

# Battle of Stalingrad

The **Battle of Stalingrad**[[Note 8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-34) (17 July 1942 – 2 February 1943)[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWerth1964441-35)[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-36)[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-37)[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-38) was a major battle on the [Eastern Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II)) of [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), beginning when [Nazi Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) and its [Axis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axis_powers) allies attacked and became locked in a protracted struggle with the [Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) for control over the Soviet city of [Stalingrad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volgograd) (now known as Volgograd) in [southern Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Russia). The battle was characterized by fierce close-quarters combat and direct assaults on civilians in aerial raids; the battle epitomized [urban warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_warfare),[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Anderson-2003-39)[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Spencer-2021-40)[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDiMarco201227-41)[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Walsh-2020-42) being the single largest and costliest urban battle in [military history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history).[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Intrec_Inc-1974b-43)[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Johnson-1991-44) It was the bloodiest and fiercest battle of the entirety of World War II—and arguably in all of human history—as both sides suffered tremendous casualties amidst ferocious fighting in and around the city.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Winchester-2011-45)[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-46)[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Hellbeck-2015a-47)[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Krinko-2018-48)[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-Hanson-2020-49) The battle is commonly regarded as the turning point in the [European theatre of World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_theatre_of_World_War_II),[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-50) as Germany's [*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oberkommando_der_Wehrmacht) was forced to withdraw a considerable amount of military forces from other regions to replace losses on the Eastern Front. By the time the hostilities ended, the German [6th Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Army_(Wehrmacht)) and [4th Panzer Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4th_Panzer_Army) had been destroyed and [Army Group B](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Group_B) was routed. The Soviets' victory at Stalingrad shifted the Eastern Front's balance of power in their favour, while also boosting the morale of the [Red Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Army).

Both sides placed great strategic importance on Stalingrad, for it was the largest industrial centre of the Soviet Union and an important transport hub on the [Volga River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volga):[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-51) controlling Stalingrad meant gaining access to the oil fields of the [Caucasus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus) and having supreme authority over the Volga River.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad#cite_note-52) The city also held significant symbolic importance because it bore the name of [Joseph Stalin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin), the incumbent leader of the Soviet Union. As the conflict progressed, Germany's fuel supplies dwindled and thus drove it to focus on moving deeper into Soviet territory and taking the country's oil fields at any cost. The German military first clashed with the Red Army's [Stalingrad Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalingrad_Front) on the distant approaches to Stalingrad on 17 July. On 23 August, the 6th Army and elements of the 4th Panzer Army launched their offensive with support from intensive bombing raids by the [*Luftwaffe*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftwaffe), which reduced much of the city to rubble. The battle soon degenerated into house-to-house fighting, which escalated drastically as both sides continued pouring reinforcements into the city. By mid-November, the Germans, at great cost, had pushed the Soviet defenders back into narrow zones along the Volga's west bank. However, winter set in within a few months and conditions became particularly brutal, with temperatures often dropping [tens of degrees below freezing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Winter). In addition to fierce urban combat, brutal [trench warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trench_warfare) was prevalent at Stalingrad as well.