

Russian Security State

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

Lecture 17. Stalingrad to Berlin

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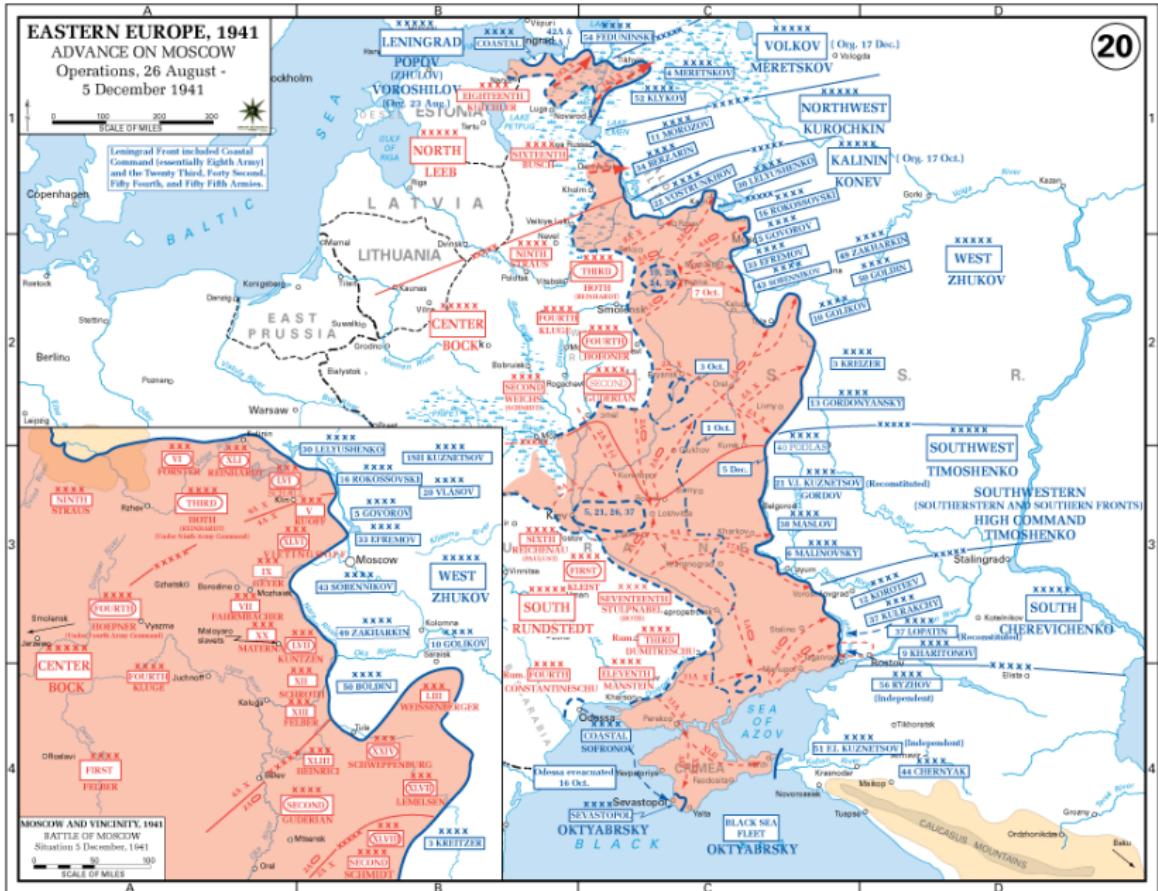
October 30, 2025
All Hallow's Eve



