

# Russian Security State

## GOVT-5519/IPOL-3519/REES-5519/SEST-6763

### Lecture 17. Stalingrad to Berlin

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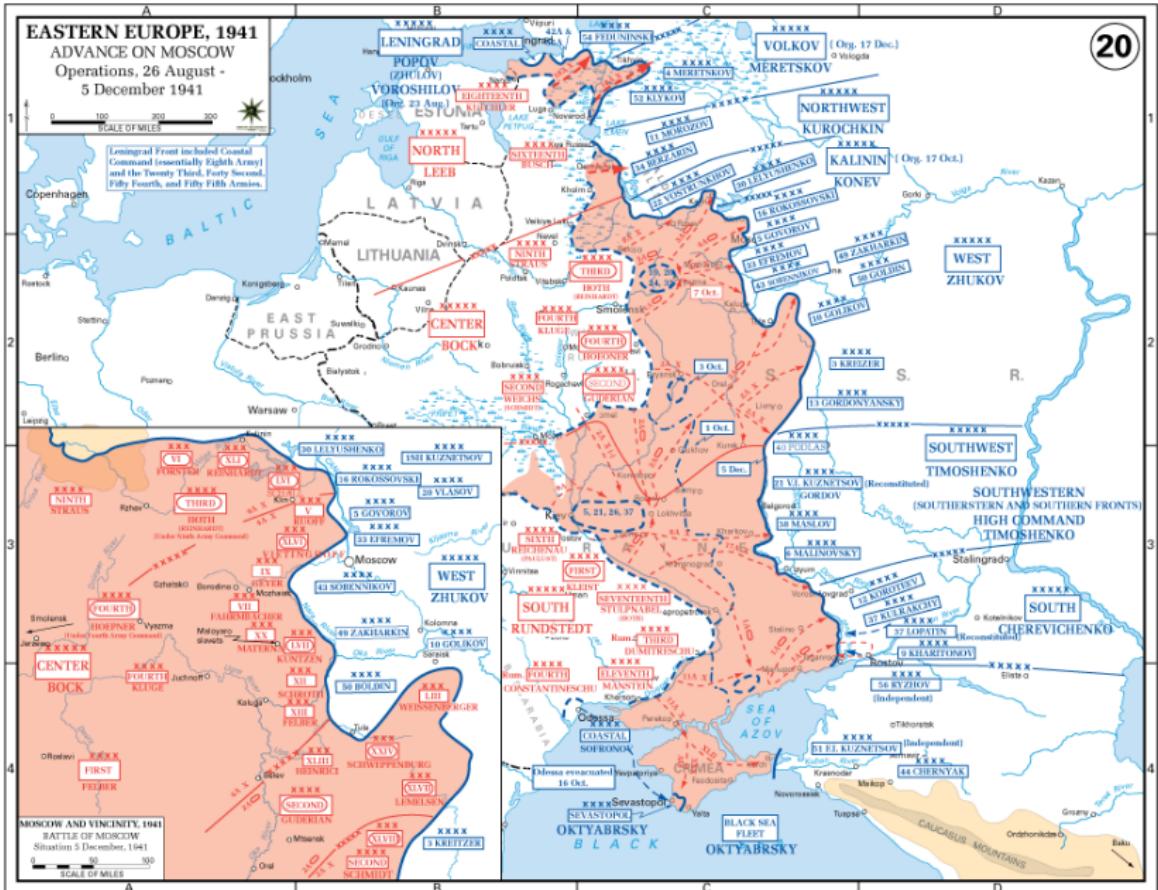
**October 30, 2025**  
**All Hallow's Eve**



## Today's objectives

1. *Consider*: how Germany adapted its strategy for a long war against a much larger, more resource-rich state
2. *Probe*: was it bad strategy or bad implementation?
3. *Analyze*: whether Germany's "Plan B" could have worked

# Plan B Into the Cauldron



## More German challenges

### 1. Mobility

- a) forests, swamps, wooded steppe
- b) limited roads
- c) heavy rains in fall
- d) snow & frost in November
- e) no winter clothing
- f) no antifreeze

### 2. Soviet defenses

- a) civilians help dig fortifications
- b) reserves arrive from Siberia
- c) Zhukov takes over defense of city,  
launches major counter-offensive

