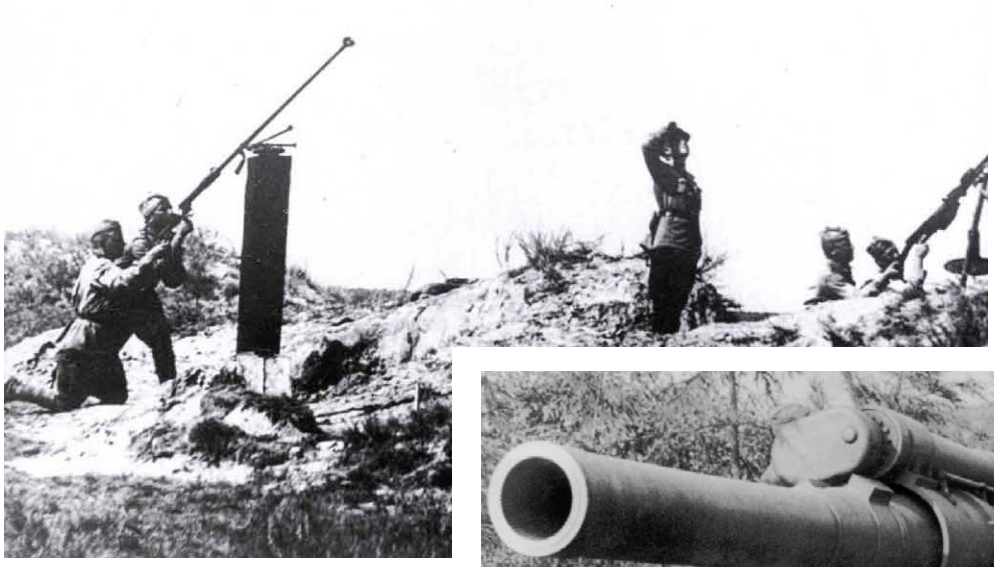
steam. The Russian autumn rains had come on schedule — hindering supply columns in the rear, and to make matters worse, the rain had turned to snow from the 19th. A greater headache was the discovery of the Russian Sixty-Fifth Army crossing the Volga to the south of Stalingrad — to become part of Zhukov's "bait." By mid-November, Zhukov had assembled 1,015,219 men on the western side of the Volga; he also had 6,582 artillery pieces, 12,976 mortars, 1,041 anti-aircraft guns, 3,070 tanks, 381 armored cars and 1100 planes. Yeremenko's Stalingrad Front had swollen to five armies,[7] accounting for 258,638 men, 5,079 guns and 621 tanks. By November 2, Paulus's depleted nine infantry divisions faced sixteen Russian ones, although not by much (as a typical Russian infantry division was equivalent to half a German division).

Back in the city, the last attack by the German 79th Division against the Red October Factory found itself under heavy artillery fire from Soviet batteries positioned on the other side of the Volga and fell apart. The 94th Division, fighting in the Spartanovka sector was also forced into the defensive after a period of fierce fighting. The Russians noted the change.

"In the last two days," an officer wrote Moscow on November 6, "the enemy has been changing his tactics. Probably because of big losses over the last three weeks, they have stopped using large formations." This was a discerning observation. Frustrated by increasingly debilitating artillery bombardments, the Germans had organized into small forces to conduct a "reconnaissance in force to probe for weak points between" the Soviet regiments. Almost all of these small groups were forced out of cover and bombarded by artillery, called in by Soviet observers on the front line.

On November 3, the first batch of Red Army officers (from Generals Rokossovsky's Don Front and Vatutin's South-East Front) were briefed on Zhukov's impending, ultra-secret counteroffensive, codenamed "Uranus." The operation would launch on November 19, and in keeping with its name, would eclipse the Sixth Army.

7 62d, 64th, 57th, 51st and 28th Armies.



CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

NOVOSTY PRESS AGENCY

STRANGE WEAPONS (Above) A PTRS anti-tank rifle being used as an anti-aircraft weapon. A Russian crew claimed to have shot down three Stukas with one. (Right) An M1931 203mm Howitzer of the Red Army. The crude finish belies the potency of this weapon which was used to reduce German strongpoints. It fired a 217lb shell.

As Russian hopes sprung anew, German spirits ebbed. The Sixth Army was suffering grave privations. Food and ammunition was running thin, and unlike the Russians, they had no hope of reinforcements. By some marvel, Hitler released the 14th Panzer division to the Sixth Army, allowing Paulus to resume his assault. He also sent five battalions of combat engineers[8], experts at demolition, by air on November 6. Commanded by Colonel Herbert Solle, the pioneers were ordered to finish off the last Russian pockets of resistance in and around the factories. The Barrikady Factory was a special nuisance for the Germans, as groups of Russians had managed to infiltrate in to take up positions around key locations.

Apart from the factories, the engineers were also given special instructions to take the "Commissars House," and the "Pharmacy," dominating the cliffs over the Volga. Further, Paulus split his infantry divisions into small battlegroups to secure the area in between the factories. The assault was to launch at 9 a.m. on November 9. That same day, winter chills arrived and the temperature plummeted to -4° F (-18° C.) The ices floes on the Volga crashed into each other, grinding with a terrible noise, which sounded to one Russian writer, Vasily Grossman, like "shifting sands…an eerie sound for the soldiers in the city."

Afraid that the Germans would use the frozen river to outflank Chuikov's men and come up on their rear, Russian artillery batteries concentrated their guns on the crossing routes, blasting both enemy troops and Russian boats in the same go. On one instance, a steamer from the Volga flotilla, carrying guns and ammunition was struck and sank in shallow water. As the shelling continued, another Russian boat pulled up alongside to save the precious arms.

In the city, Paulus's advance initially went well. The two buildings fell and the Russians were ejected from the Barrikady. But Chuikov was determined to hold until the end. Dug in along the narrow corridor,

8 The 50th, 162nd, 294th, 336th and 389th Pioneer Bns

on the edge of the low-cliffs bordering the Volga, his men had set up camp in nearby caves and assembled an arms reserve. Chuikov himself lived the life of troglodyte, spending the hours with his staff deep in a yawning cave. Here the Sixty-Second Army prepared to fight to the death.

Just feet away, men fought and bled on the pristine white-clad earth. A company from the 347th Rifle Regiment, entrenched only 200 yards from the Volga, had only nine men left when it was attacked on November 6 and overrun. Its commander, Lt. Andreev, organized the survivors and taking on sub-machine guns, rallied them into a counterattack just as a group of reinforcements arrived. Together, they cut off the German advance and secured the Sixty-Second Army's northern crossing point.

On the 11th, Paulus played his final card. The equivalent of seven infantry divisions[9] advanced on a three-mile front on the Barricades Factory. The battle raged for five hours. Attacking Stukas knocked down the factor chimney with bombs, sending up a spectacular cloud of dust, but that would prove the limit of the Luftwaffe's achievement on that day. On Mamayev Hill, Lt-Colonel Batyuk's 284th Siberian Division clung to their defensive posts. A fierce German attack by the 305th Division towards the Lazur Chemical factory thrust through their lines, and several key buildings fell. Unperturbed, the Siberians retaliated on the following day and retook some of the buildings, stalling the German attack.

In the north, the 138th Rifle Division, isolated at the Barrikady factory, fought until the end. Half surrounded, the division's 118th Regiment blunted one German attack after another, until at last, with no more men able to fight, it fell aside and was simply destroyed. Only seven men, together with their wounded commander, Lieutenant Kolobavnikov, escaped. By nightfall, some of the other regiments had on average only 30 bullets left per man. A few antiquated Soviet U-2 biplanes attempted to make supply runs but the amount received was minute and often damaged.

After some sporadic combat that night, the fighting resumed on the next day and carried on in the weeks that followed, with the Germans making painful progress. At some places they broke through to the Volga, but were stubbornly checked by the Russians in other locations. The Sixty-Second Army was split into three distinct pockets — around Rynok, the Lazur Chemical Works, and an even smaller outpost on the western periphery of the Red October Steel mill. But the Sixth Army had lost its bite in fierce close-quartered fighting. The infantry divisions were decimated, with losses among the newly-arrived engineers being especially horrific (at least a thousand of the 3,000-strong force had been killed, with almost a similar number wounded). Their commander, Colonel Selle, was forced to merge the survivors into a single group.

"Stalingrad is no longer a town," wrote one battle-weary German officer, Lt. Weiner of the 24th Panzer Division: "By day it is an enormous cloud of burning, blinding smoke; it is a vast furnace lit by the reflection of the flames. Ask any soldier what half an hour of hand-to-hand fighting means in a fight, and imagine Stalingrad, 80 days and night of hand-to-hand struggles. The streets are no longer measured in meters but by corpses …and when night arrives, one of those scorching, howling, bleeding nights; the dogs plunge into the Volga and swim desperately to gain the other bank. The nights of Stalingrad are a terror for them. Animals flee this hell; the hardest stones can not bear it for long; only men endure."

To finish off the last Russian defensive points that mid-November, Hitler ordered that tank drivers be gathered as infantry for "a last push." Panzer leaders were aghast, but when Paulus failed to cancel the order, they sent in their cooks, medical orderlies and signals staff instead of their valuable drivers. Losses were again heavy.

Seydlitz-Kurzbach of LI Corps calculated that by the middle of that month, 42 percent of his battalions had been "fought out," with most of the infantry companies reduced to less than 50 men each. In Germany, however, Hitler joyously boasted that the battle had been won. In an address to Nazi officials at Berchtesgaden, he gloriously declared that "no power on earth will force us from Stalingrad." But for all of his bravado, Hitler had been perturbed by the activity on the Russian front. It was apparent to Zeitzler and Weichs of Army Group B, that the Russians were intent on encircling the Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

9 71st, 79th, 100th, 295th, 305th and 389th Divisions, reinforced with four pioneer battalions.

When Zeitzler proposed that the Sixth Army withdraw into a more solid line on the Don, Hitler yelled: "I will not leave the Volga! I will not go back from the Volga! Where the German soldier sets foot, he stays!" But Hitler, concerned of the threat to his flanks, withdrew Hoth's XLVIII Panzer Corps from Stalingrad (where it was still needed), and sent it north to reinforce the Third Romanian Army.

He also urged Paulus to finish the job at Stalingrad. When Paulus replied that there were difficulties, Hitler snapped that the "difficulties …in Stalingrad are well known to me, but the difficulties on the Russian side must be even greater now with the ice drifting down the Volga (which was hindering Russian re-supply efforts). If we make good use of this period of time we shall save a lot of blood later on. Therefore I expect that the commanders will once again fight with their usual dash in order to break through to the Volga, at least at the ordnance factory and the metallurgical works and to take these parts of the city."

For Chuikov, the onset of large, floating ice floes on the river was indeed a serious development. The flimsy ferries and supply boats of the Volga Flotilla could no longer operate without encountering serious hazards, and the fleet's gunboats were unable to protect the convoys as all but two boats had been stored for the winter. When Yeremenko attempted to airdrop supplies, much of the crates fell into the river and into German lines.

On November 18, Paulus, pushing his forlorn troops to their maximum, attacked the three Russian pockets. At Rynok, Major-General Gorokhov held a garrison of troops. At the Red October-Barricades Front, troops under Colonel Lunikov held a salient half a square mile on the banks of the Volga. Their left flank was defended by the remnants of the 13th Guards under Rodimstev holding a sliver of land only a few hundred yards wide. South of them was the Lazur Chemical enclave, held by the strongest concentration of Russians. It was here that Chuikov's new headquarters was based.

BUNDESARCHIV

SYMBOL OF CONSCIENCE Kurt Zeitzler's rise through the army was meteoric. In just two years he had risen from a staff command at a Corps to the Chief of Staff of the German Army General Staff. Given this position because Hitler thought him malleable, Zeitzler instead emerged as a moralist deeply troubled by the suffering of the troops at the front. He finally left his appointment in 1944 and was dismissed from the army for this outrage in early 1945.

Exhausted, and advancing through driving rain, the Germans made slow progress, leaving the artillery and machineguns to deal with the Russians. In the north, the 124th and 149th Special Brigades fought off six savage attacks by two battalions of Germans with tanks, destroying eleven Panzers and killing about 800 men. Only 12 Germans were captured. Northeast of the Barrikady Factory, the 138th Rifle Division fought another German battalion, losing three factory buildings to adept German troops who caved in their left flank. Southeast of the factory, the 95th Rifle Division, which had fought all day against three waves of enemy attack, dug in and held its ground until the Germans pulled back.

The Sixth Army had spent its last chance for victory, and from that period on its momentum passed irrevocably into the defensive. Rumors proliferated that the Red Army was preparing a massive counteroffensive on the Don front. Berlin was unconcerned, but as Paulus' soldiers settled into their bunks and trenches, they did so with rising trepidation. History would show that they had good reason to be worried. At dawn on the very next morning, Zhukov's massive offensive, Operation "Uranus" went into action, sealing their fate.

Even though Zhukov had taken great precautions to keep his assembling armies hidden, by moving forward troops only at night and during bad weather when the *Luftwaffe* was grounded, the jig was up. Both Paulus and General Weichs of Army group B were well aware of Russian armies massing to the north and south of Stalingrad – deserters and scattered aerial reconnaissance had revealed as much. What they did not know, however, was the Russian intent. Paulus had a vague suspicion that the Russians intended to surround him at Stalingrad but had he known the true nature of Zhukov's plans, he would have been horrified. Zhukov, the undisputed master of strategy in the Russian army aimed to not only cut-off the Sixth Army at Stalingrad, but also part of Army Group B in the Don area in a gigantic pincer. Encircled, and forced into a pocket, the Germans would then be systematically reduced and crushed. If successful, "Uranus" would deal a blow to Germany's armies in southern Russia from which they would never recover.

PAVEL KORIN

MASTER STRATEGIST Soviet Russia was fortunate in that Georgy Zhukov survived the Stalinist purges of the army in the 1930's that nearly crippled the Red Army. A veteran of World War, he saw action against Japan's Kwantung Army in 1938, clearing the enemy from the Mongolian border. In August 1942, he became deputy commander-in-chief of the armed forces and coordinated the conduct of the war against Germany (in various capacities) until victory in 1945. He became the first Soviet commander of the Russian zone of occupation in Germany.

Whatever warning signs existed they were largely ignored by Berlin. Hitler no doubt saw the intelligence reports but his solution was to employ lightly-equipped *Luftwaffe* "Field Divisions" (such was the megalomania of the *Luftwaffe* chief, Herman Goring, that he also wanted to command ground forces), to take over from some of the veteran army units which needed to be relieved from the line to refit. The most notable example of this was the 22nd Panzer Division which had been relieved by second-rate forces as it returned to the rear to taken on replacements. Matters were precarious for the Germans but few officers of the line realized the overwhelming Soviet forces taking shape against them. In manpower, artillery and armour, the Russians outnumbered their opponents by almost 2:1.

This fatalistic sense of calm extended to even the *Luftwaffe*. In October, when aerial reconnaissance revealed that Russian tanks and infantry were crossing the Don River at Sefrimovich, air command proved fatalistically laid-back. General Wolfram von Richthofen, the commander of *Luftflotte 4*, was under the misguided impression that the Russians were largely finished and consequently he failed to properly coordinate an attack on Zhukov's bridgeheads. His *Fliegerkorps VIII* at that time still had over 400 serviceable aircraft of all types. Their employment against the bridges could have caused serious delays in Zhukov's timetable — time enough for Paulus to finish off the Sixty-Second Army. As an indication of what the *Luftwaffe* was capable of, even limited air strikes on the 12th successfully destroyed several pontoon bridges at Kletskaya and Serafimovich.

Still, even if Berlin recognized the gravity of the situation, arguably there was little they could have done. The majority of German troops in Army Group B were fighting in Stalingrad. Aside from

Luftwaffe ground forces, Hitler chose to substitute their absence with poorly-armed and unreliable "allied armies," including the Italian Eighth and Romanian Third Armies in the north, while the Romanian Fourth Army held the line in the south.

Zhukov's attack would launch in three phases. First, three armies (the Fifth Tank, First Shock and Twenty-First Armies) from General Vatutin's South-West Front, would move past their positions on the Don, and punch through the Italian and Romanian lines in the north. Then the Fifty-Seventh and Fifty-First Armies would attack from the south and drive north to meet the South-West Front. If the two armies met, the Sixth Army at Stalingrad would be cut-off.

But the Germans had not gone this far by being reckless. On November 16th, just a few days before the Russian attack, the generals transferred the 22nd Panzer Division from the north (beyond the Italian lines) to reinforce the Third Romanian Army. The division was earmarked to become part of a new battle group, "Panzer Reserve Heim," to protect the Sixth Army's northern flank. Unfortunately, the division had been nearly catatonic for over two months for lack of fuel and operations and when ordered to move out, many crews found that their tanks would not start. Rats, making their homes in the straw and hay that had been used to protect the tanks had chewed through much of the internal electrical wiring. A significant number were immobilized on the spot; still others fell victim to iced-up roads and mud traps. When the division finally arrived on the front, the glum Romanians noted that only 42 of the division's 104 tanks had appeared. Their own tanks were completely inadequate against the Russians. The 1st Romanian Armored Division could boast of only 21 German-made tanks and 87 of the smaller, Czechoslovakian-built Skoda 38(t) tanks.

The Russian armor, meantime, built around the formidable T-34 was more than a match for the best German tanks in the area, including the 75mm long gun-armed Mark IVF. As the German Army's Inspector General of Fast troops disclosed in a May 26 report, based on studies of captured T-34 and combat experience: "The T-34 is faster, more maneuverable, has better cross-country mobility than our Pz.Kpfw III and the Mark IV. Its armor is stronger. The penetrating ability of its 76.2 mm cannon is superior to our 50mm KwK and the 75 mm KwK40 cannons. The favorable form of sloping all of the armor plates aids in causing the shells to skid off."

The night of December 18/19 was unduly harsh. Romanian and Italian soldiers in the north faced the prospect of spending yet another freezing night in inadequate foxholes and tents. But this would transpire as the least of their worries. At 7:20 that morning, the code word "Siren" went out to

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

SNUG DEFENDERS This group of well-clothed and well-fed Siberians were typical of the eclectic group of Russians that the Germans encountered at Stalingrad. The Soviets had even massed one entire division, the 173rd Rifles, completely outfitted with intellectuals from the Moscow area.