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

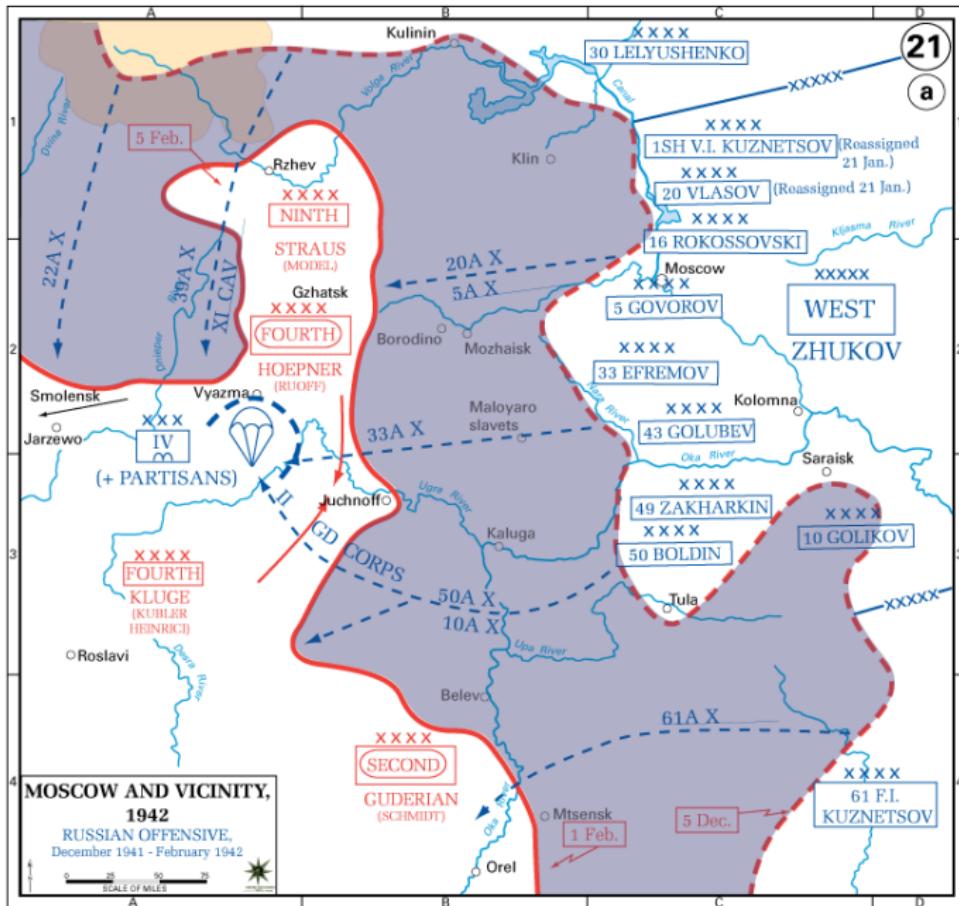


Figure 2: Rasputitsa



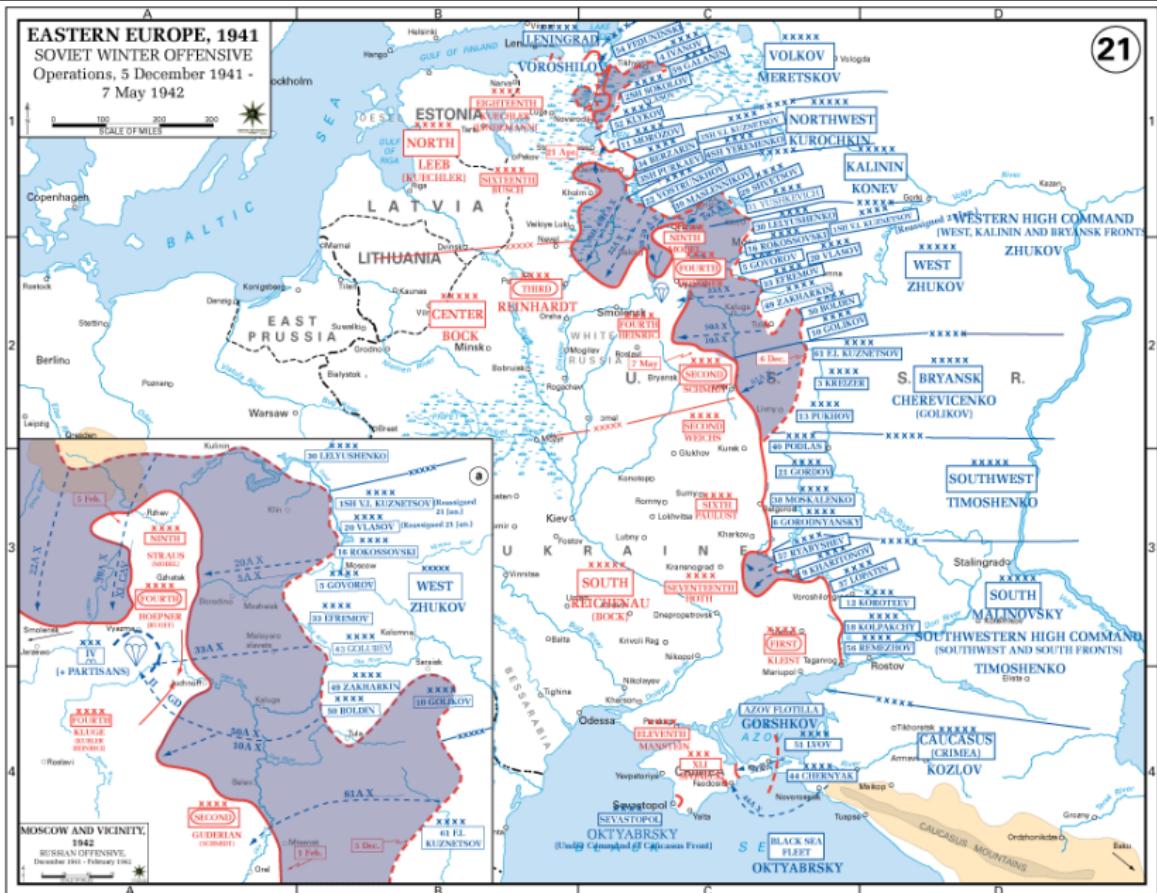
Figure 3: All hands on deck

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
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Stalingrad to Berlin

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