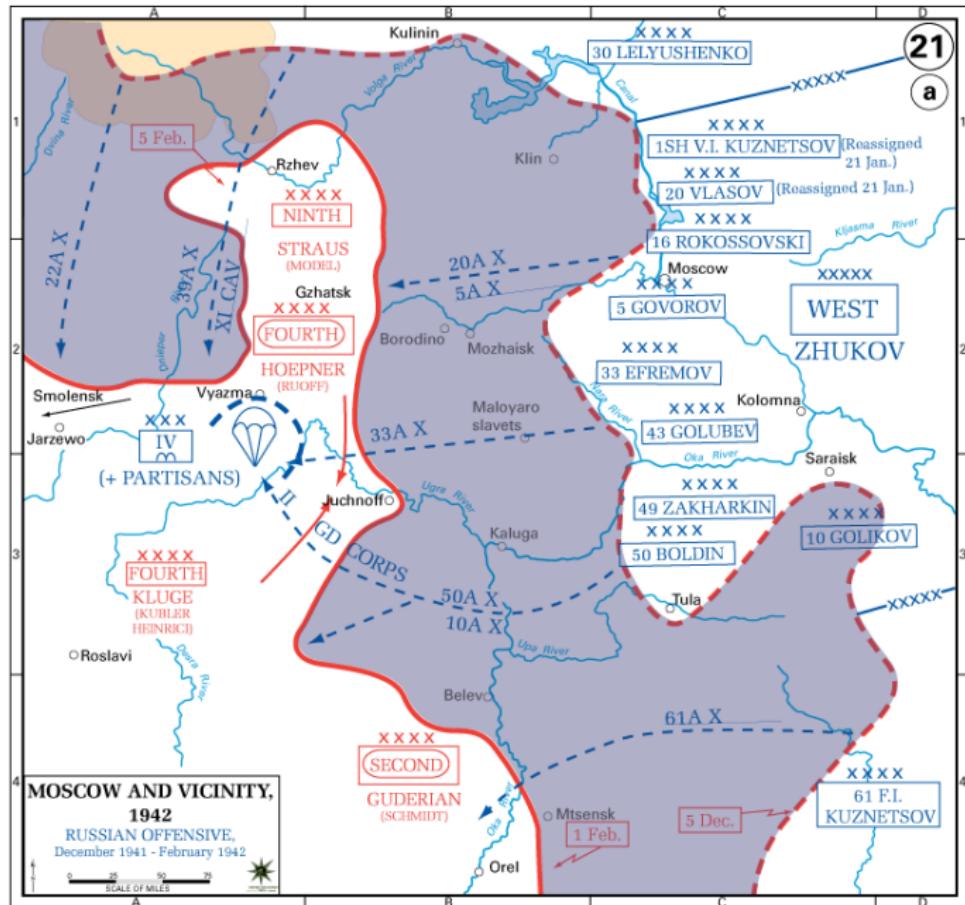


Figure 2: Rasputitsa



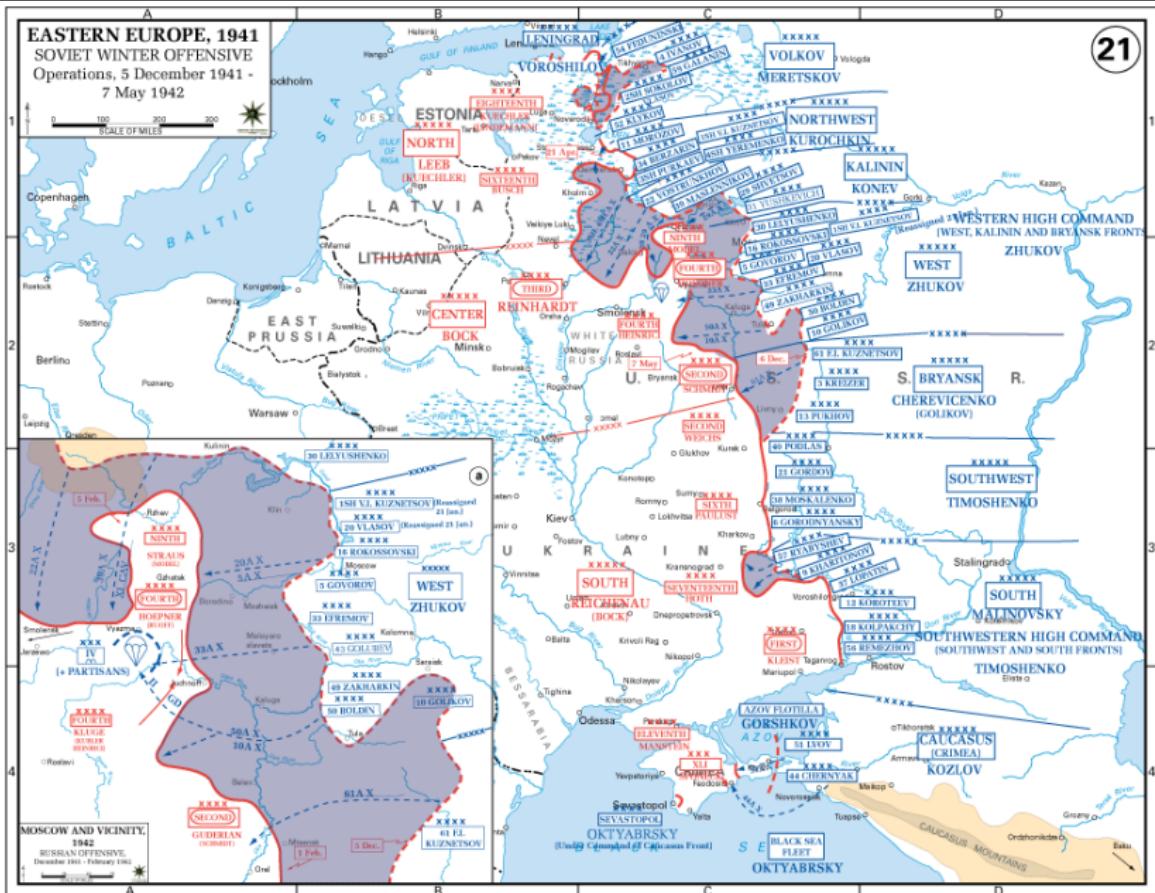
Figure 3: All hands on deck

Plan B  
Into the Cauldron



Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

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## Costs of Barbarossa

1. Killed, wounded, captured
  - a) Germany: 790,000 - 803,000
  - b) USSR: 3,500,000 - 5,000,000
  - c) 4:1 - 6:1 loss-exchange ratio
2. but...
  - a) Red Army not destroyed
  - b) Moscow not seized
  - c) long war not avoided



Figure 6: So close, yet so far

## *Discussion: Could the Germans have taken Moscow if... .*

- 1. Focus on Moscow from start*
  - a) Hitler accepts General Staff's operational priority
  - b) Army Groups North and South conduct holding operations only  
(no dispersal of effort toward Leningrad, Ukraine)
- 2. Not divert Panzer groups from AG Center in August*
  - a) Hitler's orders countermanded
  - b) Soviet Far Eastern reserves don't arrive
  - c) supply difficulties overcome
  - d) autumn rains not slow advance
- 3. Better logistical preparation*
  - a) railway gauge conversion prioritized earlier
  - b) adequate fuel and ammunition stockpiles pre-positioned
  - c) adequate winter preparation (clothing, lubricants, antifreeze)
- 4. Japanese northern strike*
  - a) Japan attacks USSR in Siberia (not U.S. in Pearl Harbor)
  - b) Soviet Far Eastern reserves remain pinned
  - c) two-front war forces Stalin to negotiate

How realistic are these scenarios?