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

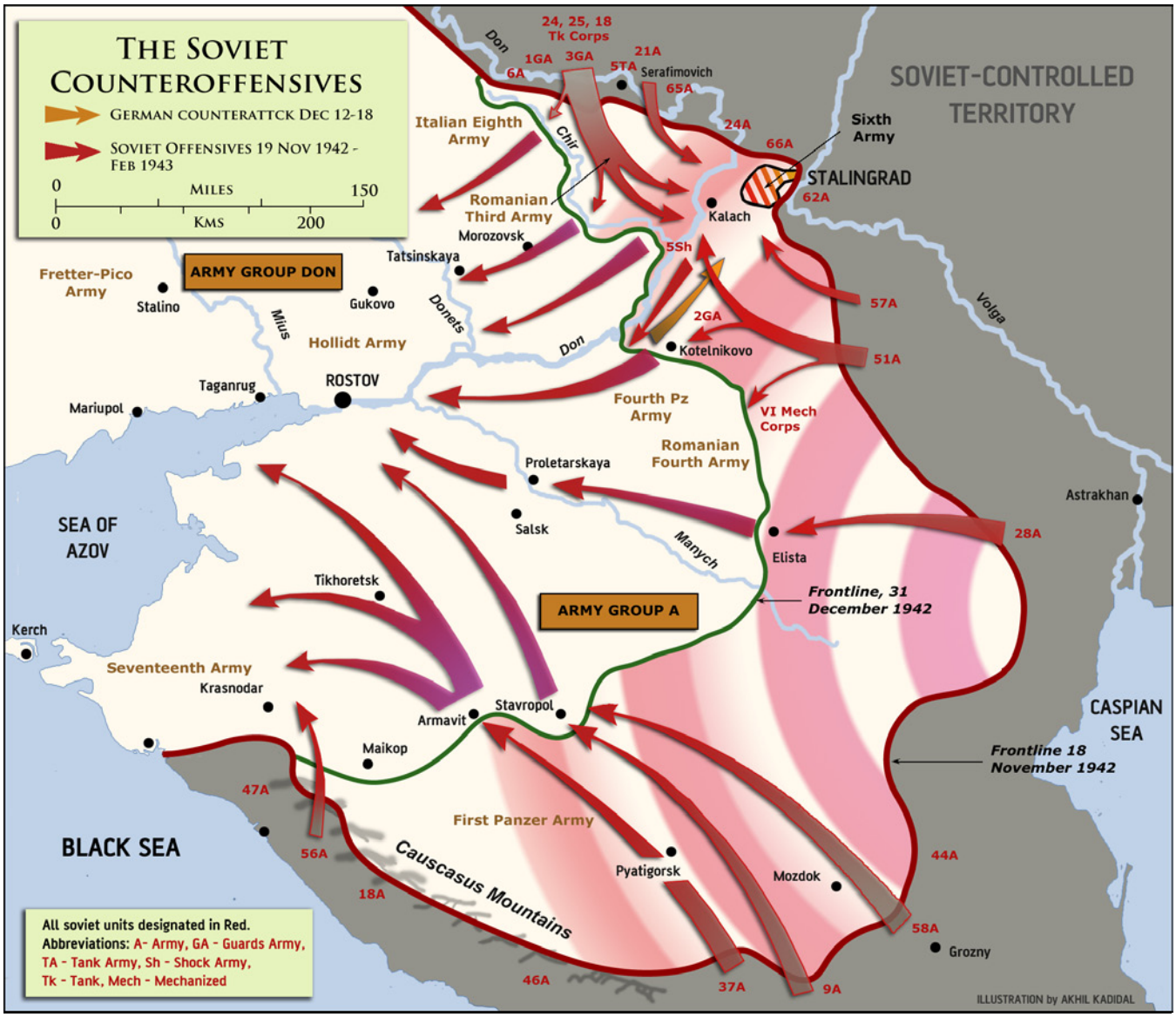
WHITEWASHED ARMOR A Russian T-34 at the start of Operation "Uranus" waits in ambush at a village. The antenna indicates that it is a tank leader's vehicle. Note the Mosin-Nagant rifle fixed to the side of the turret — presumably for picking off German infantry at medium range.

Soviet artillery regiments, who began to load their guns. A freezing mist enveloped the front, swirling in the words of one Soviet general, "as thick as milk." Several senior commanders contemplated cancelling the attack because of poor visibility, but ten minutes later, orders came through to fire the artillery. The signal, heralded by trumpets relaying the order, woke up some of the Romanians. Sixth Army headquarters received news of the event, prompting one staff officer, Captain Winrich Behr, to accurately conclude that a massive Russian bombardment or attack was about to begin.

On schedule, ten minutes later, the artillery opened up. General N.F. Vatutin's South West-Front had concentrated 3,500 guns and heavy mortars to blast open a corridor for a dozen rifle divisions, three tank and two cavalry corps. Initially, the first salvos sounded like thunderclaps and as the Romanians watched the misty sky, the shells began to land. The ground began to quake violently, the shock waves intruding as far south as thirty miles where medical officers from the 22nd Panzer Division woke up because of the trembling earth. The bombardment lasted for eight minutes but it took an hour for the Russian infantry to make their move. The artillery still soared blindly over their heads, to pummel targets further inside the Romanian Third Army perimeter. The shells tore through concrete emplacements, earth and flesh; hundreds of soldiers were killed with minutes or buried alive as their concrete bunkers collapsed under the salvoes.

Despite their limited arms, the Romanians proudly held their ground and repulsed the first attack — a fact corroborated by a German officer attached to the 13th Romanian Infantry Division. A second attack, two hours later, brought large groups of Russian infantry out of the mist, completely outfitted in white winter clothing, accompanied by the dreaded T-34 tanks — over 200 hundred of them. For the horror-stuck Romanians it seemed that every tank in Russia was streaming over the flat, snow-covered steppes towards them.

They attempted to hold their ground as before and destroyed some of the tanks, but without proper anti-tank weapons, it was a hopeless defense. Several groups of tanks trundled over the forward perimeter and turning in the interior, blasted the inner lines. At mid-day, with the fighting



threatening to bog down, the Russians sent in the bulk of their armor to charge the Romanian lines. In the Kletskaya sector, the 4th Tank Corps and the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps tore through the lines held by Romanian IV Corps and rushed south. The Soviet cavalry, still equipped with horses — in this case, Cossack ponies — sped across the Romanian-held territory, keeping pace with the tanks. In half an hour, tanks from the 5th Tank Army reached the perimeter of the II Romanian Corps and blasted a way in. Trenches collapsed as the armor rumbled over them, burying the unfortunate soldiers within. The 8th Cavalry Corps followed, opened the penetration.

In terror, the Romanian lines finally cracked. Hundreds of troops abandoned their dug outs and streamed back over the exposed fields, taking heavy losses. By the end of the day, they had lost 55,000 troops and had left open a 50-mile breach in the axis lines. East of Vatutin, General Rokossovsky's Don Front launched a small attack to trap the German XI Corps just north of Stalingrad — only to be thwarted by German infantry. It was the only Axis success of the day.

News of the offensive did not reach the Sixth Army until 9:45 that morning. Paulus, instead of calling off an attack by his tanks in the city, told them to continue mopping up operations. Incredibly, at this stage, no senior officer seemed to have accurately identified the Russian offensive as a significant event that threatened their futures.

TANK DESCENT MEN
This was the so-called designation of troops who rode on top of the attacking armor into battle. These men have started to dismount and move forward into the attack on the first day of Operation "Uranus."

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

At 10 a.m on the following day, the 20th, three armies (the Sixty-Fourth, Fifty-Seventh and the Fifty-First) from the Stalingrad Front went into action in the south after a thousand *Katyushas* rockets signaled the beginning of their assault. Moving forward in driving snow, the Fifty-Seventh Army struck north on the right flank to the rear of the German Sixth Army with six rifle divisions, while the Fifty-First Army raced north towards Kalach to meet the incoming troops of the South-West Front.

The Romanian Fourth Army was hard-hit. A single Soviet Marine Brigade from the Fifty-Seventh Army shattered their first two lines of defenses lines just south of Stalingrad, paving the way for a rapid exploitation by Major General T.I. Tanashchishin's 13th Mechanized Corps. By mid-day the Romanians had suffered 35,000 casualties, and by 1 p.m., elements of both Russian armies were speeding north towards Kalach.

General Shumilov's Sixty-Fourth Army was also in the attack, trying to fight its way into south Stalingrad, only to be thwarted by the German 297th Infantry Division. Elements of the 4th Panzer Army were also nearby and Hoth ordered the 29th Motorized Infantry Division to cut up Tanashchishin's flanks. Before they knew what was happening, Tanashchishin's command found itself being battered. It was in danger of being destroyed when abruptly Weichs ordered Hoth to pull his division back into a defensive post on the Sixth Army's southern flank. The order left that the road to Kalach open for the Russians. Then to compound the matter, and to Hoth's fury, his divisions in the Stalingrad area were then transferred wholesale to the Sixth Army. With almost no troops to command, Hoth evacuated what little was left of his command out of Stalingrad. He was just in time — within forty-eight hours Stalingrad would be completely encircled by the Russians.

In Stalingrad, the concept that the Russian offensive was still a minor event was finally dismissed at 6 p.m. Seydlitz-Kurzbach received orders to transfer the 24th Panzer Division to Peskovatka and Vertyachy near the Don crossings. Then at 10 o' clock that night, Weichs ordered Paulus to break off the fighting in Stalingrad and move his forces to support the embattled Romanians. "Change of situation in area of Third Romanian Army compels radical measures with the objective of moving forces [westwards] as rapidly as possible to cover the rear flank of Sixth Army and secure lines of communication," he messaged.

The 16th Panzer Division, which contained a large number of "Hiwis"[10] (the German nickname for Russian volunteers), was also ordered to move westwards despite being in stiff combat at Rynok.

10 *Hilfswilliger*, literally *one willing to help.*

SUDDEUTSCHER VERLAG BILDERDIENST

INFANTRY SUPPORT In addition to its quantities of PzIII and Mark IV tanks, the German Sixth Army also possessed a significant contingent of StuG self-propelled assault guns, which could be found in the anti-tank battalions of the infantry divisions. They were instrumental in carrying the German advance through Russia, although the limitations of tank support became apparent in the sort of street-fighting that prevailed at Stalingrad.

The division's 2nd Panzer Regiment found itself unable to pull out until 3 in the morning of 21 November, nearly 46 hours after the launch of "Uranus."

By this point, the northern force's General Kravchenko's 4th Tank Corps had covered thirty miles from its original positions towards Kalach. Directly in its path was Paulus headquarters at Golubinskaya, ten miles northeast of Kalach. Fleeing the incoming Russians, Paulus evacuated a mere two hours before the headquarters was overrun. Flying to his new command center at Nizhne-Chirskaya, forty miles southwest on the Don, he realized for the first time the full scale of the debacle that had befallen Army Group B. Even from the air, the fleeing mass of the Romanians was clearly visible, as were the advancing Russians hordes, plumes of snow clouds marking the trails of speeding T-34s. The German 376th Infantry Division was forced to move into gap left open by the Romanians, as did the Austrian 44th Division, which had to abandon some of its heavy equipment because of fuel shortages in its transport fleet.

On Sunday, the 22nd, in the north, Russians from Major General A.G. Rodin's 26th Tank Corps approached Kalach and its important bridge over the Don. It was ironical that the span which had initially supported the Sixth Army's attack on Stalingrad in August would now be used to turn the tables on the Germans. Rodin knew that the Germans had set explosives on the bridge and resorted to cunning to win the day. Early that morning, at 6:15, a crack Russian detachment from Lt-Colonel G.N. Filippov's 19th Tank Brigade approached the bridge behind two captured Panzers and a reconnaissance vehicle, headlights blazing. The befuddled German garrison waved them on, realizing too late that they were Russians. By then Rodin's men had already cut the wires and secured the bridge. That same day, Paulus sent a frantic message to Hitler's headquarters requesting permission to withdraw his army from Stalingrad to a new defensive line along the Don. General Zeitzler supported the plan, but met stiff opposition from Hitler who said: "Sixth Army will stay where it is. It is the garrison of a fortress and it is the duty of garrisons to withstand sieges. If necessary they will hold out all winter and I will relieve them by an offensive in the spring."

In a conversation with Albert Speer, the German Minister for Armaments, Hitler condemned the over-cautiousness of his commanders, saying that "our generals are making their old mistakes again. They always overestimate the strength of the Russians. According to all the front-line reports, the enemy's human material is no longer sufficient. They are weakened; they have lost far too much blood. But of course nobody wants to accept such reports. Besides how badly the Russian officers

are trained. No offensive can be organized with such officers. We know what it takes. In the short or long run the Russians will simply come to a halt. They'll run down. Meanwhile we shall throw in a few fresh divisions; that will put things right."

Paulus' staff set up a new headquarters at the rail junction at Gumrak, eight miles from Stalingrad, while Paulus and Schmidt flew to Nizhne-Chirskaya to meet General Hoth for a conference. As they left, Hitler's order arrived at the headquarters, "Sixth Army stand firm in spite of danger of temporary encirclement." Ironically, that Sunday, 22 November, was for Protestants the day of remembrance of the dead. "A somber *Totensonntag* 1942," Kurt Reuber, a priest serving as a doctor with 16th Panzer Division, wrote. "Worry, fear and horror." All too often, the phrase, "We are surrounded," spread in the German lines. Unlike the rosy picture in Berlin, the situation in Russia was one of harsh reality. The far-ranging Soviet Cavalry presented a surreal picture to the harried Germans. Out in the open, fighting off repeated cavalry thrusts "as if it were 1870," according to one *Wehrmacht* officer, the Germans found that with all the horses that Russians seemingly had, a shortage of horses on the German own side, to pull supplies, was proving the biggest headache. A solution was found that would become an example of German inhumanity.

Nearly starved Russian prisoners were removed from the stockade and put to work as draught animals. "We were put instead of horses to drag carts loaded with ammunition and food," one prisoner later wrote. "Those prisoners who could not drag the carts as quickly as the *Feldwebel* (Sergeant) wanted were shot on the spot. In this way, they were forced to pull carts for four days, almost without any rest." The rest of the prisoners, the sickest of the lot, were left behind to starve and freeze in the snow. By the time the attacking Russians from the Sixty-Fifth Army arrived, only two of the 98 POWs (Prisoners of War) at the Vertyachy camp were still alive. Photographers were sent in to record the event and the Russians formally accused the Germans of a war crime. This would become important later. The long Russian memory would not forget.

On the 23rd, troops from the Vatutin's South-West Front met the Stalingrad Front's 4th Mechanized corps at Sovetsky, thirteen miles southeast of Kalach. In the forward German lines, the men and the officers could clearly see through field glasses, both armies meeting, one from the left and one from the right, until the contrasting waves of men, merged, embracing each other happily, their jubilation displayed by a shower of kisses on the cheeks (in typical Russian style). The Axis troops stared with mute apprehension. They had been effectively trapped. Encircled in a pocket measuring 40 miles by 25 were 242,000 axis soldiers, of which over 230,000 were Germans.

Apart from fencing in 21 German and two Romanian divisions at Stalingrad, the Russians had also snared the entire headquarters of the Sixth Army and its commander. Just a day before the encirclement, Paulus and his staff had flown into the pocket under imprudent orders from Hitler, and here, Paulus would stay with his men come twilight and oblivion.

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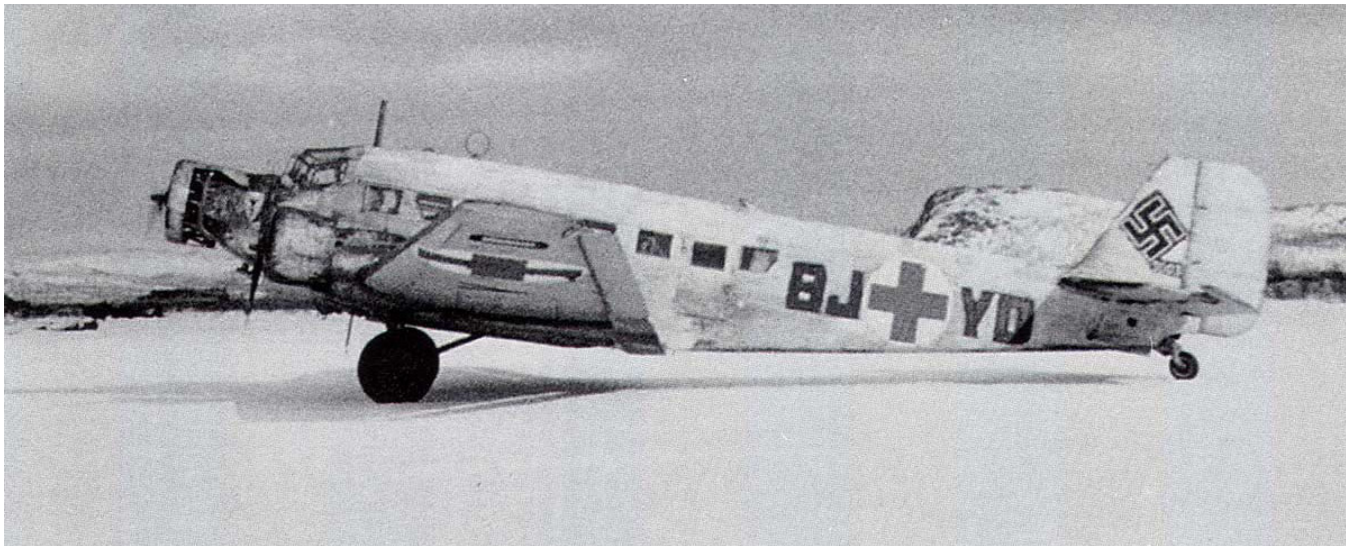
WORLD VIEW The irony that the attacking Germans had trapped themselves at Stalingrad was not lost on the world as is demonstrated by this wartime U.S. cartoon.

HEADING TOWARDS DISASTER

At his headquarters at the Gumrak Train station, Paulus attempted to convince high command of the dangers surrounding his troops. "Army headed for disaster," he wrote, "It is essential to withdraw all our divisions from Stalingrad … the army has only food for six days." Paulus was fully prepared to get the *Fuhrer's* acquiescence but he had overestimated Hitler's altruism. Hitler, although initially unconcerned about the depth of the Russian pincers, was alarmed to learn that the Sixth Army had been cut off. Paulus had gone to extent of planning a breakout on the 27th when Hitler had a brainstorm. The *Luftwaffe* would save the save the day — by airlifting supplies to the besieged army. Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring the *Luftwaffe* chief, being not the instigator of the plan, could have well discredited it. Instead, he grandly proclaimed that it could be achieved with little cost or effort . It was a gross overstatement. But intriguingly enough, there was precedence.

In January 1942, a hundred thousand men of the German II and X Corps had been trapped at a pocket at Demyansk, south of Leningrad. The *Luftwaffe* had been given the job was supplying the beleaguered men until relief came or until the corps was strong enough to break out. The daily supply requirement was put at 270 tons of supplies. Colonel Freidrich Morzik, the *Luftwaffe* Commander of Air Transport in the East, had organized a massive airlift with his entire fleet of multi-engined aircraft. But initially his Ju52 force (the *Luftwaffe's* reliable tri-motor transport plane) numbered only fifty machines. In time, sixty He111 bombers pulled from regular combat units gave the transport fleet the ability to airlift sixty tons a day, but more was needed and in time, Morzik swelled his command with a further eight groups of transports by depriving other fronts.