## Germany's invasion of Soviet Union

### Assumptions

1. Quick victory is possible
2. After 1941:  
Victory still possible in long war ✓



Figure 7: Need new plan

## Barbarossa: First 60 days

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
numbers	doctrine	distance	surprise	weather
replacement of losses	strategy	terrain	intelligence	timing
industry/production	training	climate	analysis	luck
logistics	officer quality	roads	communication	
natural resources	technology	fortifications		

## Barbarossa: Advance toward Moscow

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
numbers	doctrine	distance	surprise	weather
replacement of losses	strategy	terrain	intelligence	timing
industry/production	training	climate	analysis	luck
logistics	officer quality	roads	communication	
natural resources	technology	fortifications		

## Stalingrad to Berlin

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
numbers	doctrine	distance	surprise	weather
replacement of losses	strategy	terrain	intelligence	timing
industry/production	training	climate	analysis	luck
logistics	officer quality	roads	communication	
natural resources	technology	fortifications		

# Plan B

## German strategic priorities in 1942

### 1. Ends

- a) deny Soviet resupply  
(90 percent of oil production)
- b) seize oil assets for Reich  
('if I can't seize the oil fields of Maikop and Grozny, I must end this war')

### 2. Means

- a) shift away from Moscow,  
Leningrad
- b) secure oil fields of Caucasus
- c) secure Stalingrad
  - protect northern flank
  - interrupt Soviet supplies

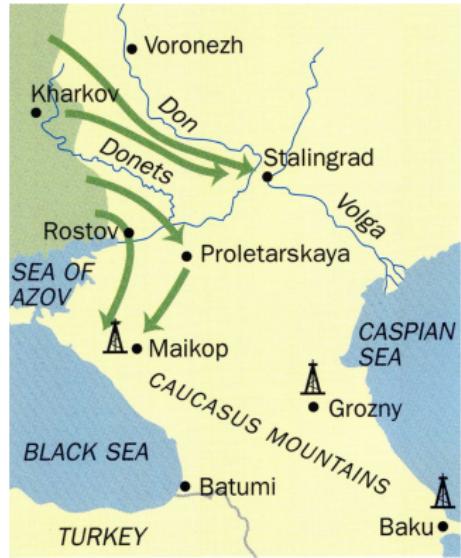


Figure 8: Southern strategy

## Case Blau

three-phase campaign

1. Encircle Soviet troops west of Don River
2. Establish blocking position in Stalingrad
3. Main drive into Caucasus

Huge front:

Rostov → Baku = 1300 km

*Discussion:*

- Would the loss of the Caucasus have resulted in Soviet defeat?

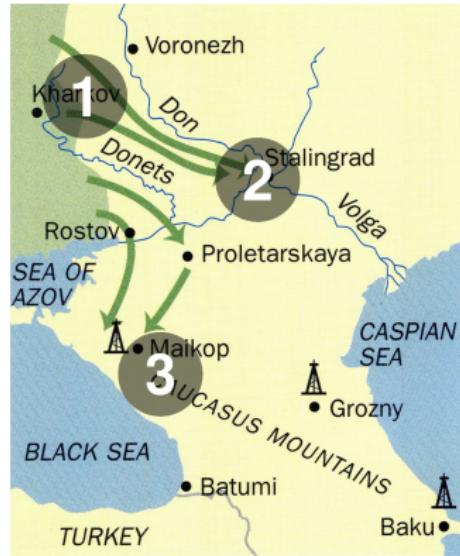


Figure 9: Three easy steps

## Comparative strength, June 1942

### Germany

1. Numbers
  - a) 1.3M-1.5M troops
  - b) 1,500-2,000 tanks
  - c) 1,500-1,600 aircraft
2. Force structure (74 divisions)
  - a) 9 armored divisions
  - b) 6 mechanized divisions
  - c) 59 infantry divisions
  - d) org. into 1 Army Group:
    - South (→ Don)
  - e) split into 2 Army Groups:
    - A (→ Caucasus)
    - B (→ Stalingrad)

### Soviet Union

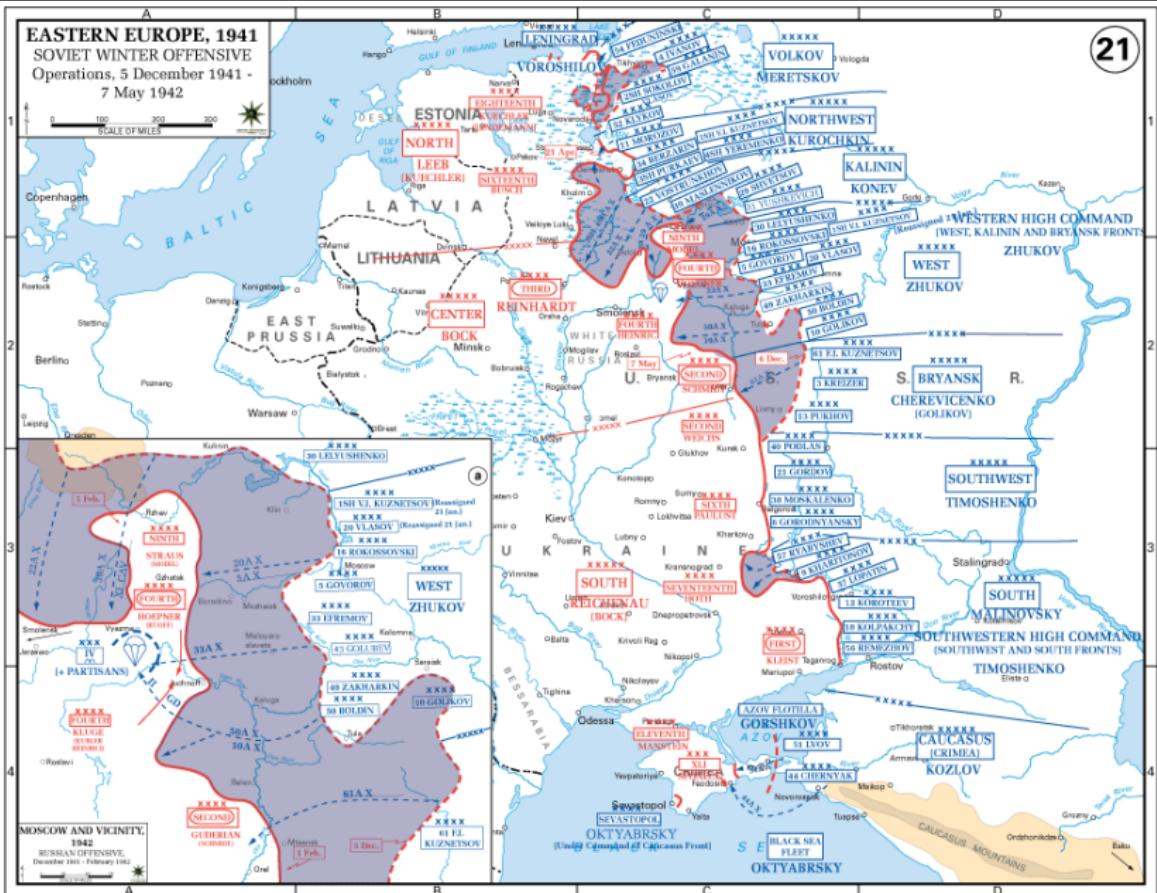
1. Numbers
  - a) 2.3-2.7M troops
  - b) 3,700 tanks
  - c) 1,700 aircraft
2. Force structure (45 divisions)
  - a) 6 armored divisions
  - b) 4 mechanized divisions
  - c) 35 infantry divisions
  - d) organized into 5 Fronts
    - Voronezh
    - Stalingrad
    - South (Kuban')
    - North Caucasus
    - Transcaucasus
  - e) re-organized into 5 Fronts
    - Voronezh
    - Southwest
    - Don (Stalingrad north)
    - Stalingrad (Stgd south)
    - Transcaucasus