But the task facing his pilots and crews had been daunting. For one, the Demyansk pocket had possessed only one airfield — poorly suited to accommodate heavy aircraft. In part due to Morzik's competence, a second landing ground was built from scratch inside the pocket at Pyesky. That March, German troops under none other Seydlitz-Kurzbach had widened a narrow corridor through which relief could be achieved. By April, the *Luftwaffe* was flying 300 sorties daily into the encircled area. Later that month, when the army finally broke through to the defenders, Morzik's squadrons had flown in 24,000 tons of supplies and 15,000 fresh troops, taking out 20,000 wounded on the homeward flight. But the cost had been high. Some 265 planes had been lost on operations — mostly in accidents during take



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BACKBONE The venerable Junker Ju52, affectionately nicknamed "Auntie Ju" by the troops was expected to form the mainstay of the airlift attempt. This machine is from Kgr.zbV 1.

off and landing. An estimated 385 *Luftwaffe* men had died. On the other side, the Russians had lost 408 planes, the majority of them fighters, while attempting to crush the air supply.

Göring was certain that the same feat of logistics could be achieved at Stalingrad. Paulus was horrified. Even at the height of the fighting in Stalingrad, his divisions had experienced constant shortages in fuel and ammunition — even in the presence of reliable air and rail links. With the loss of the rail link to Soviet pincers, disaster threatened. What was more, *Luftwaffe* officers in the field were openly critical of the airlift plan.

General Martin Fiebig, the chief of *Fliegerkorps VIII*, warned Paulus' deputy, General Schmidt as early on the 22nd that the Sixth Army could not be supplied by air alone. His immediate superior, General Wolfram von Richthofen was more specific, pointing out that it would take 225 Ju52s, and a minimum of at least 550 tons of supplies per day to equal the demands of the Sixth Army. The losses at Demyansk had been made up (500 Ju52s had been built in 1942 alone) but the Hitler-Göring proposal would call for one-third of the *Luftwaffe's* transport force of 750 Ju52s to be actively engaged in the Stalingrad area — at the cost of other equally important fronts.

Furthermore, two supply airfields closest to the Stalingrad pocket, Tatsinskaya and Morosovskaya, 150 miles to the southwest, would have to bear the brunt of the effort. If they were snowed in or worse — if they were to be captured by the Red Army, the airlift faced disastrous consequences.

Then there was yet another major factor that had emerged since the Demyansk incident. Although the confidence of the Soviet Air force was still shaky, it was stronger than before. It no longer flew antiquated machines but a new breed of aircraft, fresh from factories in the east, including the Yakovlev Yak-9 fighter (a match for the *Luftwaffe's* Fw190), and the Pe-2, a fast, light bomber. Four entire Russian Air Armies had been concentrated in the Stalingrad area and Soviet fighters routinely patrolled the skies over the city, replacing the once-familiar sight of German Stukas by dreaded silhouettes of Russian Il-2's, a formidably-armored attack aircraft. Even Weich's declared that the "*Luftwaffe* would at best, be able to provide ten percent of the army's minimum daily requirements." He also endorsed Paulus's plans to breakout of Stalingrad, stating that although "it will mean heavy losses…it will be far less than those that must ensue if the situation is left to develop". Hitler, however, saw a far different picture. He saw the warm and well-fed soldiers of the Sixth Army holding their lines, supplied by air, denying Stalingrad to enemy until being relieved.

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GERMAN TACTICIAN Erich von Manstein was perhaps best responsible for Germany's soaring fortunes during the war, first in France and then on the Eastern Front. A brilliant tactician, he became a Field Marshal in June 1942 and was responsible for several spectacular actions before and after Stalingrad. But Hitler's interference in operations resulted in fierce arguments over strategy. Relieved of command in March 1944, Manstein, never returned to another combat assignment again. Although secretly of Jewish heritage, he was strangely tepid in post-war criticisms of the Nazi leadership.

On the 24th, he radioed Paulus: "I will do everything in my power to supply [the Sixth Army] adequately, and disengage it when it the time is convenient." Paulus took this message to his corps commanders. They were aghast and urged Paulus to break out before the Russians consolidated their

STAVKA ARCHIVES

WINTER BATTLES A line of Russians leaves their trenches for the attack. They are covered by a squad armed with a Degtyarev DP.28 light machine gun. Courage was often reinforced by drink.

Daily Red Army rations included a 100 grams of Vodka for each man, approximately a quarter of a pint. (Below) One man drinks his daily ration from an appropriated and prized German mess canteen. Another waits for his turn.

RGAKFD, KARASNOGORSK

gains. Maj-General Hube of XIV Panzer Corps, one of Hitler's choice men, but a popular commander whose troops nicknamed him *der Mensch* ("The Man"), adamantly told Paulus that "a breakout is our only chance." LI Corps commander, Seydlitz-Kurzbach, a fierce anti-Nazi, went one step further. He sent an unsuccessful petition (countersigned by all four corps commanders) urging Paulus to withdraw the army without waiting for official authorization from Berlin. But already on the evening of November 23, Seydlitz-Kurzbach had acted without authorization, ordering the 60th Motorized, 4th and 94th Infantry Divisions to burn their stores and withdraw from the northern side of the city. As smoke from thousands of fire filled the sky, the quartermaster of the 94th Division recorded men burning "overcoats, uniforms, boots, documents, maps, typewriters," and even worse, food.

The sight of this destruction alerted the Russians who moved in as the division withdrew from Spartanovka, dealing 1,000 casualties. Hitler was furious and unfairly put the blame on Paulus. Then, in an extraordinary decision on the 25th, he decided to separate command of the forces within the pocket. Oblivious of Seydlitz-Kurzbach's anti-Nazi sentiments and convinced that he was a brilliant officer in defense, Hitler appointed him leader of the northeastern sector.

Paulus took the message to Seydlitz-Kurzbach's headquarters. "Now, you have your own command," he told Seydlitz-Kurzbach. "You can break out." Seydlitz-Kurzbach, unable to hide his embarrassment, took the message and turned away. Their superior, General Manstein, was appalled at this halving of command. But this man, who became a receptacle for all of Paulus' concealed emotions, would share complicity in Hitler's folly for not passing on vital information to the Stalingrad garrison when the opportune moments arose. Still Paulus placed great faith on Manstein. In a remarkable letter to him dated that November, Paulus betrayed his overwhelming struggle of conscience. While accepting that the

Sixth Army was doomed if Hitler's orders were maintained, Paulus also maintained that he could not willingly disobey the *Fuhrer* as he had taken an oath of loyalty to Germany before the war. All Manstein could do was offer a few pithy words of encouragement, and worse, despite his contempt for Hitler and the high command, told Paulus to continue following Hitler's orders. "The *Führer's* order relieves you of all responsibility other than the most appropriate and resolute execution of the *Führer's* order. What happens when, in execution of the *Führer's* order, the army has fired off its last bullet — for that you are not responsible," he said.

Back in Germany, Hitler was still seething over Stalingrad's encirclement and the poor performance of the Romanians. By a feat of imagination, he charged Lt-General Ferdinand Heim, the commander of XLVIII Panzer Corps, as the man responsible for the debacle as he had pulled some of his tanks out of the line to reinforce the under-gunned Romanians. Heim was relieved of his command and General Schmundt at the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's East Prussian headquarters, noted that, "the *Führer* himself will decide on all further measures of military discipline in this matter [in Heim's case]."

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STALINGRAD SCAPEGOAT Lt-General Ferdinand Heim, who by turtous logic, was made responsible for the Russian success of Operation "Uranus."

In January 1943, Heim was, at Hitler's personal order, dismissed from the Army, arrested and placed in solitary confinement. He was released in April 1943, only to be transferred to a military hospital at Ulm. In a post-war interview, Heim stated that the only documentation for his arrest was Hitler's order — with a complete absence of sentence or explanation. In May 1943, Heim's dismal was rescinded and he was officially retired. Brought out of retirement in August 1944, he commanded German forces at Boulogne and when given instructions to the fight to the last, set about preparing the defenses with the minimal resources available. Shelled and bombed, he and the garrison surrendered to the 3rd Canadian Division on 23 September.[11]

By now, the airlifts had begun. To anyone watching it was clearly apparent that Hitler's ostentatious plan was unrealistic in practice. For the Sixth Army to hold out, it needed at least 250 tons of ammunition, 120 tons of fuel and another 180 tons of food per day. On paper, it appeared that the *Luftwaffe* could easily achieve the total considering that it would have to launch only 150 Ju52s per day (each capable of lugging nearly five tons). In reality, there were several teething problems. First of all, as this was not an airdrop operation; the Ju52s would have to actually land inside the pocket to discharge their cargo — provided that they had successfully run the gauntlet of Russian fighters. To accommodate them, the Sixth Army initially had seven airfields (later reduced to two), including those at: Karpovka, Bolshaia Rossoshka, Voroponovo, Basargino, the Stalingrad Flying School and two major fields at Gumrak and Pitomnik. Of all, Pitomnik, situated 15 miles

11 Incarcerated in England until 1948, Heim returned to Germany afterwards and died in 1977.

west of the city, was the most suitable, as it had good concrete runways and had lights, flare paths and signal flares. Sixth Army officers were none to slow in realizing that the existence of the army had become inexorably tied to the airfields — if they fell, supply would be impossible. Yet, from the beginning, the airlifts were a fiasco.

At the start on November 23, Richthofen could only amass 350 Ju52s and a hundred He111s — of which only about one-thirds were operational at any given time. In mid-1942, the air fleet had been centralized around five *Kampfgruppen zur besonderen Verwendung* (KGr.zbV), literally translating into "Battlegroups for special operations," in simple terms denoting the *Luftwaffe's* transport units. While his units had performed admirable during "Blau" by evacuating 51,619 wounded soldiers, flying in 27,044 fresh troops, 4,614 tons of fuel, 1,787 tons of ammunition and 73 tons of supplies to the army,[12] Richthofen's units had been badly depleted by combat losses and the normal wear and tear of continuous operations. For example on 9 November, Richthofen's KGr.zbV 900 had possessed only 12 serviceable Ju52s out of a total strength of 41, while KGrzbV 50 had only 13 out of 35. It was the same story with the other groups.

Understandably, when the airlifts began, Richthofen could put up only 30 of his 295 cargo planes — setting a trend that would prove hard to break. Losses came quickly. On November 24, 22 transport planes were lost through enemy action and another nine were shot on the 25th.

UNITS OF THE AIRLIFT

UNIT	AIRCRAFT	STRENGTH	NOTES
1st KgrzbV	Junkers Ju52	N/A	
5th KgrzbV	Heinkel He111	N/A	
50th KgrzbV	Junkers Ju52	35	
102nd KgrzbV	Junkers Ju52	N/A	
172nd KgrzbV	Junkers Ju52	N/A	
200th KgrzbV	Focke-Wulf Fw200	20	Two Squadrons (from January 1943)
900th KgrzbV	Junkers Ju52	41	
Viermotorige Transportstaffel	Junkers Ju90 & Junkers 290	7 3	

The Russian Air Force on the other hand, was a force to reckon with. Three Russian Air Armies in the area (the Sixteenth, Eighth and Seventeenth) and could boast of 480 fighters, 359 bombers and 418 attack aircraft. On 1 December, Stalin gave the official order to destroy the German airlift, but even before that, the Russian Air Forces had struck all along the line to gain the initiative. The supplying airfields outside the pocket were routinely hit by marauding droves of Russian bombers and attack fighters — causing havoc to the airlifts. In December alone, the soviets flew 2,856 sorties against the German airfields. Those Ju52 and He111s that successfully took off found their way to Stalingrad barred by treacherous weather and enemy fighter screens. Losses were heavy. In the 48 hours between November 28 and the 30th for instance, of 36 Ju52s that departed for the pocket, only 12 landed, bringing just 24 tons of supplies. The remaining lost their way in the clouds or fell victim to enemy fighters.

Between November 30 and December 1, the airlift took a heavy blow when the Russian Air Force destroyed 28 transports (mostly Ju52s) in strafing and bombing runs inside the pocket. By the 4th, the Luftwaffe had a lost a grand total of 38 Ju52s and 15 He111s in just nine days of

12 The transports had also ferried 20,173 ton of aviation fuel, 9,492 tons of ammunition, 2,764 tons of supplies and 3,731 tons of equipment to the Luftwaffe in the theatre.

operations. In the pocket, the besieged soldiers were receiving on average a meager 70 tons of cargo, with the transports rarely managing over 180 tons. On a rare occasion, on December 7, the *Luftwaffe* managed 362 tons — a record for the airlift, and 360 tons on the 20th. Much of the supplies were fuel and ammunition as Paulus had agreed to keep the food supply balanced by slaughtering ten thousand of the army's horses.

Even then, shortages in food began to become chronic by mid-December. In desperation, the *Luftwaffe* transferred the *Viermotorige Transportstaffel* (Four-Engined Transport Squadron) to the Russia, equipped with seven Ju90s (a militarized version of a pre-war airliner), and three of the even larger Ju290s (including one prototype), each capable of carrying ten tons of cargo. The squadron's entry into the battlefield in January 1943 was just short of disaster. On January 14, one of the Ju290's (the prototype), overloaded with wounded, took off from Gumrak at such a steep angle that it stalled and crashed; another was shot down by Russian fighters. Several examples of the in-development He177 two-engined bomber were also pressed into service, but the aircraft still had several teething problems and five were lost — mostly in crashes.

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NAZI SUPERWEIGHT The Junkers Ju290 was an experimental modification of the older Ju90 airliner. It was meant to replace the Fw200 Condor (which was also used at Stalingrad), because of the latter's slow speed and vulnerability to enemy fighters. Eight examples had been built by the time of the Stalingrad airlifts and one was lost in a crash. Two others were lost in other airlifts over North Africa, the following year.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

VIGILANT The commander of a PzIII of the 23rd Panzer Division keeps watch for enemy forces. The Panzer III, by now hopelessly outclassed by Soviet armor had started to become ineffectual. By December 26, the 23rd Panzer Division had been reduced to about a dozen tanks by combat losses.

By early-December, it became apparent that the *Luftwaffe* was falling short of its objectives. Senior German commanders in Russia began to look for alternatives. A first step was Hitler's reorganization of the southern armies, including Paulus' Sixth Army, the derelict Romanian and the Fourth Panzer Armies into Army Group Don, under Manstein, on November 21.

He charged Manstein with "bringing the enemy's attack [on the Stalingrad front] to a standstill and recapture positions previously held by us." Another key order was to breakthrough to the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. Manstein went to his task with a heavy heart. He was realistic enough to know that whatever he planned, all he could ever hope to prolong the life of the Sixth Army. But his plan, codenamed Operation *Wintergewitter* (Winter Storm) was bold and imaginative. It called for the shattered remnants of the Romanian armies and a Panzer Corps from Hoth's Fourth Army to punch a gap through the Russian lines in the south through to Stalingrad. But unknown to Manstein, the Russians had already predicted all of this.

Zhukov, who had intended to follow "Uranus" with "Saturn," a second shattering blow at the weakest link in the German line, the Italian Eighth Army south of Rostov, wanted to get underway as soon as possible. "Saturn" would cut off the rest of Army Group Don and trap the First Panzer and Seventeenth Armies in the Caucasus. But first they had to deal with whatever Manstein intended to do to save the Sixth Army. Stalin was especially impatient. He ordered the Second Guards Army (the most powerful army in the Red Army) to take up position west of Stalingrad to move on Rostov when the order came. In the meantime, on November 28, he asked Zhukov for an estimation of the German intent. Zhukov's report was prompt: the Germans would attempt a relief from the direction of Nizhne-Chirskaya and Kotelnikovo. His assessment would prove remarkably accurate.

In the meantime, Manstein made hasty preparations to get his force underway. The headquarters of the unit-less LVII Panzer Corps[13] from the Caucasus was organized to conduct the operation with Hoth running the show at Fourth Panzer Army headquarters. Three panzer divisions joined it — the 17th, the 23rd and 6th — the latter recently arrived from France. Other units were also promised, including four infantry and three *Luftwaffe* Field Divisions which never arrived because they were never released by their parent units or did not have enough transportation to move. Still Hoth was especially pleased by the arrival of the 6th Panzer Division. The unit had recently refitted at Brittany and contained a full complement of armor and support, including 160 long-barrelled Panzer Mark IVFs and forty assault guns.

13 Under General Friedrich Kirchner

In all, he had 75,000 men and 500 tanks to punch his way to Stalingrad. On the Corps' right flank were the Romanians, to guard against counterattacks from the Russian Fifty-First Army, a potential threat with 34,000 men and 77 tanks. On December 3, Hoth produced his plan for "Winter Storm," under the patently unexposed sub-head of: Fourth Panzer Army relieves Sixth Army. But to Manstein's dismay, the operation was delayed first by the 17th Panzer Division which was held back on Hitler's order to act as a reserve for the Italian Eighth Army, and then by the weather which took a turn for the worst from December 2. A battalion of new Tiger tanks[14] armed with formidable 88mm guns were also promised but these did not set off to join Army Group Don until December 21 and would miss the operation all together. Snow and sleet set back the operation for nearly a week but on the 12th, Manstein gave the go ahead to Hoth.

Advancing out from the village of Kotelnikovo, Hoth's LVII Panzer Corps drove hard for Stalingrad, 80 miles away. The Russians, who had not expected the Germans to start so quickly, were caught off guard. Yeremenko warned that the attack, if not checked in time, could cut through the 57th Army on Stalingrad's south flank. Stalin immediately ordered the 2nd Guards Army, under Lt-General Malinovsky, into the path of the LVII Corps. At the same time, he ordered the Sixth and the First Guards Tank Armies to launch a counterattack on the Italians, to force Manstein to divert valuable reserves in their aid.

Operation "Neptune" as the Russian counter-attack was codenamed, unfurled against the Italians in all its might. The Italians held the line for 48 hours but after that fell back in disarray. Manstein watched in horror as his left flank crumbled, but kept "Winter Storm" on its course. Yeremenko ordered the 4th Mechanized Corps and the 13th Tank Corps to block Hoth's thrust. The 6th Panzer Division made significant progress, covering 32 miles in the first day and even reaching the Aksay River. On the second day, they rolled into the village of Verkhne-Kumsky and as they did so, a heavy rain began to fall, thawing the snow. The division pushed on to the high ground around the village and blundered straight into the incoming Russians. A ferocious battle erupted, which, in the words of the German divisional commander, Maj-General Erhard Raus, was a "gigantic wrestling-march," that raged for three days.

14 From the 503rd "Felderrnhalle" Schwere Panzer Abteilung.

SUDDEUTSCHER VERLAG BILDERDIENST

ICE COMBAT A German heavy machine-gun team sets up in the frozen steppes south of the Aksay River.

German Divisions involved

6th Panzer

17th Panzer

23rd Panzer

Elements of the 11th Panzer Regiment rumbled east and attacked the tank force of the Russian 13th Mechanized Corps, inflicting heavy casualties. A Soviet mechanized brigade which had been sent after the tanks came in from the northeast, only to be pinpointed by German reconnaissance. Before the Russians knew what had happened, they were being attacked from the flanks. The Russians fled, but they had barely gone when a second mechanized brigade appeared from the northwest, blundering straight into a German defensive line. Hoth's troops held their position but Russians started to appear behind them and two Russian tank brigades attacked from the west. Several T-34s carrying infantry on their backs actually broke into Verkhne-Kumsky but were destroyed by German troops who closed in with explosive charges.

Word then came that other Russians had occupied the Saliyevsky-Verkhniy Kumsky road, cutting off the 6th Panzer's supply route. Raus quickly turned his forces around and rumbled south to reopen the road. The attack forced the Russians to commit their tank reserves. Hoth quickly ordered it smashed. The entire German pincer then withdrew south to a bridgehead at Saliyevsky to regroup. Although they had gained no ground, the Germans had cause to cheer. A massive amount of soviet armor had been destroyed. Elsewhere, the 23rd Panzer Division reached the southern bank of the Myshkova River near Kapinsky. From these positions, the Stalingrad pocket was a mere 40 miles away. Alarmed, the Russians sent in a scratch force from the Second Guards Army[15] to destroy the German bridgehead but as matters

15 The Second Guards Army had: 1st and 13th Guards Rifle Corps and the 2nd Guards mechanized Corps. In addition,

SUDDEUTSCHER VERLAG BILDERDIENST

DEFEAT Two Germans, trailed by a winterized StuG self-propelled gun, dejectedly fall back from the Myhskova River.

stood, it would take them three days to arrive by train.

On the 18th, the 6th Panzer Division crossed the river in strength to establish a small bridgehead on the Russian side, nearly overrunning Malinovsky's headquarters, who prudently withdrew his staff north. Much of the Second Guards Army was still in the rear, but determined divisions of Rifles and Tanks marched all day for the Myshkova. To Malinovsky's relief, Moscow also sent the 4th Mechanized Corps, the 87th Rifle Division and the remnants of a depleted Cavalry Corps. The reinforcements poured in on the 19th, a Saturday, when the 98th and 3rd Guards Rifle Divisions were hauled in by trains which started to run around the clock. The reinforcements had the desired effect. By the 21st, Hoth was stuck.

Stalingrad was just 30 miles away. Yeremenko fully expected Paulus' tanks to break out from the pocket and link up with their comrades in the south, but the tanks never moved. At this moment, according to the post-war accounts of German generals, a breakout by Paulus from Stalingrad towards LVII Corps would have succeeded. Certainly, Paulus was encouraged to do so by Manstein, even though losses would have been terrific. Manstein took the case up with Zeitzler at Berlin, but Hitler was adamant. The Sixth Army could break out, he said, only if it could still hold on to Stalingrad. It was the logic of a madman.

When Manstein personally wired the Wolf's Lair for the withdrawal order, Hitler did not even deign to send him a reply. Exasperated, Manstein urged Paulus to breakout, even without Hitler's consent. It was Paulus' last chance to save his army but he chose not to take it. In any case, his seventy remaining tanks had enough fuel for only about a dozen miles worth of travelling and he genuinely believed that "they could hold out as long as they were fed." His self-propagated optimism was painfully apparent in a letter to his wife in which he wrote: "After the winter, there is another May to follow."

Meantime, Stalin and Zhukov had realized that the best way to destroy "Winter Storm" was to check the advance at the Mishkova, while delivering the actual blow elsewhere. Operation "Saturn" was quickly modified and now became "Little Saturn," in which the Sixth and First Guards Armies were to smash through the Italian Eighth Army on the Don, opening a massive fissure through the Axis lines, instead of concentrating at Rostov.

The attack went underway on December 16. In two days of fighting, the entire frontline along the lower Chir River began to give way. The long-awaited 17th Panzer Division had finally joined Hoth's fighting troops but by this point it was already too late. Massive groups of T-34's were already on the loose, rampaging behind the Italian lines, shooting up depots and rail junctions. One Soviet pincer was

it had been reinforced with the 7th Tank, 4th Mechanized and 4th Cavalry Corps.

of graver concern than the others. This was Major-General Vasily Mikhailovich Badanov's 24th Tank Corps which was making hard for the main *Luftwaffe* supply airfield for Stalingrad at Tatsinskaya.

Badanov, a formidable commander with the great brush of a large handlebar moustache protruding past his face, drove his men hard. On the afternoon of December 23, his troops captured Skassirskaya, just north of Tatsi — the German name for Tatsinskaya. The local *Luftwaffe* air commander, General Martin Fiebig had received strict instructions from Hitler not to abandon the airfield unless it came under artillery fire. But the tanks had come without artillery fire and the planes were still on the ground.

Furious at the incompetence at High Command, Fiebig ordered his motley crew of ground personnel to defend the airfield. All they had were seven 88mm flak guns which were positioned to cover the road. While this was going, Fiebig ordered the massive fleet of 196 planes on the airfield to prepare for departure. The airfield broke out into a mass of activity until "around the runway, it looked like chaos," Richthofen's chief of staff wrote. "With engines running, one could hardly understand a single word."

Visibility that early pre-dawn morning was poor with a thick mist from low clouds covering the area as light snow fell. Then at 5:20 a.m., to everyone's shock, the first Russian shells struck the outer perimeter. Up to this point, not a single plane had taken off and the Russians had wily come up cross-country, ignoring the road.

Initially, many of the pilots in their noisy planes did not realize what was happening, even after two Ju52's inexplicably caught fire. Then Fiebig's voice came crackling the radio: "Off you go, head for Novocherkassk."

The noise multiplied as the planes increased throttle. Despite the near presence of the Russians, there was surprisingly little panic and the planes took off in a steady stream. The Russians watched in awe as a veritable shooting gallery unfolded before them. Some of the tankers began to shoot wildly. One T-34 even sped across the airfield and rammed a Ju52, blowing both plane and tank to eternity. A slight strain of haste overtook the *Luftwaffe* men now, for there were some collisions as pilots jostled to get on the runway. A steady pile of burning wrecks began to pile up, but then at 6:15 that morning, the last wave of survivors took off. Fiebig himself was in one of the last planes to depart. In all, 108 Ju52s and 16 Ju86 trainers managed to get away, but 72 planes had been lost (including a dozen that had been reportedly captured intact), constituting 10 percent of

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GENERAL MARTIN FIEBIG

STAVKA ARCHIVES

MAJOR-GENERAL VASILY BADANOV

LITTLE SATURN A column of Soviet T-34s advance on a snow covered road during the Russian offensive.

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

the *Luftwaffe's* total transport fleet. Badanov was immediately promoted, awarded the new order of Suvorov and made a national hero. Soviet propaganda claimed that his force, now renamed with the illustrious title of 2nd Guards Tank Corps, had destroyed 431 planes — an incredible exaggeration.[16]

On the ground, the situation was just as dire. By the 22nd, the weight of the Russian armies against LVII Panzer Corps had precluded all chance of success. The unreliable Romanians for one had already abandoned their positions on Hoth's flank, leaving LVII Corps in danger of being surrounded. This event signaled the death of "Winter Storm." On the evening of the 23rd, Hoth received orders to pull his men back. Raus noted that "Right down to the most junior soldier it was absolutely clear" "that this signified defeat at Stalingrad."

STAVKA ARCHIVES

DEBRIS OF WAR The aftermath of the Russian attack. A shattered Junkers Ju52 at Tatsinskaya.

On Christmas Day, Manstein, with the threat of sweeping Russian armor hanging above his ahead, told Hoth shift the emphasis of his army into countering the Russian armies advancing from the north. With the withdrawal of the Panzers, the Second Guards Army pushed on and took Kotelnikovo on December 29 — effectively restoring the lines. The men at Stalingrad were now completely alone.

16 See Appendix for order of battle. The unit was later cut off by attacking Panzers and the Russians were forced to withdraw after abandoning much of their equipment. The Corps became a Guards unit in December.

THE WINTER OF MISERY

By now, Stalingrad was a charnel house. Deprived of ammunition and food, but still in good morale, the Germans endured. But men were dying on an alarming scale. Paulus sanctioned the slaughter of 400 draught horses on the 29th alone, but the meat would not last long.

The Russians, well-defended and maintained, now that the Volga had completely frozen over — allowing trucks to cross over — toyed with the Sixth Army. On December 2, Chuikov, well aware of Paulus' difficulties, launched a harassing raid against the 297th Infantry Division near Red Square, to make them waste ammunition. By the 8th, the besieged axis troops were reduced to less than a thousand calories per day. To get a true picture of what was happening at Stalingrad, Zeitzler dispatched a six-member fact-finding team to the city on the 24th, headed by his adjutant, Major Coelestin von Zitzewitz.

"You will fly to Stalingrad…taking with you a wireless section of the Supreme Command Signals Regiment," Zeitzler had said. "What I want you to do is to send direct to me, by radio, a rapid report on the situation there. Make it as full as possible. You have no command powers of any sort. We're not worried about that and have the fullest confidence in General Paulus' ability." The team had a 70 watt short-wave radio and a 15 watt ultra-shortwave transmitter to broadcast the reports, and Zitzewitz went to work. Despite Lt-General Arthur Schmidt's Pro-Nazi propagandist interference at Sixth Army headquarters, the Major painted an untarnished image of the conditions within the city. In clear and painstaking detail, he pointed out the debilitating toll that the winter and the shortage of food was taking on the Sixth Army; how the hospitals were overflowing with the wounded and the trenches frozen over with ice. In one shocking broadcast, he described how a man's frostbitten fingers were eaten by rats as he slept. It was a shattering blow to rosy façade built up in Berlin. But shroud of self-delusion closed quickly when Göring announced that the enemy must have "captured the transmitter" and sending these "defeatist messages."

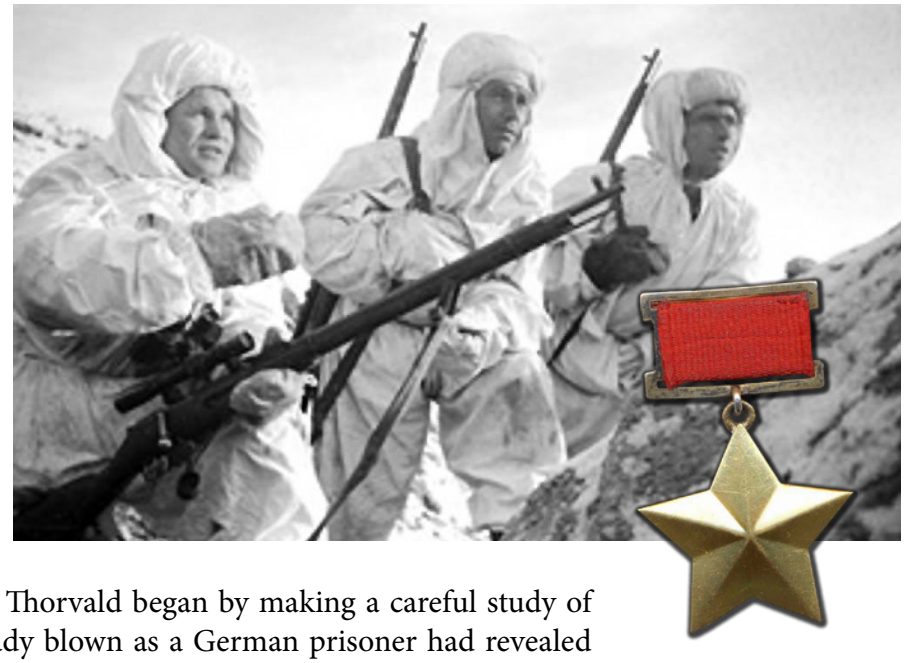
Zeitzler, however, cut his own rations in a movement of camaraderie with the men in Stalingrad, losing 26 pounds in two weeks. Hitler, informed of this measure by Martin Bormann, finally ordered Zeitzler to return to normal diet, banning champagne and brandy at headquarters as a concession, in tepid recognition of the "heroes of Stalingrad."

Back in the city, Russian snipers were making life hell for the Germans. The soviets had established a snipers school in the remains of the Lazur Chemical factory run by Vasili Zaitsev, a formidable shot from the Urals. Zaitsev had come to Stalingrad with the Siberians of the 284th Rifle Division on 20 September and quickly showed his handiness with a rifle, a skill learnt as a boy in his native village of Elininski, on the foothills of the Urals. Zaitzev's and his pupils used the ruins of the city to their advantage and quickly emerged to become formidable headaches for the Germans. Together, they were worth an entire brigade to Chuikov.

In one ten-day period, before November 10, Zaitzev, whose name means hare, shot and killed 32 Germans with a standard issue Mosin-Nagant rifle.[17] Soviet propaganda turned the simple shepherd into a national hero and boasted of his ability to kill Germans with a single shot. So great was the menace that the Germans flew in their own expert sniper to deal with Zaitsev. SS Colonel Heinz Thorvald, the chief of the SS sniper school at Zossen, near Berlin, came to Stalingrad with the specific mission of eliminating top Red Army snipers in the city. By this time, a mysterious Red Army sniper, identified only by the codename "Zikan" had already killed 224 Germans by November 20. As little else is known about him, including his name, he is probably a propagandist creation.

Thorvald's ultimate objective was Zaitsev. The story too, carries a trace of legend making, making

17 Zaitsev had crossed the Volga with 1047th Rifle Regiment of the 284th Division on September 22, as a Sergeant Major. He was awarded a Medal of Valor and a sniper rifle after killing a German officer at 800 yards with a single shot and two others who came to check on the body. His commander had been nearby to witness the event.



CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

ACE SNIPER Vasili Zaitsev (far left) studies the German lines with two of his comrades from the 284th Division. All are well equipped for the winter weather with white parkas, gloves and Valenki boots. For his battlefield accomplishments, Zaitsev became a "Hero of the Soviet Union" (depicted on the right). Today, the scope of Zaitsev's rifle is on display in Moscow.

it suspect. According to the story, Thorvald began by making a careful study of the area. His cover had been already blown as a German prisoner had revealed his presence to Red Army officers, resulting in the SS officer supposedly being hunted by Zaitsev and his team of snipers. For three days, the opponents stalked each other around the "9th of January" Square in central Stalingrad. Thorvald killed a Red Army Commissar named Danilov who was reporting the duel for the Soviet Press. Unhappily for Thorvald, his shot gave away his position and Zaitsev set a trap. The Russian waited until the sun was behind him and persuaded his apprentice, Sniper Kulikov, to raise his helmet to draw the Germans' fire. When Thorvald fired, Kulikov cried out as if he was hit. When Thorvald raised his head to check, Zaitsev shot him between the eyes. Although the story is impressive, it may be a little apocryphal as there is conflicting evidence that the duel ever took place. It is confirmed by Chukiov's memories but not by the recollections of other senior commanders. Thorvald himself existed (in that there is one man in records with precisely that name and rank), but he was likely only an officer with theoretical experience as he was not awarded any major awards. Zaitzev ultimately went on to kill 242 Germans (according to Russian sources) before being blinded by a mortar shell.[18]

Aside from Zaitsev, there were other formidable snipers in the area. When a sniper reached a tally of 40, he was awarded the tile of "Nobel Sniper." At least three other "Nobel Snipers" crossed the one hundred mark during the battle, they being: Sergeant Maxim Passar from a division in the 21st Army who was credited with 103 kills, Corporal Studentov who killed 170 enemy soldiers, and an unverifiable Commissar named Iln of a Guards division, who supposedly killed 185 men.

Aside from the snipers the freezing winter was also taking a toll on the Sixth Army. It was a cruel irony for the Germans that the winter chose to be the fiercest at the time of their occupation. Even the Russians, snug in their underground bunkers and sheltered behind thick screens of winter clothing, complained. By day, the temperature was a mind-numbing -13° F (-25°C) or less, while by night the temperature dropped even further to -47° F (-44°C). A Russian war correspondent described the conditions: "If you breathe on your glove a thin film of ice immediately forms. You cannot eat anything because all our food, bread, sausage, and eggs, have turned into stone. Even wearing *valenki* (felt boots) and two pairs of woolen socks you had to move your toes all the time to keep the circulation going. Without *valenki*, frostbite would have been certain, and the Germans had no *valenki*. To keep your hands in good condition you had to clap half the time or play imaginary scales. Once I took out a pencil to write

18 The efforts of Professor Vladmir Filatov, a noted Russian ophthalmologist, saved Zaitsev's sight. On 22 February 1943, Zaitsev became a "Hero of the Soviet Union." He late returned to action and ended the war as a Captain, fighting in the Seelow Heights. After the war, he managed a factory in Kiev, dying in 1991 at the age of 76, just 10 days before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

down a few words. The first word was all right, the second was written by a drunk, and the last two were the scrawl of a paralytic. I quickly blew on my purple fingers and put them back in the lined glove."

A German officer recalled how one of his men had said that "when it gets really cold, one only has no interest in living or fighting, only to lie down and die." It was hardly an exaggeration. The cold coupled with meager food rations was sapping the strength of the Sixth Army. By late-December, five men were living on a single-loaf of bread and a bowl of soup. There seemed little hope of the situation improving. The airlifts had suffered a grievous blow after Tatsinskaya's loss. The capture of the main airlift bases (Morosovskaya fell a few days later), prompted Göring to transfer his squadrons to Salsk, over 200 miles to the southwest. From here, Stalingrad was more than an hour's flight away and the flight line ran straight over airfields of the Soviet Eighth Air Army. In what was a bitter pill to swallow, at about the same time, the Russian supply lines improved significantly. On December 16, a mass of ice of floes crashed into each other and stuck. The Russians quickly established a small footway over the ice with wooden planks. Then an ice highway came into existence as the Russians positioned wooden branches over the floes and poured water to act as freezing cement.

In the next seven weeks, 18,000 trucks and 17,000 other vehicles crossed the iceway into Stalingrad. The Russian wounded were evacuated across the river and badly needed supplies and munitions arrived, including a 122mm howitzer, which went straight into action against the German-held part of the Red October factory. The main office building which had become an integral part of the German defense was reduced to rubble.