## Before the Cauldron

## Plan B Into the Cauldron

## Before the Cauldron Strategy Change

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## First 30 days

1. Soviet Kharkiv offensive, May 1942
  - a) attempt to break out of salient
  - b) German pincer attack cuts off 3 Soviet armies
  - c) killed, wounded, captured:
    - Soviets: 280K
    - Germans: 20K
    - 1:14 loss-exchange ratio
2. Germans consolidate positions in south
  - a) Kerch peninsula captured in May
  - b) Sevastopol seized by July
3. Germans advance to Don river

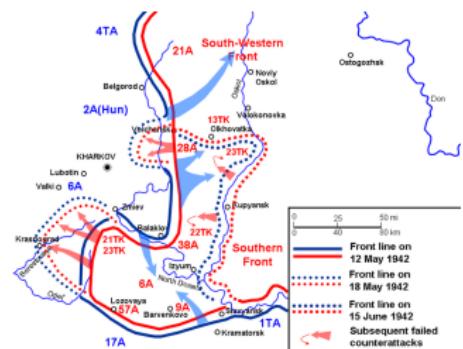
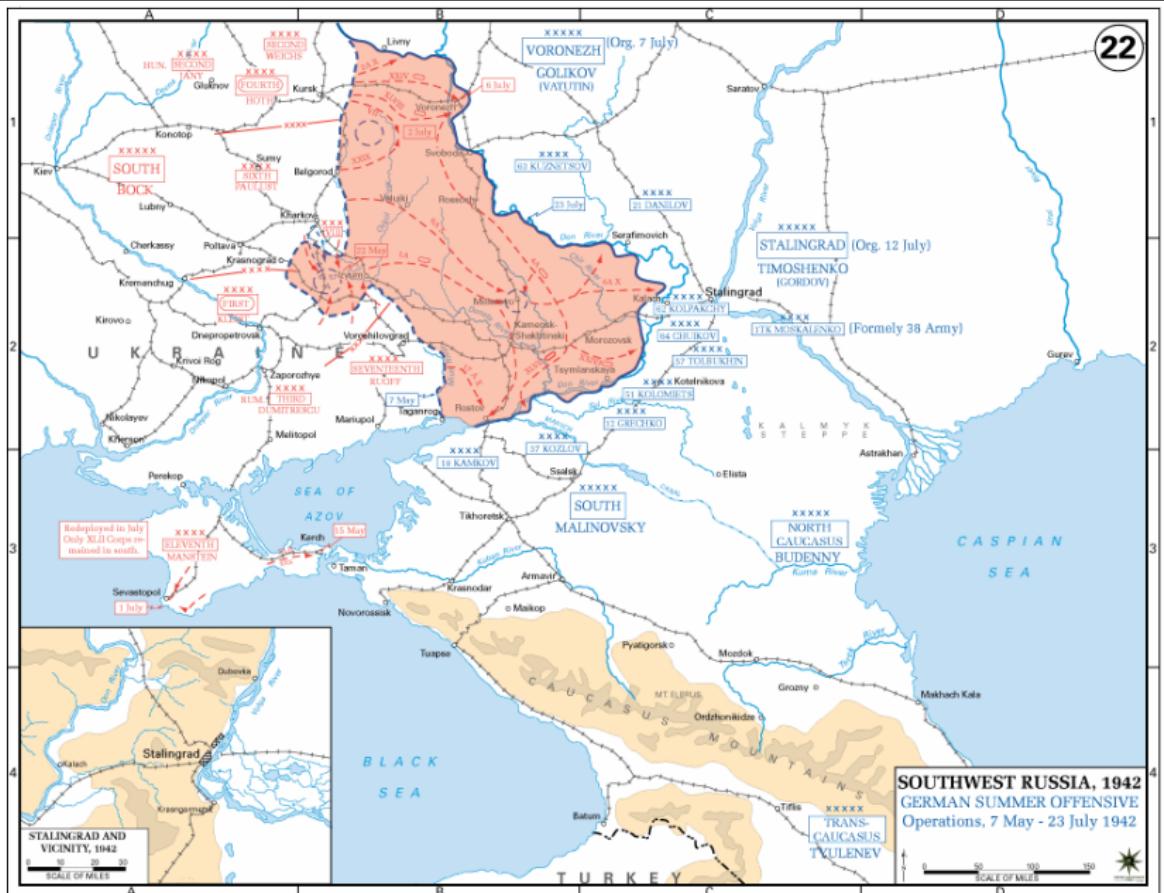


Figure 11: Kharkiv debacle

Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Before the Cauldron  
Strategy Change

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# Strategy Change

## Case Blau

two simultaneous offensives

1. Split Army Group South into A and B
  - a) Group A → Caucasus
  - b) Group B → Stalingrad
2. Push to oil fields before northern flank secured in Stalingrad
  - a) divert 1st Pz Army to A
  - b) Stalingrad left mainly to Paulus' 6th Army (infantry)

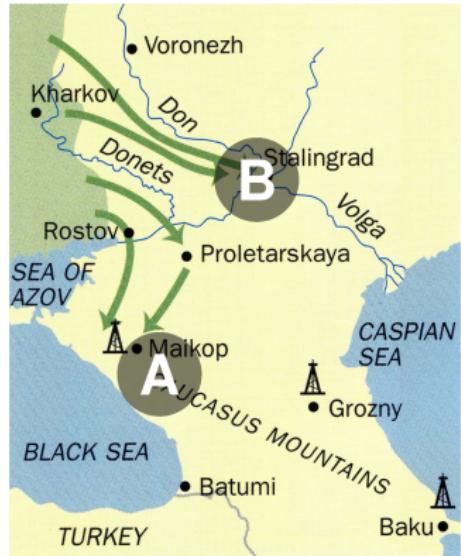


Figure 13: Two steps at once

**Plan B**  
Into the Cauldron  
Before the Cauldron  
Strategy Change



## Caucasus

### German challenges

#### 1. Strategy

- a) too many objectives
- b) impossible to achieve unity of effort
- c) 1,500km gap between Army Groups
- d) constant swapping of units between combat zones
- e) drop in strength, readiness, serviceability
- f) Soviet scorched earth campaign – burn oil fields before Germans arrive



Figure 15: Reach vs. grasp

## Caucasus

German challenges (continued)

### 2. Geography

- a) tallest mountains in Europe
- b) 'wild and untamed'
- c) excellent terrain for ambushes
- d) weather
- e) extended, vulnerable logistics



Figure 16: Far from home

# Into the Cauldron

## Why urban warfare is hard

1. Fighting in 3 dimensions
  - a) streets
  - b) buildings (including interiors)
  - c) sewers and tunnels
  - d) lines of communication  
not visible on map
2. Terrain favors defender
  - a) ample cover and concealment
  - b) local knowledge of area, secret routes, floorplans
  - c) multiple hidden entry and exit points, escape routes
  - d) hard to destroy underground structures, tunnels
  - e) booby traps, snipers, MGs
  - f) attacker exposed on streets



Figure 17: Harder than looks

## “Not one step back!”

1. Soviet response
  - a) Luftwaffe terror raid does not make city surrender
  - b) Stalin's order No. 227, July 28 – ‘no retreat!’
  - c) hold west bank of Volga at all costs, almost no reinforcements
2. Close quarter fighting
  - a) fighting block-by-block, house-by-house, room-by-room



Figure 18: Tractor factory



Figure 19: Verdun on Volga

## Turning point

## Soviet counteroffensive

Operation Uranus, November 1942

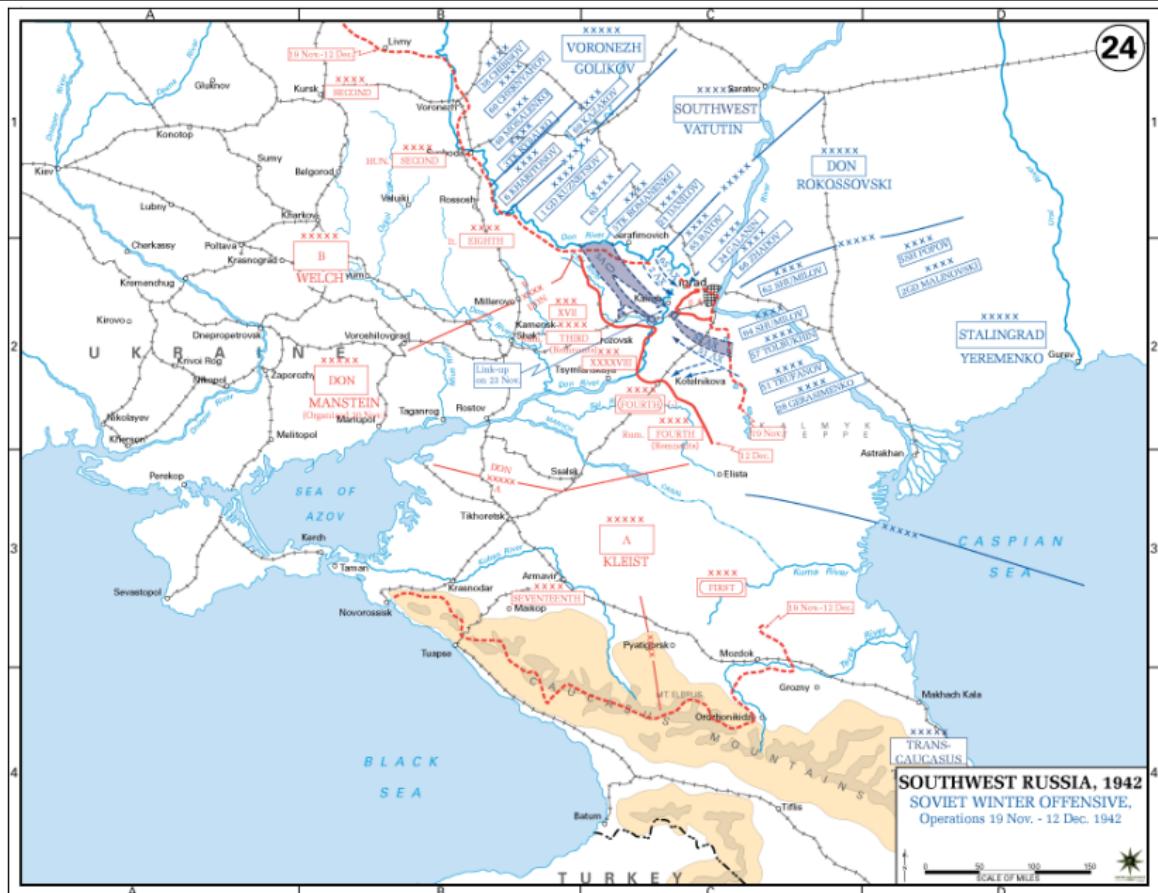
1. Leadership
  - a) Zhukov takes over defense of city
  - b) complete disregard for casualties
2. Ends
  - a) cut off German troops in Stalingrad from rest of Wehrmacht
3. Means
  - a) pin Germans down in city
  - b) counterattack from north, south flanks vs. weakly-defended positions
  - c) keep reinforcements to Soviet troops in Stalingrad at minimum



Figure 20: MVP?