The freezing temperatures might have aided the Russian lines of communications, but the frigid conditions escalated the miseries of the Sixth Army. Frost-bite cases escalated from the middle of December. German doctors noted that for the first time, feet were not merely swollen and tinted purple as on previous occasions, but most cases were black and required immediate amputation. Another more worrisome development was the widespread deaths of soldiers "without having received a wound or suffering from a diagnosable sickness." Doctors cited numerous cases, citing "exposure, exhaustion…and [an] unidentified disease," conveniently ignoring the actual cause: starvation. The truth came out after the Sixth Army's chief pathologist, Dr. Hans Girgensohn performed about 50 autopsies, which showed "clear signs of death by starvation: atrophy of the heart and liver, a complete absence of fatty tissue, a severe shrinkage of muscle."

Girgensohn's eight year study (including seven of those years while spent in a Russian POW camp), came to the conclusion that debilitating environmental conditions played as much a part in the degeneration of the body as did actual malnutrition. He wrote that a combination of exhaustion, stress and the cold upset the metabolism of most soldiers so that even when they ate, their bodies absorbed a mere fraction of the nutrients. And the Russians had made little attempt to alleviate the wastelandic, stressful conditions that had overtaken the city.

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY The Red Army was the only regular combatant of the Second World War to actively employ women in combat roles — albeit only in the sniper division (as these women in the photo) and the Air Force. Famously, female combat aviators of the 588th Night Bomber Regiment also operated over Stalingrad.

Every day, propaganda briefs running up to half an hour blared towards the German lines on loudspeakers, broadcasting news intermingled with poems and songs. Some of the most effective items were the revelations that the Italian Eighth Army had disintegrated and fled and that Manstein's "Winter Storm" had been thwarted. Other measures were the ominous ticking of a clock, crackling messages that said that Stalingrad was the "mass grave of Hitler's army," and tango music, which when played against the icy, wintry sweeps of destroyed streets took on an ominous quality. A propaganda leaflet showing a child crying over the body of a German soldier made many of the hardened Germans weep with despair.

EFFECTIVE PROPAGANDA Once it was realized that German morale was eroding the Russians did everything they could to force the capitulation of individual troops. This leaflet, air dropped over German lines reads: "I am following your advice. Accept my surrender, comrade, Do not shoot!"

Conditions failed to improve in the days leading up to Christmas which many German troops saw as a marker of better times to come. In the early morning hours of Christmas, both the 16th Panzer and 60th Motorized Divisions came under stiff attack by the Russians. Elsewhere along the line, those units not under attack found the opportunity to sing Christmas songs, the tones of which cast prosaic memories of home and family. In a characteristic incident, a group of Germans celebrated Christmas at the Red October Factory in front of makeshift Christmas tree constructed from carved-up wooden boxes. Their celebratory meal consisted of a slice of horse, a loaf of bread and cigarettes. By some miracle, someone had even scrounged up rum and wine. A large group clustered around a radio to listen to a special broadcast of *Grossdeutsche Rundfunk*[19] (German Radio), which blared with characteristic pomp, announcing greetings from all corners of the *Reich*. To the surprise of many, the speaker announced: "And now from Stalingrad!" Followed by a cheerful song, to show that all was well in the city. Most of the soldiers were furious. Others reasoned that it was a necessary subterfuge to comfort families with men in Stalingrad that conditions in the city were still tolerable, even though, realistically, it was far from so. An estimated 1,280 Axis soldiers had died of starvation, frostbite and disease on that day alone.

At seven o'clock in the morning of Christmas Day, as the temperature fell to a near unbearable -13° F (-25°C), the Sixth Army War Diary recorded the unavoidable facts: "No supply flights arrived in the last forty-eight hours.[20] Supplies and fuel coming to an end." To Zeitzler, Paulus sent the message: "If we do not receive increased rates of supplies in the next few days we must expect a greatly increased death rate through exhaustion." In stark contrast, the Russians had celebrated New Year's Eve with a large party of ballerinas, actors and musicians. At Kotelnikovo, Russian generals of the 2nd Guards Army dined on a kingly scale — on newly ferried supplies from the Soviet rear and on captured German food provisions headed for Paulus, ranging from French cheese to tinned jams and fish from Norway. Food had become the overwhelming concern for most German troops, an item that had become irrevocably tied to morale, sense of self and duty. One soldier, Wilhelm Hoffman, a member of German 94th Infantry Division, compiled a tragic entry in his diary for December 26th: "The horses have already been eaten. I would eat a cat; they say its meat is tasty. The soldiers look like corpses or lunatics. They no longer take cover from Russian shells; they haven't the strength to walk, run away and hide."

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19 A State controlled radio stationed which could be vaguely equated to the British BBC.

20 Historian Anthony Beevor contends that this is a slight exaggeration as a handful of supplies had arrived during that period. On December 26, 108 tons of supplies arrived, including 10 tons of sweets for Christmas, but no fuel.

HOPELESS DEFIANCE

With the passing of 1943, the Sixth Army now looked to New Year's Day and the onset of 1943 with the glimmering eye of hope. But Paulus was particularly eager to impress upon Hitler and the other brass at headquarters of the desperation in the city. His chance came when *der Mesnch*, Lt-General Hans-Valentin Hube of XIV Corps was informed that he had been awarded the Swords to his Knight's Cross which he was to receive in person from Hitler.

Paulus quickly told Hube to take all the "necessary documents" on matters ranging from shortages in fuel to medicine with the hope that Hitler would finally realize that the *Luftwaffe* was failing to satisfy the necessary supply quotas. Hube was scheduled to fly out in a week's time but in the interim, the painful struggle continued.

On New Year's Day, Hitler sent a carefully worded message that lifted everyone's spirits.

> In the name of the whole German people, I send you and your valiant army the heartiest good wishes for the New Year. The hardness of your perilous position is known to me. The heroic stand of your troops has my highest respect. You and your soldiers, however, should enter the New Year with the unshakeable confidence that I and the whole German Wehrmacht will do everything in our power to relieve the defenders of Stalingrad and that with your staunchness will come the most glorious feat in the history of German arms — Adolf Hitler.

Paulus, with a quick relief that all would ultimately turn out well, wrote back: "*Mein Führer*, your confident words on the New Year were greeted here with enthusiasm. We will justify your trust. You can be certain that we, from the oldest general to the youngest grenadier, will hold out, inspired by fanatical will, and contribute our share to final victory."

But by this point, Paulus' command was in the process of simply fading away. Russian propaganda and constant attacks had exacted a heavy toll from his divisions, notably the Austrians of the 44th Division and Maj-General Edler von Daniel's 376th Division, which had already suffered a large number of men to desertions. In the Romanian sector, in the so-called "Fortress area," the men had suffered heavily to frostbite because of clothing shortages. After the battle, the Romanians would systematically

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ANGUISH A wounded German prisoner is marched away at gunpoint. The misery on his face is apparent, but more was to be endured until he reached the relative safety of a POW camp.

charge Paulus with having neglected them of food and clothing in favor of German troops. All battalions and companies had become so diluted with casualties that their designations on maps had little meaning. Even though 150,000 Axis soldiers were within the pocket, only one in five were combat troops. Many companies had less than a platoon of men. The *ad-hoc* German military entity, the battlegroup, became the most prevalent military small-unit formation, each carrying its own eclectic range of troops, with service personnel gathered alongside combat soldiers, with Cossacks and Hiwis manning guns alongside *Luftwaffe* ground crews, and Panzer crews branded together with artillery men. On January 6, Paulus signaled Zeitzler: "Army starving and frozen, have no ammunition and cannot move tanks anymore." When told of this, Hitler did not respond except to award Lt-General Schmidt with a Knight's Cross. Increasingly, the bestowment of awards and promotions on the trapped garrison was seen as an adequate measure when no physical measure could actually be undertaken.

The Russians, on the other side, were busy planning the annihilation of the pocket. A new operation, codenamed *Koltso* ("Ring") had taken shape at the end of December. Under the Polish-born General Konstantin Rokossovsky, the 21st, 24th, 64th, 65th and 66th Armies with 47 divisions, backed by 5,610 field guns and mortars and 169 tanks was to smash through the Sixth Army perimeter with 300 planes from the 16th Air Army in support. The start date for Operation "Ring" was January 10.

To give the Germans one last chance to surrender, the Russians put together a party of two officers on January 8, Major Aleksander Symslov, an army intelligence officer and Captain Nikolay Dyatlenko of the NKVD, to meet with Paulus. The terms were honorable. In return for surrender, all men would be given food, medical aid and the right to keep their uniforms, including medals. The officers would be allowed to keep their ceremonial swords and to return home after the war ended. After the two officers, with an NCO in the lead, managed a hazardous journey to the German lines, Paulus refused to even meet with them.

The *Luftwaffe* airlift attempts still continued despite heavy losses over the previous weeks.[21] The

21 The third best day for the airlift had been on December 19, when 154 airplanes had brought in 289 tons of supplies. On three important days, 19 and 20 December and 4 January, over a thousand men were taken out of the pocket.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

CRASHED BEHEMOTH A Focke-Wulf Fw200 Condor that had crashed during the airlifts. The "famous ring around the world" emblem which once adorned German bombers from KG40 (bomber wing 40), raiding England in 1940, has been extended to this unit, Kgr.zbV 200, a specially-formed unit. After the airlifts ended, the unit returned to its old designation of Kampfgeschwader (KG) 40.

airfield at Pitomnik within the pocket had been battered by artillery and air strikes to such a degree that the shattered wrecks of planes and wreckage littered the sides of the runway, forming a veritable "machine graveyard." In order to augment the losses, larger Focke-Wulf 200 Condors, originally used for maritime work were added to the transport fleet as each could carry six tons. The even larger Junker Ju290 which could manage 10 tons was also in limited operation but these planes were vulnerable to enemy fighters and were difficult to operate from forward airfields. Even worse, the new main airbase at Salsk came under attack in mid-January, forcing the planes to move again, this time to Zverevo, north of Rostov, to a place which was little more than a snowy runway on an agricultural field.

The ground crews and pilots erected tents to shelter from the cold and conduct operations under dismal conditions. Being a temporary location, Zverevo had little anti-aircraft defenses, and the Russians exploited this flaw with devastating result. On January 18, eighteen waves of Russian fighters and bombers, struck, destroying about fifty Ju52s on the ground.

By now in Stalingrad, the Axis troops shuffled around like stiff caricatures, piling on more and more clothing to keep from freezing. The level of hygiene falling dramatically as there was little water for bathing or even shaving. Lice populations exploded in these conditions and the half-starved and suffering men dreamed of hot baths and warm food as the epitome of a luxurious existence. The bread ration had fallen to 200 grams a day and at times went down to a hundred grams. The last of the draught horses were slaughtered but the frozen meat proved difficult to cut up. Hardly any fuel existed for cooking or melting snow, much less for running tanks. Suicides took place on an alarming scale but the numbers are difficult to distinguish from combat deaths. For many a hardened veteran, the toughest pill to swallow was the possibility of breaking down in front of their comrades. Men left their bunkers and dug outs to cry in solitude, with memories of home, of parents, wives, children. On one occasion, the sight of a starving horse desperately gnawing on a piece of wood moved men to tears.

When Hube returned to the pocket on January 9, he reported that Hitler had refused to believe that Stalingrad was in danger of falling. Instead, Hitler had spoken of a second relief attempt, this time by SS troops — an irrational idea which rapidly spread among the troops who clung to desperate hope despite the painful lure of reality.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

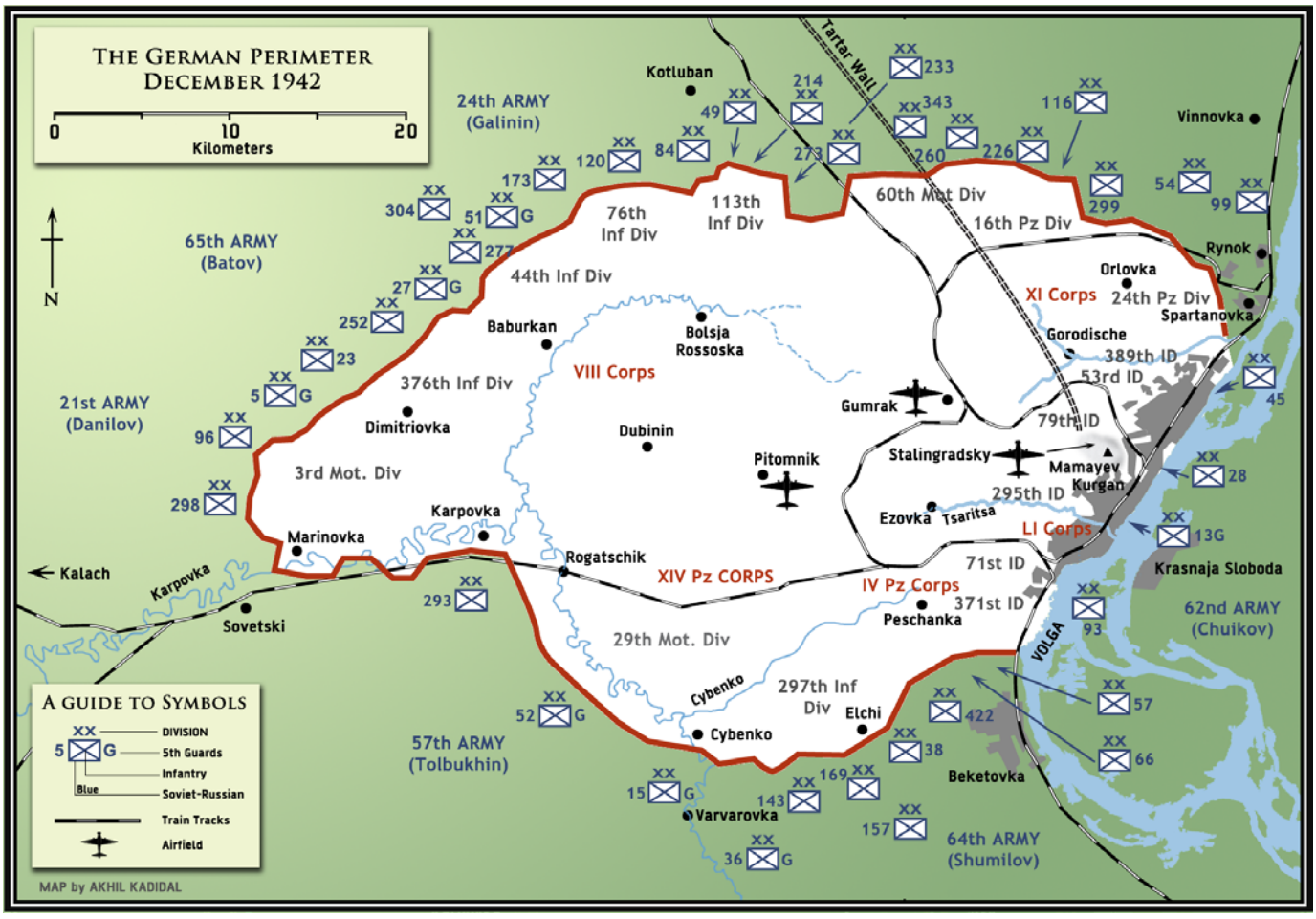
ESCAPE When it became clear that the Sixth Army was doomed, provisions were made to get some of the more valuable men out. A few of the generals made good their escape this way, but so did irreplaceable specialists such as these men. Feelings of guilt predictably overtook many who got away.

THE BITTER END COMES

On the morning of January 10, a Sunday, Operation "Ring" went into effect as planned. When Rokossovsky gave the fire order, 7,000 field guns, Katyusha launchers and mortars opened up, heralding in the words of one Soviet commander, an incessant thunder rolling over the steppes in dark spouts of fountain-like bursts. Colonel Ignatov, the Russian artillery commander, remarked that the barrage was so heavy that there was only two ways to escape — "death or insanity." Von Daniels, in a letter to his wife, described the day as a "very peaceful Sunday." This attempt at indifference was not shared by his men. The grenadiers of one regiment were so astonished at the scale of the barrage that they offered little resistance when the Russians appeared.

After an hour, the bombardment eased but then three waves of Russian troops attacked, with a tank every fifty or a hundred yards as far as the eye could see. On the southwest part of the perimeter, held by the 44th, 29th Motorized and 3rd Motorized Divisions, the front started to cave. By the afternoon, the 29th and the 3rd Motorized found themselves being outflanked. In the 3rd Motorized, resistance was especially slack. Replacements, mostly sick or worn out did little to fight off the Russians and only contemplated, in the words of one officer, "of slipping away to the rear at night."

At the fortified towns of Marinovka and Karopovka, near the perimeter, the Twenty-First and Sixty-Fifth Armies attacked the Germans in strength who were only able to respond with doomed, small-scale counter-attacks. Elsewhere, the Sixty-Sixth Army attacked the 16th Panzer and 60th Motorized Divisions. The last remaining tanks of the 2nd Panzer Regiment held its ground against incoming T-34's charging across the open ground, destroying droves until the survivors fled. In the south, the Sixty-Fourth



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DESPERATE WORK
As the noose tightened around the Sixth Army, coupled with heavy snowfall, the Germans worked frantically to keep the airlifts going. Here a group attempts to free a Ju52 from a heavy snow bank.

Army first bombarded the partly-Austrian 297th Infantry Division and the 82nd Romanian Regiment with artillery, and then attacked. As the shelling lifted, the local German commander, Lt-Colonel Mäder, received word that, "those pigs of Romanians have made a run for it." An entire battalion had packed it in and fled, leaving a gaping hole a mile wide open for the Russians. Pioneers, under the command of Major Götzelmann, rushed in and only just managed to plug the gap after a few Russian tanks had broken through. Mäder's men would continue to fight bravely for the next two days against overwhelming odds, thwarting the 36th Guards Rifle, the 422nd Rifle Division, two marine infantry brigades and a portion of the 13th Tank Corps.[22] On January 11, Marinovka and Karopovka fell and the following day, the Twenty-First and Sixty-Fifth Armies reached the west bank of the frozen Rossoshka River despite the gallantry of the 14th Panzer Division which fought nearly until the last bullet.

Realizing the front was faltering and that they would be overrun until something was done, Paulus decided to send a young, highly-decorated soldier to Hitler's headquarters to press the urgency of breaking out. The officer chosen was a Knight's Cross holder, Captain Winrich Behr, a Panzer man currently with the inglorious job of updating the situation map in Sixth Army headquarters. Behr received word of his mission just hours before his departure and did not even have time to collect farewell letters from his comrades before he took off.

Miraculously, he survived the Russian aerial gauntlet in a He111 teeming with German wounded and reached Taganrog on the Sea of Azov where he met with Manstein. After this, on the following day, the 13th, he flew on Rastenburg to meet Hitler. Reaching the Wolf's Lair that evening, he was escorted to the briefing room where he discovered a reception party of between twenty and twenty-five senior officers. Hitler appeared after ten minutes and immediately began a monologue on Operation "Dietrich," the supposed SS relief attempt towards Stalingrad.