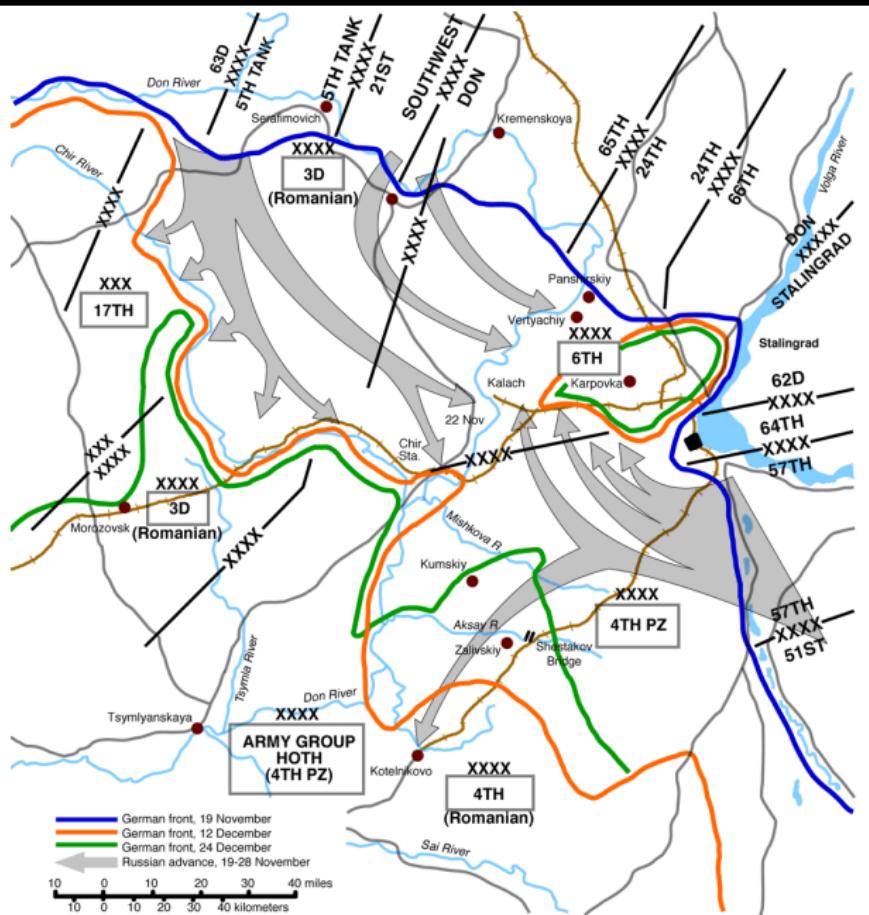
Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Turning point  
What if?



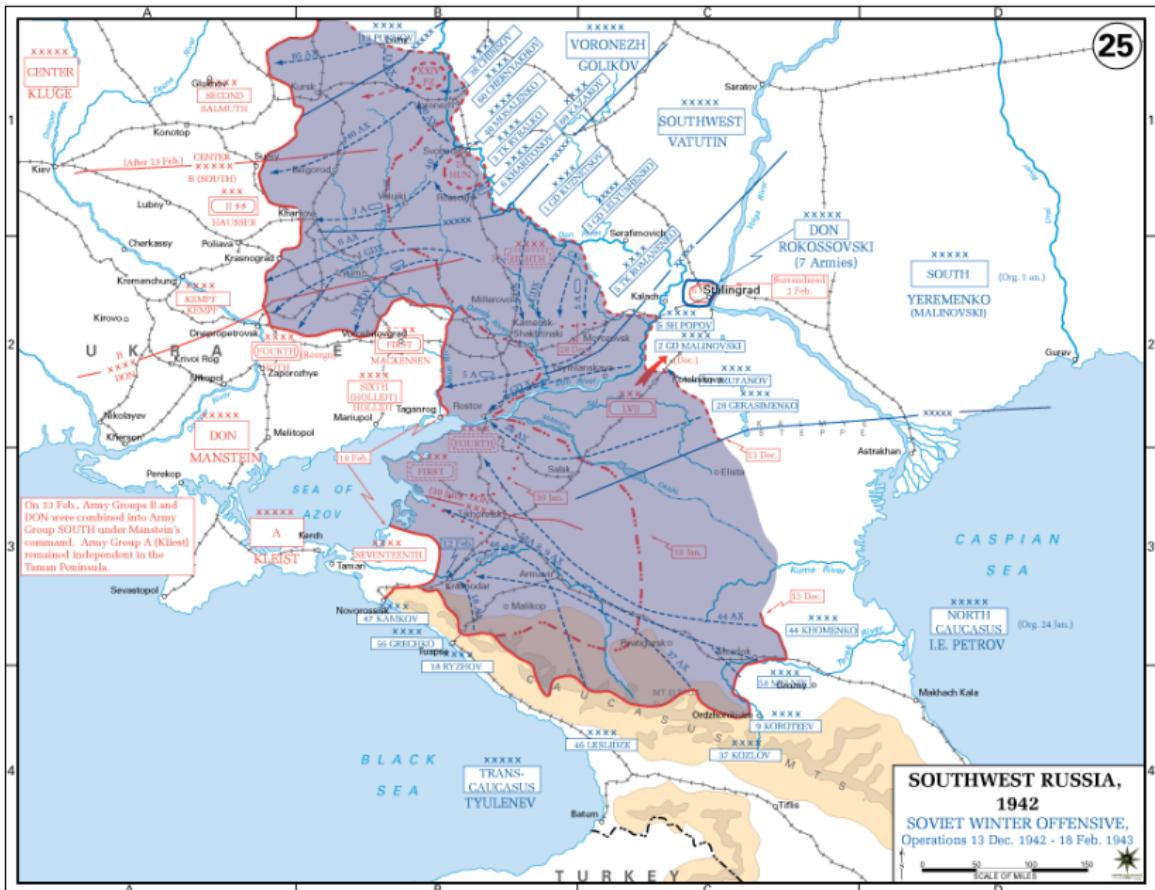
Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Turning point  
What if?



10 0 10 20 30 40 miles  
10 0 10 20 30 40 kilometers

Plan B  
Into the Cauldron  
Turning point  
What if?



## The Cauldron

November 1942 - February 1943

1. Running on fumes
  - a) Pulus' 6th Army completely surrounded
  - b) 210,000 German troops trapped in pocket
  - c) Hitler refuses to let Paulus attempt break-out
  - d) no reinforcements, supplies for either side (but esp. Germans)
  - e) unsanitary conditions, disease
  - f) frigid winter temperatures
2. The bitter end
  - a) Gen Paulus surrenders on Feb. 2



Figure 24: Hold...



Figure 25: Hold...

## Costs of Case Blau

1. Killed, wounded, captured
  - a) Germany: 1,013,000
  - b) USSR: 2,227,000
  - c) 2:1 loss-exchange ratio
2. but...
  - a) Stalingrad not captured
  - b) oil fields out of reach
  - c) whole eastern front on verge of collapse



Figure 26: The prize



Figure 27: The cost

What if?

*Discussion:* Could the Germans have succeeded?

How realistic are these scenarios?

1. '*Stalingrad first*' option

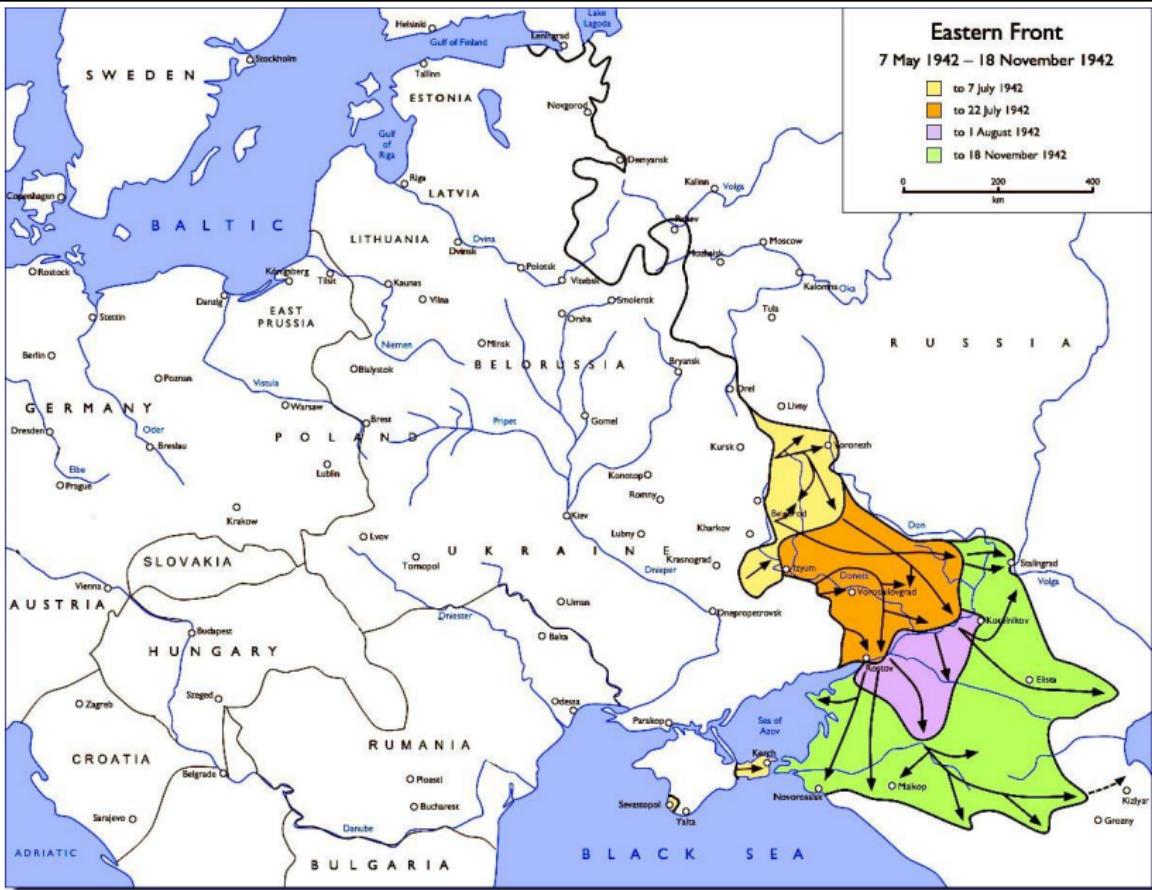
- a) fast Panzer drive to Volga
- b) envelop city, take east bank of Volga
- c) but...
  - would need to capture Stalingrad before August
  - follow-up operation in Caucasus may need to wait until 1943

2. *Strategic bombing option*

- a) focus on denying oil resources to Soviets
- b) bomb wells, refineries, storage tanks, ports
- c) but...
  - Baku at far end of German bomber range
  - must fly missions without fighter escort
  - local Soviet air superiority
  - lack of local runways
  - bomber losses likely high