Behr had been warned about this tactic by his brother-in-law, Nicholaus von Below, who was Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant. He waited for the longest time as Hitler spoke on until finally ending with the words, "Herr Hauptmann, when you return to General Paulus, tell him this and that all my heart and my hopes are with him and his Army" — an attempt to send the younger man packing without making his case, a favorite technique used by the *Führer* to circumvent discussions on touchy subjects.

22 Mäder escaped the pocket on January 21-22, after an order came down for one man to be nominated from each division for evacuation. Mäder was the man from the 297th Division designated to be a part of this Sixth Army's equivalent of "Noah's Ark."

UNCOWED MESSENGER Captain Winrich Behr, the reluctant but defiant messenger of the Sixth Army's woes.

Behr would have none of it. He went on to describe with great detail the conditions at Stalingrad, the growing numbers of German deserters going over the Russians, the hunger, the cold and the lack of supplies. At one point his honesty took on such a brutal tone that General Keitel angrily shook a fist at him from behind Hitler's back. Other senior officers attempted to diffuse the tension by asking ridiculous questions but Hitler himself proved surprisingly attentive to Behr's criticism. But when the young Panzer commander had finished, Hitler returned to his maps and pointed to great array of divisions on the board (little more than skeletal forces in reality) that would restore the balance. Hitler also pointed out an entire SS Panzer Army which was already supposedly assembling around Kharkov ready to strike towards Stalingrad. Behr remembered in his discussions with Manstein the day before, that this force still needed weeks to organize.

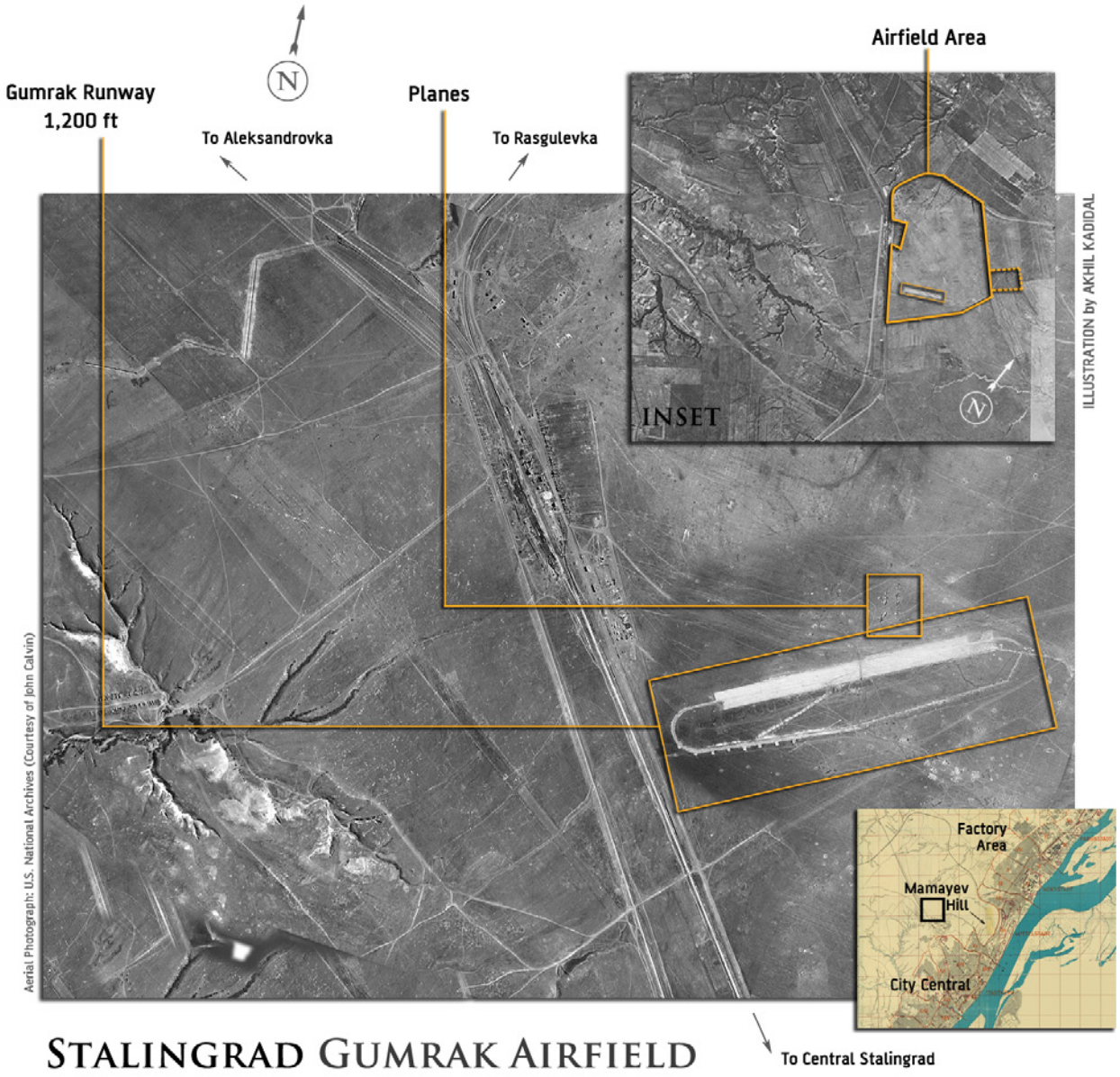
"I saw then that he had lost touch with reality," Behr later said. "He lived in a fantasy world of maps and flags. It was the end of all my allusions about Hitler."

Instead of returning Behr to Stalingrad, the senior leadership had him moved to the Black Sea Coast to work in Melitopol with a new "Special Staff" under the command of *Luftwaffe* Field Marshal Erhard Milch to better coordinate airlifts to Stalingrad. Meantime, again as if in recompense, Hitler ordered another series of awards for the men of the Sixth Army, approving a total of 178 decorations, including Oak Leaves to Paulus's Knight' Cross on the 15th.

Back in Stalingrad, the 16th Panzer and 60th Motorized Divisions had been forced back from the northern perimeter while Chuikov's veteran Sixty-Second Army attacked their old opponents, the 100th Jäger and 305th Infantry Division in the factory district. On the western side of the pocket, the 29th Motorized Division was reduced to a handful of men and the 3rd Motorized Division as forced to abandon much of its transport and heavy weapons, and fall back on foot. The relentless Russian Sixty-Fifth and Twenty-First Armies rolled on towards Pitomnik, a breakthrough which was helped by the progress of the Fifty-Seventh and Sixty-Fourth Armies on the southern flank. Mäder's 297th Division there managed to pull back, just escaping a Russian trap, but von Daniel's 376th Division was cut off. On the afternoon of the 14th, Paulus sent out the message to Army Group Don: "376 Infantry Division is destroyed….Pitomnik airfield will only be useable until 15 January."

The assessment was accurate. On the 15th, Pitomnik indeed fell to Russian troops. A small force of Messerschmitt Me109 fighters which had been based there rapidly took off as the Russians appeared and landed at Gumrak, only to find heavy snow on the runway. In the afternoon, artillery fire began to land on Gumrak and the planes took again, for the last time, headed west, under Richthofen's orders. By now, the air transports had the same ideas of escape.

Already, chaos was overtaking the airfield with a horde of squatters occupying the dispersal eager to get out while other men, military police and officers without units attempted to hold them back. A chance to have supplies landed on the 16th was missed after hectic conditions in the airfield resulted

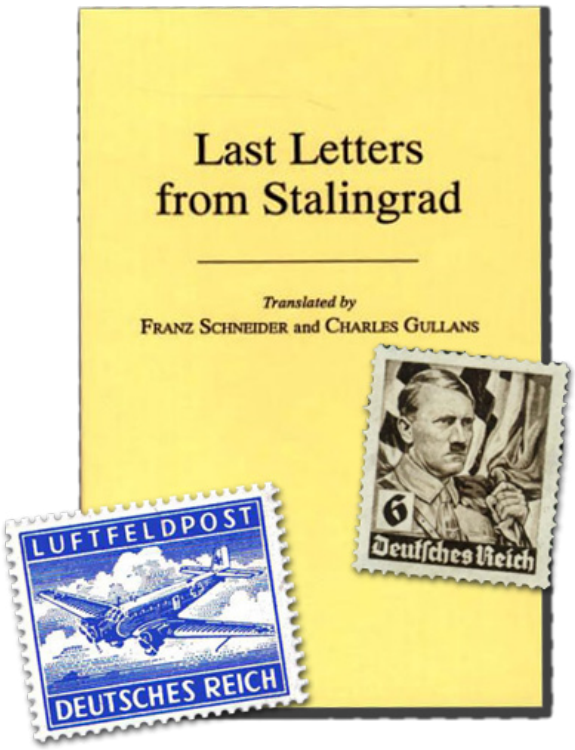


STALINGRAD GUMRAK AIRFIELD

in none of the landing lights being turned on, and with ground-control radios seemingly out of action. Fearing that the end had finally come, Paulus sent Zeitzler a message that same day, recommending that all units still capable, should be allowed to break out. Zeitzler initially did not respond and Paulus issued his own orders: "Regimental commanders were to assemble battlegroups of 200 of their best men…and break out."

Yet for some reason, the breakout plan did not come to pass. It may have succeeded on a small scale. These days were a period of a relative calm as Rokossovsky was busy regrouping his forces for a final dash to the city. Several small groups made the attempt by themselves. One group from XI Corps used skis and actually broke out of the lines to the southwest during the last day of the siege, only to meet their end at the hand of other soviet units to the south. By all accounts, no German ever escaped the Stalingrad perimeter. Paulus himself never entertained any personal notions of escape, writing just one line of farewell to his wife to be carried out by one his evacuating officers. Lt-General Hube was also ordered to evacuate and flew out on January 20. Other officers also left before escape became impossible. Then on the 25th, Hitler, in act of callous disregard, and perhaps finally conscious of the imminent demise of the Sixth Army, ordered his chief adjutant, General Schmundt to form a new "Sixth Army with a strength of twenty divisions."

The Russians attack again on the morning of the 20th. Gonchara was captured by the Sixty-Fifth



Army. Gumrak was now a few miles away. Field Marshal Milch received a message relaying that Gumrak would be unusable from January 22 onwards. "The airfield at Stalingradsky will be clear for landing," the message read. Unfortunately, large planes were incapable of landing at the Stalingradsky Flight School's solitary runway and this effectively spelled the end of the airlifts.

When a *Luftwaffe* liaison officer told Paulus that there would be no more landings, Paulus knew that there was no more hope left. He raged at the man helplessly: "We have had it. Our men have no strength left. It's four days since they had had anything to eat! The last horses have been eaten! …Why on earth did the Luftwaffe ever promise to keep us supplied?" Then he appeared to deflate. When a Major attempted to inform him of the situation facing Army Group Don, he muttered: "Dead men are no longer interested in military history."

At the airfield, men waited in anguish for the planes to come. Some of the last planes had carried out final letters from the dying army (the regular *Luftpost* had effectively cease after January 13). Most of the letters were scribbles written by men in haste. Almost all were brutally honest.[23]

"The mood here is very mixed," an army doctor wrote to his father. "Some take it badly, others lightly and in a composed way." An unknown Major von R, wrote to his wife: "Perhaps this will be the last letter from me for a long time. You are always my first and last thought…. Our men have been and still are achieving the impossible. We must not be less brave than them." Some letters were bitter towards the regime that had condemned them to die here. "We're quite alone, without any help from outside," one man wrote. "Hitler has left us in the lurch." Another told his wife: "Do not stay single for long. Forget me if you can, but never forget what we endured here."

The letters were never delivered. The Fourth Panzer Army's field censorship bureau had ordered that the letters be studied for sentiments on Nazi leadership and morale. The names of the writers were scrubbed out and the letters became mere pieces of data to be studied. Captain Count von Zedtwitz, the bureau chief attempted to do this as best he could, while avoiding all references to defeatism. Joseph Goebbels, the propaganda chief, eventually ordered the entire lot destroyed although apparently a junior officer, Heinz Schröter (sanctioned by the propaganda ministry to write an epic historiography of the Stalingrad campaign) copied some of the best letters for posterity.

At Gumrak, 500 wounded men had been abandoned in freezing cold by the 9th Flak Division as the Russians came. One man who had lost both legs crept along the road leading out where he was found by a car full of fleeing Germans. There was no room for him in the car but the Germans tied a sled to the back of their car. They had barely started off when the sled overturned. They stopped again and one officer told the man to hang on to the front. The man stared at them. The Russians were close now and

23 A few samples of the immense collection of letters were published anonymously in Germany in 1954, under the title, *Last Letters from Stalingrad*. Some historians now consider them forgeries. Others consider them genuine. French president François Mitterrand reputedly carried the French edition with him until the end of his life, using it for his speech for the 50th anniversary of the end of the war on the 8 May 1995.

NOVOSTY PRESS AGENCY

AN AIRFIELD FALLS Red Army men rush through one of the airfields in the Stalingrad perimeter, with German planes still on the ground.

the amputee made a decision that affected the officers deeply. "Leave me," he told him in a harsh voice. "I haven't got a chance anyway."

The officers reluctantly drove away. The soldier waited in the snow by the side of the road for the Russians to come. Elsewhere in Stalingrad, such stories of men reconciling with the end became commonplace. Men now openly wept that they would never see home again, would never have a chance to all the say the things they had hoped to, dreamed about under a hundred wintry nights. "I am thinking about you and our little son," an unknown German wrote in a letter that never reached his wife. "The only thing I have left is to think of you. I am indifferent to everything else. Thinking about you breaks my heart."

The advancing Russian tanks ran over some of the wounded lying at Gumrak, but those that survived faced a grimmer existence — slow death. The Russians had made little provisions to treat enemy wounded and Gumrak was reportedly left under the care of just two medical orderlies and a chaplain. Other accounts question even this and state that the men were left to survive alone on "water from snow and horse carcasses," to survive ten horrific days in the open before being moved to Camp Beketovka. By the 22nd, the Russians had appeared on Stalingrad's door. That same day, Hitler radioed the Sixth Army: "Surrender out of the question. Sixth Army will hold their positions to the last man and the last round and by their heroic endurance will make an unforgettable contribution to the salvation of the Western world."

Sixth Army officers received this message with a mixture of disbelief and contempt. The city had now been reduced virtually to rubble. Many of the buildings were empty shells with the facades standing tall, gaunt windows open to the sky. Some 20,000 wounded clogged dank, musty cellars under buildings still standing, while another 20,000 soldiers wandered the city, most weaponless, looking for a warm place to rest, completely isolated from their commanders and units. At the Gorki theatre alone, 600 wounded lived a troglodytic existence without light and water, with constant, near unison moans for help, mingled with prayer. In one terrible incident, a three-storey building, sheltering hundreds of wounded was hit by shelling and caught fire, consuming most of the infirm.

The divisions and regiments which had once proudly held the line had simply ceased to exist on the streets. The 14th Panzer Division had only about 80 men still capable of handling weapons and its once impressive numbers of tanks had been reduced to none. If men continued to fight, it was out of fear of

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

CAPTURED GENERAL Lt-General Werner Sanne of the 100th Jäger Division at the moment of his surrender to Russian troops. As Sanne and his staff were led away, bursts of machinegun fire were aimed at them from the German lines. Two German officers were killed. Surrender had been forbidden in some sectors by fanatical Nazi officers. Sanne survived but died in 1952 in a Russian POW camp.

Russian retribution.

On January 25, finally unable to take much more, the Germans started to give up in masse. General Moritz von Drebber's 297th Infantry Division surrendered wholesale, three miles from the mouth of the Tsaritsa. The Russians who quickly appeared to take charge, found only a skeletal force.

"Where is your division?" a Russian Colonel asked von Drebber. The German general looked at him wearily, at the surviving cluster of men, wracked by hunger, frostbite and disease. "Do I really have to explain to you, Colonel, where my division is?" he asked.

At dawn on the next day, a semi repeat of what had transpired at Kalach months before occurred when Russians from the Twenty-First Army linked with Rodimstev's 13th Guards Rifle Division near the Red October Factory worker settlements. At long last, the Sixty-Second Army had been relieved. As before, the Russians danced and leapt with joy. For Chuikov, the moment was emotional. "The eyes of the hardened soldiers who met were filled with tears of joy," he wrote.

By now, Paulus, in his new headquarters, in the basement of the Univermag Department store, was in a state of mental torment. Large numbers of his men and generals had been captured and the Russians were just up the street. All captured prisoners were rapidly shuffled off to the rear with the officers moved on to interrogation centers by the NKVD and Army Intelligence. Many of the captured generals were bitter about their leaders in Germany, referring to Goebbels as a "lame duck," and criticizing *Luftwaffe* chief, Herman Göring for not have gone on a "Stalingrad diet." The Russians were far from fooled. Most cynical intelligence officers saw these late hour condemnations reflective of a crop of men who had followed the *Third Reich* only as long as things had been profitable.

On January 29, near the eve of the tenth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, the Sixth Army sent a message of congratulation to Berlin: "To the *Führer*! The Sixth Army greets their *Führer* on the anniversary of your taking power. The swastika still flies over Stalingrad. May your struggle be an example to present and future generations never surrender in hopeless situations so that Germany will be victorious in the end — Paulus."

It is unclear if Paulus sent this message or whether his pro-Nazi chief of staff, Lt-General Schmidt did. The next day, more empty platitudes crossed the airwaves. Goring conducted a radio broadcast in which he compared the Sixth Army to the Spartans at Thermoplae. But already some of the Spartans had decided to relinquish victory to the Persians. On January 25, Seydlitz-Kurzbach had granted his divisional commanders permission to surrender if they wished. Paulus immediately sacked him. Seydlitz-Kurzbach's divisions were moved to General Walter Heitz's VIII Corps. Heitz proved a hypocritical sort, commanding his men to fight to the last bullet while ordering his staff to rig up white flags. Seydlitz-Kurzbach and three other generals[24], meantime, decided to give up. As they were led away, shots rang out from the German lines at them, wounding two generals. The act of surrender had been forbidden by some of the more

24 Max Pfeffer, Otto Korfes and Werner Sanne, along with a large contingent of their staffs.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

INTO ENEMY LINES Paulus, haggard and unshaven stumbles, forward towards the Soviet Front headquarters and eventually the stockade. Beside him is his chief of staff, Lt-General Schmidt, and another staff officer.

FAR LEFT The collar tab of the German Field Marshal which Paulus had not even received by the time of his capitulation, a fact that caused him some embarrassment as he relayed to Soviet interrogators.

fanatical Nazi officers.