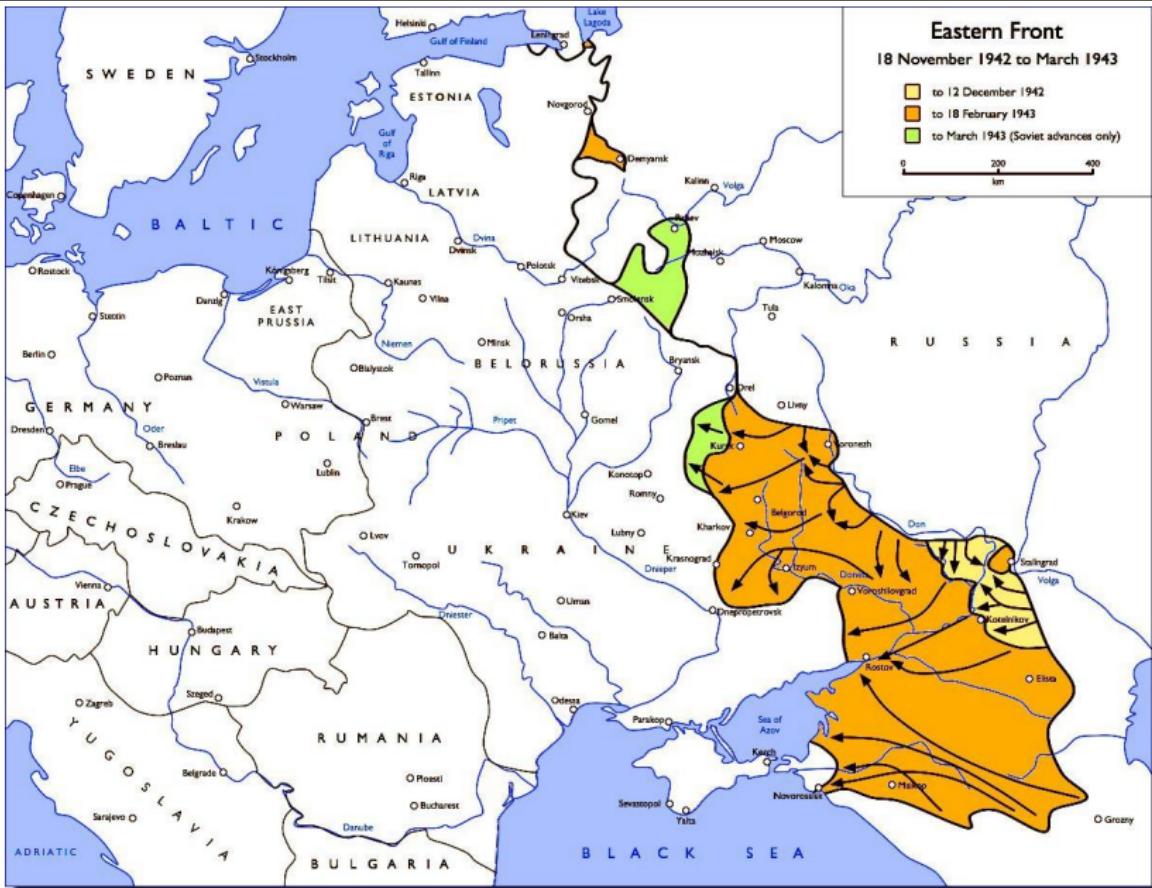
Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Turning point  
What if?



Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Turning point  
What if?



Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Turning point  
What if?

Eastern Front

19 February 1943 to 1 August 1943

- to 18 March 1943
- to 1 August 1943

0 200 400 km



Plan B  
Into the Cauldron  
Turning point  
What if?



Plan B  
Into the Cauldron  
Turning point  
What if?





Figure 33: Hoisting the victory banner for the cameras

Plan B  
Into the Cauldron

Turning point  
What if?

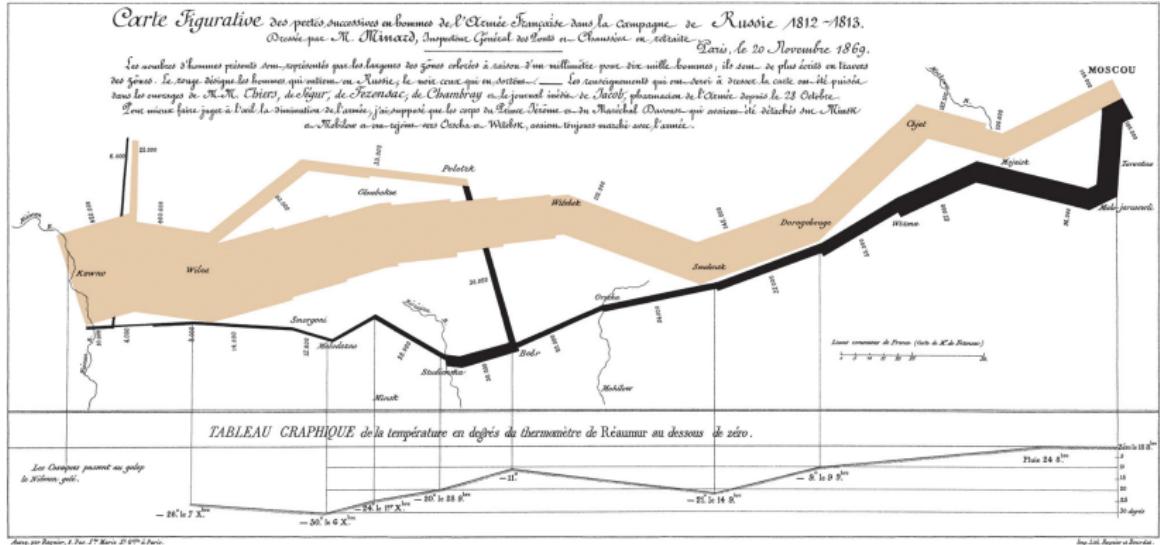


Figure 34: Remember this?

# NEXT MEETING

*Origins of the Cold War (Tu, Nov. 4)*

- how did a wartime alliance turn into a global peacetime rival?
- how did the Soviets seek to “catch up and overtake” U.S.?
- what are the lessons for a potential Cold War 2.0?