But the Russians really hoped to get Paulus. The fear was so great that he would escape that General Nikolai Voronov, the Soviet commander of Artillery, awoke that night, jarred with the thought that Paulus might escape on an aircraft landing on the frozen Volga. Ringing up his men on the east bank, he ordered them to train their guns on the river.

In reality, Paulus had no desire to escape. Unlike many other commanders, he was determined to remain with his men until the end. Hitler thought half as much but hoped that the man would go one step further. On the morning of the 31st, he promoted Paulus to Field Marshal. The motives were transparent. No German Field Marshal had ever been captured alive. In his mind, Paulus had only two options left: fight to the death or commit suicide. Paulus was furious. One his men remembered him as saying, "I have no intention of shooting myself for that Bohemian corporal."

By mid-morning, the Sixty-Fourth Army had nearly captured all of central Stalingrad. Red Square was witness to an intense artillery bombardment that further ravaged its pockmarked grounds. At 7:35 a.m., Milch's headquarters on the Black Sea received the message: "Russians at the entrance. We are preparing to surrender." Ten minutes later, a Russian party led by Senior Lt. Fyodor Ilchenko of the 38th Motorized Brigade went down into the basement. Led in by a German officer who had been instructed to show the Russians in, Ilchenko and his men went past an improvised cloth "door" and into a small clean room. A makeshift open-flame made from a spent cannon shell stood on a big table, an ornate accordion occupied a place on a sofa by a wall and a tall, elderly, despondent-looking man wearing a sweater sat on a bed nearby. It was Paulus. His uniform hung on a chair. As this was taking place, one last German message went over the air waves. "We are surrendering."

Captain Behr, who had done much to describe the conditions at the city, received the signal. He passed it on to Manstein's headquarters. In Germany, the official communiqué for the day read: "Stalingrad, situation unchanged. The defender's spirit unbroken."

THE LAST SONG

In Germany, Hitler was secretly furious at the capitulation. "They have surrendered there formally and absolutely," he told Keitel and the other senior generals at the Wolf's Lair. "Otherwise they would have closed ranks, formed a hedgehog and shot themselves with their last bullet. When you consider that a woman has pride to leave, to lock herself in, and to shoot herself right away just because she has heard a few insulting remarks, then I can't have any respect for a soldier who is afraid of that and prefers to go into captivity."

As large numbers of German troops surrendered, the Russians scoured the captured ranks for Hiwis and "fascist troops," their meaning for SS men, Gestapo officers, Feldgendarmerie and Panzer troops who wore the "Death's Head" badge resembling the emblem worn by SS troops. Paulus was driven into captivity in his own staff car[25] to Don Front headquarters outside Zavarykino, fifty miles away. Here he met some of his other generals, captured days or moments before and was given a small country cottage house, little more than a common Russian gable-roofed log house called an *Izba*. Unlike most of his men who were led off into captivity with only the clothes on their back, Paulus and his entourage had been allowed to take their luggage. Now, NKVD officers appeared to check the contents, to circumvent suicide.

General Schmidt was furious at the intrusion. "A German field marshal does not commit suicide with a pair of nail scissors," he told them. Paulus, whose mind still struggled to grasp capture and fates of the rest of his army still fighting, exhaustedly waved a hand of dejection and gave the Russians his shaving kit. That evening he was summoned to a meeting with Rokossovsky, Voronov and other Russian officers, including Captain Dyatlenko.

Voronov went straight to the point, asking Paulus to sign a decree commanding the rest of the Sixth Army to surrender. Paulus declined with any angry outburst. Voronov attempted to point the humanitarian benefits of surrendering as the last German pockets of resistance would be cleared up in a day or two anyway. Paulus still declined. At last, frustrated, Voronov warned that his refusal would sign

25 This vehicle, a Mercedes, was seized by General W.I. Kazakov, the Don Front's artillery commander, as war loot.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

THE INTERROGATORS A rare photograph of Paulus being questioned by the Russians. From left: General Konstantin Rokossovsky of the Don Front, Marshal of Artillery N. Voronov, translator Captain Dyatlenko of the NKVD, and a dejected-looking Paulus.

would warrant grave repercussions on the lives of his men.

Paulus did not speak. The tic on his face still twitching, he stared emptily at a wall. When at last the Russians interrupted him to ask if his lodgings were favorable, Paulus stirred. "The only thing I would like to request is that… [you] feed the many prisoners of war, and give them medical attention," he said. Voronov responded by saying something that it was difficult to cope with "such a mass of prisoners," but that they would try. But already the Russians had envisaged terrible repercussions for their new charges. Once final German resistance ended two days later, after a pocket around the tractor factory with six divisions held by General Strecker's XI Corps surrendered, the prisoners were put in work gangs and sent back into the city to clear the rubble.

On February 2, when it became clear that the last Germans had given up, the Sixty-Second Army went into a frenzy of celebration. Flares arched up into the sky like fireworks and sailors from the Volga flotillas crossed over to bring over food, especially for the bedraggled civilians who started to reappear in strength from cellars, hiding places and broken houses. Despite the mass of people in the broken streets, the city felt ominously dead. In five months of combat that constituted the Stalingrad campaign, the Russians had lost 1.1 million men, including 485,751 men killed.

Axis losses were smaller but also heavy. Some 488 planes of the *Luftwaffe* had been lost trying to supply the Sixth Army with the loss of a thousand airmen, and at Stalingrad and in other parts of the pocket, 300,000 Germans had died, as had 450,000 Romanians, Italians, Hungarians and Croats. An estimated 98,000 men had been taken prisoner, including 22 German generals. The victory was a tremendous morale boost for the Russians. "After Stalingrad, not a single soldier had doubts about the [ultimate] outcome of the war," a Red Army officer said. The victorious divisions who had fought were split up from their armies and sent to other armies so that the high morale could spread. Another Red Army officer told a captive group from the 297th Division, pointing to the wrecked city: "That's how Berlin is going to look." The word was as good as the intent.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

TO OBLIVION A long, snake-like column of German prisoners are marched to join work gangs and prisoner camps. Most would be dead in a year.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

ABANDONED BY THE REICH Two despondent German prisoners stare at a Russian camera. A significant percentage of Germans captured at Stalingrad would become anti-Nazis.

COURTESY OF ZA RODINU/FLICKR

COLLATERAL VICTIMS
Children, mostly made destitute by the fighting began to emerge in unexpected numbers after the German surrender. Few had any prospects except a state-run home or a distant relative somewhere.

German prisoners who had expected to be marched off to prisoner camps, found themselves cleaning the mess which they had helped to create. Much of the work involved removing the dead which proved hazardous work. Disease and infection ran rampant through the decomposing piles and the majority of the German work gangs died of typhus. By the onset of spring 1943, nearly half of the captured prisoners had died — an incredible high death rate that has no concrete figures although sources state that only 15,000 out of the 98,000 enemy captives were still alive. The Russians themselves state that the care of prisoners had been ignored, with many shot out of hand in the long march to a POW camp. The luckiest prisoners were those that were marched off almost at once to prisoner camps. Certainly the most fortune were men from the northern pocket who were marched to the Dubobvka camp, only 12 miles away. Other, unfortunate men were taken on a long death march through dismal weather to Beketovka, following a deliberately cruel zig-zag route through temperatures reaching -13° F (-25° C). Men who collapsed were abandoned to the cold or shot. One man from the 305th Infantry Division recalled setting out on one march with 1,200 men only to reach Beketovka with "a tenth, about 20 men."

One historian recorded that "time and again, the [POW] columns were raided for personal belongings, sometimes by Red Army troops but more often by civilians. The prisoners were only lightly guarded but the many men who dropped out through sickness or fatigue were at the mercy of marauding bands of armed civilians who roamed the outskirts of the columns. None of those who dropped out was ever seen again. Eventually the columns were loaded on to trains and transported through Saratov, Orenburg and Engels to Tashkent, north of Afghanistan. At each stop the dead were unloaded from the cattle trucks and only fifty per cent of those who had been entrained arrived at the destination." Rations for the prisoners were almost non-existent as the Red Army had shortages of food for its own men.

Beketovka soon had a strength of 50,000 prisoners, including wounded. By 21 October 1943, 45,200 men had died. In comparison, the captive German generals lived a life of comparative kingly comfort. Moved to a camp[26] near Moscow in a plush train bitterly called "The White Train" by the junior officers, the generals contemplated ways to remain useful. Seydlitz-Kurzbach set about trying to organize an anti-Nazi corps with an approximate strength of 45,000 men, to be formed with volunteers from the POW camps, apparently oblivious of massive attrition rate of the POWs to disease and ill-treatment. Stalin never really trusted him and afraid that the Western Allies would see the formation of

26 First a camp at Krasnogorsk, then a monastery at Suzdal, and then to a semi-permanent location, Camp 48 at Voikovo, a luxurious old inn and health spa, dubbed "the Castle."

BUNDESARCHIV

VICTORY The Soviet flag is once again waved over Red Square in February 1943 — after nearly five months of combat. The soviets brought together the debris of war, especially captured German material and piled it on Red Square to hammer home Soviet victory.

a German army within the Red Army as indication of pro-German sentiment within Russia, dismissed the idea.

Paulus, for his part, now became another anti-Nazi. His most prominent efforts included an appeal to Army Group North in August 1944, calling on his fellow Germans to surrender. Stalin reputedly refused a German offer to exchange Paulus for his son Yakov, a POW who eventually perished in a German prison camp. It is unclear why the Germans wanted him back. Perhaps it was to stand trial. Certainly, he had already been denounced by Berlin. Gestapo officers had also attempted to have Paulus condemned by his family. His wife refused and was then bundled off to an internment camp. In 1946, after the war, Paulus reappeared in the public, this time as a witness at the Nuremburg trials. The Soviet press observers dubbed him the "ghost of Stalingrad." But he refused to incriminate any of the major Germans on trial on the charges of war crimes and was returned to Russia where he shut himself up, playing cards and writing his version of the Stalingrad campaign. His wife died in 1947 without ever having seen her husband again. In 1953, he was finally released and allowed to live in East Germany, where his old opponent, Chuikov, now a Marshal, was commander of Soviet forces. Here, residing in Dresden, Paulus composed treatise after treatise examining the campaign that had dominated his life. In 1956 he published his account of the battle for Stalingrad, ironically entitled, *I stand here under orders!* But his Atlas-like struggle was drawing to an end. A year later he contracted motor neuron disease and died in a Dresden clinic on 1 February 1957 at the age of sixty-seven.[27] He was buried next to his wife at Baden-Baden. Still, Paulus's increasingly insipid life had been better than that of his men.

By the mid-1950s, Russia still held 9,626 German prisoners of war. The majority were men

27 The war had not only decimated Paulus's reputation but had nearly destroyed his family. One son, Friedrich, had died at Anzio in 1944, and the other had been detained by the Nazis after Paulus had gone into captivity.

captured at Stalingrad. This fact is telling. In all three million Germans had been captured by the Russians during the war and about two million were repatriated after the war. The same could hardly be said of Russian POWs who were systematically persecuted by the Nazi leadership. Soviet policy concerning German prisoners was remarkably progressive on paper, with a ruling that prisoners be treated in accordance with international law even though the Soviet Union had not ratified the Geneva Convention. But harsh measures were taken on the front by common soldiers and officers against captured enemy troops. On the Stalingrad front alone, at Krasnoarmeyskoe and Grishno, an estimated 600 Germans, Italians, Romanians and Hungarians were killed by Soviet troops after their capture.

A personal appeal by the post-war West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who visited Moscow in September 1955 resulted in action. The Soviets finally opened the gates for the last remaining cadre of prisoners, and the men came out. Among them was Seylditz-Kurzbach and General Schmidt, who with about 5,000 Stalingrad veterans, comprising the last echo of the Sixth Army, finally returned home.

Their homecoming was to a country, split in half, still trying to rebuild, with an ethos and a culture that had sprung out of the deaths of millions. Most of all it was a country that few recognized with any sort of certainty, but one which they had inevitable played a hand in creating. □

ILYA YEFIMOVICH REPIN

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

THE SYMBOL OF DEFIANCE Barmaley Fountain at the heart of Red Square as photographed after the battle. The fountain is an allegorical representation of Korney Chukovsky's poem, *Barmaley*.

Little children! / For nothing in the world / Do not go to Africa / Do not go to Africa for a walk! / In Africa, there are sharks, / In Africa, there are gorillas, / In Africa, there are large / Evil crocodiles / They will bite you, / Beat and offend you / Don't you go, children, / to Africa for a walk / In Africa, there is a robber, / In Africa, there is a villain, / In Africa, there is terrible Barmaley! / He runs about Africa / And eats children / Nasty, vicious, greedy Barmaley!

During the battle, Chukovsky's references to Barmaley and Africa could be an easy allusion to Germans and The *Third Reich*. (ABOVE RIGHT) Repin's portrait of Chukovsky.

POSTSCRIPT

Although few thought it at the time, but Stalingrad emerged as one of the decisive events of the war. This coupled with other German defeats at the time, especially at El Alamein and the failure of the U-Boats in the Atlantic, spelt the end of the *Third Reich's* good fortunes. Although this did not resonate at German High Command, most Allied observers were quick to realize it. The journalist, Barnet Nover's wrote in *The Washington Post* on 2 February 1943, the day of the Sixth's Army's surrender, that: "Stalingrad's role in this war was that of the Battle of the Marne [1914], Verdun [1916] and the Second Marne [1918] rolled into one."

In November that year, at the Tehran conference, Churchill presented Stalin with the "Sword of Stalingrad," a gift from King George VI. Stalin kissed the sword and handed it to one of his marshals for safe keeping. The next year, in May 1944, U.S. President Roosevelt presented a scroll from the people of the United States to the city of Stalingrad: "To commemorate our admiration for its gallant defenders whose courage, fortitude, and devotion during the siege… will inspire forever the hearts of all free people. Their glorious victory stemmed the tide of invasion and marked the turning point in the war of the Allied Nations against the forces of aggression."

Commoners in Germany also saw the momentous consequences defeat at Stalingrad portended for the *Third Reich*. The debacle created rifts in Germany's alliance with other Axis countries, including Romania and Italy, who were outraged at the poor treatment meted out to their men in the field by their German allies. This rift extended to neutral but friendly countries such as Spain, Sweden and Turkey who, after the Stalingrad campaign, began to tone down their involvement with the Nazi government.

The Western Allies, beyond their words and symbolic gifts, recognized after Stalingrad, the emergence of the Soviet Union as a significant, if not overriding power in the war against Germany, and one that could dominate post-war Europe. Steps were taken to include the Soviets in plans for the future of the continent. These meetings and conferences would ensure the emergence of a new Europe, one borne out the rubble of war; a new Europe that would persist until the fall of the Soviet Union, almost half a century later, in 1991.

CENTRAL MUSEUM OF THE ARMED FORCES

REUNITED IN CAPTIVITY In a group of captured generals, Paulus (second from left) and Seydlitz-Kurzbach (in white, fourth from left) contemplate their fates.

STAVKA ARCHIVES

Orphaned children wandered the Stalingrad battleground for the entirety of the campaign. Here, two are put to work, pounding cereals for the commissary at Gumrak.

APPENDIX

ORDERS OF BATTLE

German Forces

Note — In the following orders of battle actual German and Soviet ranks used, albeit anglicized.

SIXTH ARMY (Field Marshal Freidrich Paulus)
General of Panzer Troops Major-General Arthur Schmidt
la Operations: Colonel Elchleppf (KIA)
Ib Quartermaster: Major von Kunowski
Ic Intelligence: Lieutenant-Colonel Niemeyer (KIA)
Ha Adjutant: Colonel W. Adam
Chief of Artillery: Major-General Vassoll
Chief of Signals: Colonel Arnold† (replaced by Colonel van Hooven)
Chief of Engineers: Colonel H. Selle†(replaced by Colonel Stiotta†)
Chief of Medical Corps: General Renoldi
OKH liaison officer: Lieutenant-Colonel von Zitzewitz†

Army Troops
Mortar regiments: 51st, 53rd
Nebelwerfer regiments: 2nd, 30th
Artillery regiments: 4th, 46th, 64th, 70th
Artillery battalions: 54th, 616th, 627th, 849th
Heavy-artillery battalions: 49th, 101st, 733rd
Pioneer battalions: 6th, 41st

IV CORPS General of Pioneers Erwin Jaenecke†, Colonel Crome, Max Pfeffer± (from 17 Jan)
29th Motorized Infantry Division – Maj-General Hans-George Leyser
297th Infantry Division – Lt-General Max Pfeffer, Maj-General von Drebber (from 16 Jan)
371st Infantry Division – Lt-General Richard Stempelt

VIII CORPS General Walter Heitz, Colonel Schildknecht
76th Infantry Division (178, 203 & 230 Rgts) – Lt-General Carl Rodenburg
113th Infantry Division (260, 261 & 268 Rgts) – Lt-General Hans-Heinrich Sixt von Arnim

XI CORPS Lt-General Karl Strecker, Colonel Groscurth
44th Infantry Division (131, 132 & 134 Rgts) – Lt-General Heinrich Deboi
376th Infantry Division (672, 673 & 767 Rgts) – Lt-General Alexander Edler von Daniels
384th Infantry Division (534, 535 & 536 Rgts) – Lt-General Eccard von Gablenz†, Maj-General Hans Dorr (from 6 Jan)

XIV PANZER CORPS General Hans-Valentin Hube†, Colonel Thunert†, Lt-Gen Helmut Schlömer (from 17 Jan)
3rd Motorized Infantry Division (8 & 9 Mot. Rgts) – Lt-General Helmut Schlömer, Colonel Frieherr von Hanstein (from17 Jan)
60th Motorized Division (92 & 120 Mot. Rgts) – Maj-Generals Kohlermann†, Hans-Adolf von Arenstorff
16th Panzer Division (2 Pz, 64 & 79 PzGr Rgts) – Lt-General Gunther Angern (Suicide 2 Feb 43)

LI CORPS General Walter von Seydlitz-Kurzbach, Colonel Clausius
71st Infantry Division (191, 194 & 211 Rgts) – Lt-General Alexander von Hartmann (KIA 26 Jan 1943)
79th Infantry Division (208, 212 & 226 Rgts) – Lt-General Richard Graf von Schwerin†
94th Infantry Division (267, 274 & 276 Rgts) – Lt-General Georg Pfeiffer†
100th Jäger Division (54 & 227 Rgts, 369 Croat Rgt) – Lt-General Werner Sänne±
295th "Hanover" Infantry Division (516, 517 & 518 Rgts) – Maj-General Dr. Otto Korfes
305th Infantry Division (576, 577 & 578 Rgst) – Maj-General Bernard Steinmetz†
389th Infantry Division (544, 545 & 546 Rgts) – Maj-Generals Erich Magnus, Martin Lattmann (from 19 Jan)
14th Panzer Division (36 Pz, 103 & 108 PzGr Rgts) – Maj-General Martin Lattmann
24th Panzer Division (24 Pz, 276 Inf, 21 & 26 PzGr Rgts)– Lt-General Arno von Lenski

LUFTWAFFE GROUND TROOPS
9th Flak Division – Maj-General Wolfgang Pickert†

LUFTWAFFE AIR SUPPORT
4th Air Fleet – Colonel-General Wolfram von Richthofen
VIII Flieger Korps General Martin Fiebig

1st Romanian Cavalry Division – Maj-Gen. Constantin Bratescu
369th Croat Regiment – Colonel Victor Pavicic (Attached to 100th Jäger Division)

† – Flown out before surrender
± – Died in Captivity

Sixth Army Orders of Battle

4 July 1942
XXIX Corps: 57th, 168th & 75th Divs
XXXX Corps: 100th Jager, 23rd Pz, 336th, 29th and 3rd Pz Divs
VIII Corps: 389th, 305th & 376th Divs
XVII Corps: 113th, 79th & 294th Divs
LI Corps: 297th, 71st, 44th & 62nd Divs

12 August 1942
XXIV Pz Corps: 16th & 295th Divs
LI Corps: 44th & 71st Divs
XI Corps: 100th Jäger Div & Croat 369 Reg
XIV Panzer Corps: 60th Mot, 16th Pz & 3rd Mot Divs.
VIII Corps: 384th, 305th, 389th & 376th Divs
XVII Army Corps: 22d Pz, Italian "Celere" Division with 6th Bersagleri Regt, 79th & 113th Divs

Tank Strengths (operational only), September 12
3rd Mot Div: 7 PzII, 20 PzIII, 1 PzIVF, 1 PzIVD
29th Mot Div: 2 PzII, 5 PzIII, 2 PzIVF
60th Mot Div: 6 PzII, 20 PzIII, 8 PzIVF, 3 PzIVD
14th Pz Div: 3 PzII, 14 PzIII, 3 PzIVF, 1 PzIVD, 4 Command Panzers
16th Pz Div: 55 PzIII, 7 PzIVF, 2 PzIVD
24th Pz Div: 7 Pz II, 11 PzIII, 3 PzIVF, 1 PzIVD, 1 Command Panzer

October 8
V Romanian Corps: 14th, 5th, 6th & 13th Infantry Divs, 1st Cavalry & 1st Romanian Tank Divs
XI Corps: 376th, 44th & 384th Divs
VIII Corps: 113th & 305th Divs
XIV Pz Corps: 60th Mot, 3rd Mot, 16 Pz & 94th Divs
LI Corps: 389th, 24th Pz, 100 Jäger & 295 Divs
Attached : 76th & 79th Divs

November 5
XI Corps: 376th, 44th & 384th Divs
VIII Corps: 113th & 76th Divs
XIV Pz Corps: 60th Mot, 3rd Mot,
16 Pz & 94th Divs
LI : 389th, 305th, 24th Pz, 100 Jäger,
295th, 71st & 79th Divs

Soviet Forces

SIXTY-SECOND ARMY Order of Battle, 1942

Maj-Gen A.I. Lopatin – From Aug 1942
Maj-Gen V. Chuikov – From 12 Sept 1942

Rifle Divisions (Unless Specified)	Regiments	Commander
13th Guards	34, 39 & 42	Maj-Gen. Aleksander Ilyich Rodimstev
37th Naval Guards	109, 114 & 118	Maj-Gen. Viktor Grigorivich Zholudev
35th Guards		Maj-Gen. Vasili A. Glazkov (KIA 8 Sept 1942), Col. V.P. Dubyanski
39th Guards	112, 117 & 120	Maj-Gen. Stepan Savelivich Guriev
45th	10, 61 & 253	Lt-Col. Vasili Pavlovich Sokolov
95th	90, 161 & 241	Maj-Gen. Vasili Akimovich Gorishny
112th	385, 416 & 524	Lt-Col. Vasili Pavlovich Sokolov
138th	344, 650 & 768	Maj-Gen. Ivan I.G. Lyudnikov
193th	604, 683 & 685	Maj-Gen. Fedor N. Smekhotvorov
196th	863, 884 & 893	Brigade Commissar Averin, later Col. S.P. Ivanov
244th	907, 911 & 913	Col. G.A. Afanasiev
284th	1043, 1045 & 1047	Col. Nikolai F. Batuyk
308th	339, 347 & 351	Col. Leonti Nikolayevich Gurtiev
10th NKVD Rifle Division	269, 270, 272 & 282	Col. A.A. Sarayev. Later Col. Rogatin
84th Tank Bde	200 & 202 Tank Bns, 84th Mot. Bn	Col. DN Bely. Evacuated in Dec.
137th Tank Bde	N/A	Disbanded in October. Men and equipment used as replacements for other units. 15 x T-60s †
189th Tank Bde	135 & 178 Tank Bns, 189th Mot. Bn	Col. KS Udovichencko. Evacuated in Oct. 8 x T-34, 6 x T-70 †

92nd Marine Infantry Bde: Colonel Tarasov (abandoned Brigade during heavy fighting in Stalingrad. Court-martialled; probably executed), Major I.I. Samodai

38th Motorized Rifle Bde: Colonel Ivan D. Burmakov

Special Brigades:
42nd: Colonel M.S. Batrakov (WIA 23 Sept 1942)
115th: Colonel K.M. Andryusenko
124th: Colonel Seymon F. Gorokov
149th: Lt-Colonel V.A. Bolvinov (KIA 2 Nov 1942), Major I.D. Durnev
160th: N/A

† — Tank strengths 11 September 1942

Red Army Order of Battle, Operation "Uranus," 19 November 1942

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE *STAVKA:*
General G. K. Zhukov
Colonel-General of Artillery N. N. Voronov
Colonel-General A. M. Vasilevsky

STALINGRAD FRONT Colonel-General A. I. Yeremenko, N. S. Khrushchev

62ND ARMY General V.l. Chuikov
Rifle Divisions: 13th Guards, 37th Naval Guards, 39th Guards, 45th, 95th, 112th, 138th, 193th, 196th, 244th, 284th, 308th, 10th NKVD
Marine Infantry Brigade: 92nd
Special Brigades: 42nd, 115th, 124th, 149th, 160th
Tank Brigades: 84th, 137th, 189th

64TH ARMY General M.S. Shumilov
Rifle Divisions: 36th Guards (MI Denisenko), 29th (AI Losev), 38th (GB Safiulin), 157th (AV Kirsanov, 204th (AV Skvortsov)
154th Marine Infantry Brigade
Special Brigades: 66th, 93rd, 96th, 97th
Tank Brigades: 13th, 56th

57TH ARMY General F.I. Tolbukhin
13th Mechanized Corps‡: T.I. Tanashchishin
Rifle Divisions: 169th (JF Eremenko), 422nd (IK Morozov)
143rd Special Brigade
Tank Brigades: 90th, 235th

51ST ARMY General N.I. Trufanov
4th Mechanized Corps‡ (V.T. Volsky)
4th Cavalry Corps‡ (Shapkin)

Rifle Division: 15th Guards (EI Vasilenko), 91st, 126th & 302d
38th Special Brigade
254th Tank Brigade

28TH ARMY
Rifle Divisions: 34th Guards (II Gubarevich), 248th (LN Alekseev)
Special Brigades: 52nd, 152nd, 159th
6th Guards Tank Brigade

STALINGRAD FRONT RESERVE: 330th Rifle Division & 85th Tank Brigade

8TH AIR ARMY General T.T. Khryukin

DON FRONT Colonel-General K. K. Rokossovsky

66TH ARMY (Major General A.S. Zhadov)
Rifle Divisions: 64th (AM Ignatov), 99th (VJ Vladimirov), 116th (IM Makarov), 226th (NS Nikichenko), 299th (GV Baklanov), 343rd (PP Chuvashev)
58th Tank Brigade

24TH ARMY General I. V. Galanin
16th Tank Corps (Maslov)
Rifle Divisions: 49th (AV Chizhov), 84th (PI Fomenko), 120th (KK Dzhakhua), 173rd (VS Askalepov), 233rd (IF Barinov), 260th (AV Chizhov), 273rd (NI Krasnobaev)
10th Tank Brigade

65TH ARMY Lieutenant-General P.I. Batov
Rifle Divisions: 4th Guards (GP Lilenkov), 27th Guards (VS Glebov), 40th Guards (AI Pastrevich), 23th (PP Vakhrameev), 24th (FA Prokhorov), 252nd (ZS Shekhtman), 258th (IJ Fursin), 304th (SP Merkulov), 321th (IA Makarenko)
121st Tank Brigade

16TH AIR ARMY Major-General S.I. Rudenko

SOUTH-WEST FRONT General N. F. Vatutin

21TH ARMY (General I.M. Chistyakov)
4th Tank Corps‡ (A.G. Kravchenko)
3rd Guards Cavalry Corps‡ (P.A. Pliev)
Rifle Divisions: 63rd (ND Koznin), 76th (NT Tavartkiladze), 96th (GP Isakov), 277th (VG Chernov), 293rd (PF Lagutin), 333rd (MI Matveev)
Tank Regiments: 1st, 2nd, 4th Guards

5TH TANK ARMY General P. L. Romanenko
1st Tank Corps‡ (V.V Butkov)
26th Tank Corps‡ (A.G. Rodin)

8th Cavalry Corps (Borisov)
Rifle Divisions: 14th Guards (AS Griaznov), 47th Guards (JS Fokanov), 50th Guards, 119th (IJ Kulagin), 159th (AI Belov), 346th (AI Tolstov)

1ST GUARDS ARMY General D.D. Lelyushenko
24th Tank Corps (Badanov)
13th Mining Engineer Company
158th Mobile Repair Base
- 4th Guards Tank Brigade (Colonel G.I. Kolypov) (1st & 2d Tk Bns, 4th Gds Mot Bn)
- 54th Tank Brigade (Colonel V.M. Polyakov) (54th & 108th Tk Bns, 54th Mot Bn)
- 130th Tank Brigade (Colonel S.K. Nesterov) (1st & 2nd Tk Bns, 130th Mot Bn)
- 24th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Colonel V.S. Savchenko) (454, 455 & 446 Rifle Bns)
  - Reinforcements:
- 658th Anti Aircraft Artillery Regiment (12 x 37mm guns)
- 413th Guards Mortar (Rocket) Battalion (8 x BM-13 launchers)

Rifle Divisions: 1st (AI Semenov), 153rd (VS Askalepov), 197th (MI Zaporozhchenko), 203rd (GS Zdanovich), 266th (LV Vetoshnikov), 278th (DP Monakhov)

SOUTH-WEST FRONT RESERVE: 1st Guards Mechanized Corps

2ND AIR ARMY
17TH AIR ARMY Major-General S.A. Krasovsky

‡ - First-wave breakthrough formations for Operation Uranus

STALIN ORDER NO. 227 ("NOT A STEP BACK")

PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR DEFENCE
28 JULY 1942

The enemy throws at the front new forces and, big losses notwithstanding, is penetrating deep into the Soviet Union, invading new regions, devastating and destroying our towns and villages, violating, robbing and killing the Soviet people. The battle rages in the area of Voronezh, in the Don, in the south at the gateway to the Northern Caucasus. The German occupiers are breaking through towards Stalingrad, towards the Volga and want at any price to seize the Kuban and the Northern Caucasus and their oil and bread resources. The Germans had already taken Voroshilovgrad, Starobel'sk, Rossosh', Kupyansk, Valuiki, Novocherkassk, Rostov-on-Don, and half of Voronezh. Units of the Southern Front, succumbing to panic, abandoned Rostov and Novocherkassk without serious opposition and without orders from Moscow, thereby covering their banners with shame.

The people of our country, for all their love and respect for the Red Army, are beginning to be disappointed by it, are losing faith in the Red Army, and many of them are cursing the Red Army for giving our people over to the yoke of the German oppressors, while itself escaping to the east.

Some silly people at the front comfort themselves by saying that we can retreat further east, that we have much territory, many lands, lots of people and that we will always have plenty of bread. With this they excuse their shameful conduct on the front. But, through falsehoods and lies, such talk helps our enemies.

Every commander, soldier and political worker must understand that our resources are not unlimited. The territory of the Soviet state is not an empty desert but people – workers, peasants, the intelligentsia, our fathers, mothers, wives, brothers and children. The territory of the Soviet Union, which the enemy has seized, or is striving to seize, is bread and other products for the army and the rear, metal and fuel for industry, factories, enterprises, the railways, and supplies for the armed forces and its reserves. After the loss of the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic Republics, the Donbass and other areas we have much less territory, much less metal, much less bread, and many fewer people, factories and enterprises. We have lost more than 70 million in population, and more than 8,000 million pounds of bread a year and more than 10 million tons of metal a year. We no longer have more people reserves than the Germans, nor any reserves of bread. To retreat further would mean the ruination of our country and ourselves. Every new scrap of territory we lose will significantly strengthen the enemy and severely weaken our defense, our motherland.

It is necessary, therefore, to stop all talk that we have the possibility of unlimited retreat, that we have a lot of territory, that our country is big and rich, with many people, and bread in abundance. Such talk is lying and harmful, it weakens us and strengthens the enemy, because if there is no end to the retreat, we will be left with no bread, no fuel, no metals, no raw materials, no enterprises, no factories, and no railways.

It follows from this that it is time to finish with retreat.

Not a step back! This must now be our chief slogan.

It is necessary to defend to the last drop of blood every position, every meter of Soviet territory, to cling on to every shred of Soviet earth and defend it to the utmost.

Our motherland is going through difficult days. At whatever the cost, we must stop and then throw back and destroy the enemy. The Germans are not as powerful as they seem to

panickers. They are advancing with their last forces. Withstand their blows now, for the next few months, and this will mean the guarantee of our victory.

Can we absorb the attack and then throw the enemy back to the west? Yes we can, because our factories and enterprises in the rear are now working excellently and the front is receiving more and more planes, tanks, artillery and mortars.

What do we not have enough of?

We do not have sufficient order and discipline in companies, battalions, regiments, divisions, tank units and air squadrons. This is now our chief shortcoming. We must establish in our army strict order and iron discipline if we want to save the position and defend the motherland.

It is not permissible to tolerate any more commanders, commissars, political workers, units and formations who willfully abandon military positions. It is not permissible to tolerate any more commanders. Commissars and political workers who allow panickers to determine the position on the field of battle and entice other soldiers to retreat and so open the front to the enemy.

Panickers and cowards must be eliminated on the spot.

Henceforth iron discipline is demanded of every commander, soldier and political worker — not a step back without orders from higher authorities.

Commanders of companies, battalions, regiments and divisions, and the responsible commissars and political workers retreating from military positions without orders from above are traitors to their country. Such officers and political workers will be treated as traitors of their country. Such are the calls of our motherland.

To implement this order means the defense of our lands, the salvation of the motherland, and the extermination and destruction of a hateful enemy.

After its winter retreat before the vigorous pressure of the Red Army, when the discipline of the German forces began to crack, the Germans implemented severe measures to restore discipline, and with not bad results. They organized more than 100 penal companies for soldiers guilty of disciplinary offences of cowardice or wavering and placed them on the most dangerous sections of the front, ordering them to atone for their sins with their blood. They organized a further 10 or so penal battalions for officers guilty of disciplinary offences of cowardice or wavering, deprived them of their medals and placed them on even more dangerous sections of the front and ordered them to atone for their sins. Finally, they organized special blocking detachments, placed them behind wavering divisions and directed them to shoot panickers on the spot in the event of attempts at willful abandonment of positions or attempts to surrender to captivity. As is well known, these actions had their effect and now the German forces fight better than they fought in winter. It turns out that the Germans have good discipline, although they have no noble aim of defending their motherland, only a predatory aim – to subjugate someone else's country — whereas our forces, having the noble aim of defending their desecrated country, do not have such discipline and therefore tolerate defeat.

Should one learn from the enemy in this matter, as in the past our ancestors learnt from the enemy and then went on to achieve victory?

I think that we ought to.

The Supreme Command of the Red Army orders:

1. Front Military Councils and, above all, Front Commanders:
   - To unconditionally liquidate the retreatist atmosphere among the troops and to cut with an iron hand propaganda that we could and should retreat further east, as if such a retreat

would not be damaging;

- To unreservedly remove from post and send to headquarters for court-martial Army Commanders permitting willful retreat of troops from occupied positions without orders from the Front Commander;
- To organize on the front-line 1–3 (depending on the situation) penal battalions (of 800 people), to which will be sent middle-ranking and senior officers, and the corresponding political workers of all types of forces, guilty of disciplinary offences of cowardice or wavering, and to place them on the more difficult sections of the front in order that they have the possibility of atoning with blood for their crimes against the motherland.

2. Army Military Councils and, above all, Army Commanders:

- To unconditionally remove from posts commanders and commissars of corps and divisions permitting willful retreat of troops from occupied positions without orders from Army Commanders and to send them to the Front Military Council for court-martial
- To organize within the army 3–5 well-armed blocking detachments (of up to 200 people each), place them in the immediate rear of wavering divisions, with the responsibility in the event of panic and disorderly retreat of the division's units, of executing on the spot panickers and cowards, thereby helping the honest soldiers of the division fulfill their duty to the motherland
- To organize within the army 5–10 (depending on the situation) penal companies (of 150–200 people each), to which will be sent soldiers and junior offices guilty of disciplinary offences of cowardice or wavering and which will be placed in the most difficult sections of the army in order that they be given the chance to atone with their blood for their crimes against the motherland.

3. Commanders and Commissars of Corps and Divisions:

- To unreservedly remove from post commanders and commissars of regiments and battalions permitting willful retreat of units without orders from Corps or Divisional Commanders, taking away their medals and decorations and sending them to the Front Military Council for court-martial;
- To render all assistance and support to the blocking detachments of the army strengthening order and discipline in units. The order to be read in all companies, troops, squadrons, batteries, commands and staffs.

People's Commissar of Defense *I. Stalin*

OFFICER'S RANK EXPLANATION TABLE

For simplicity, I used the western equivalent throughout the text. For the sake of simplicity, I have also refrained from employing German or Soviet language descriptions for the ranks.

German Wehrmacht	Soviet	US Army/Western Standard
Field Marshal	General of the Army	General of the Army
Colonel-General	Colonel-General	General
General	Lieutenant-General	Lieutenant-General
Lieutenant-General	Major-General	Major-General
Major-General	-	Brigadier-General
Colonel	Colonel	Colonel
Lieutenant –Colonel	Lieutenant -Colonel	Lieutenant -Colonel
Major	Major	Major
Captain	Captain	Captain
Senior Lieutenant	Senior Lieutenant	First Lieutenant
Lieutenant	Junior Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant

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