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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

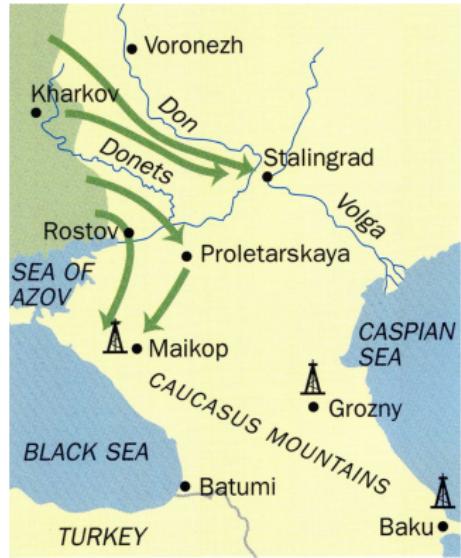


Figure 8: Southern strategy

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?

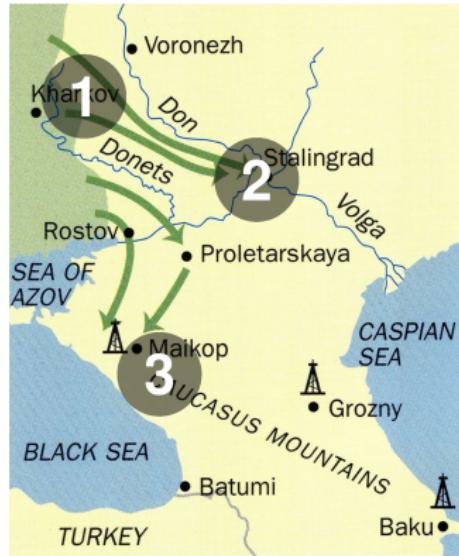


Figure 9: Three easy steps

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

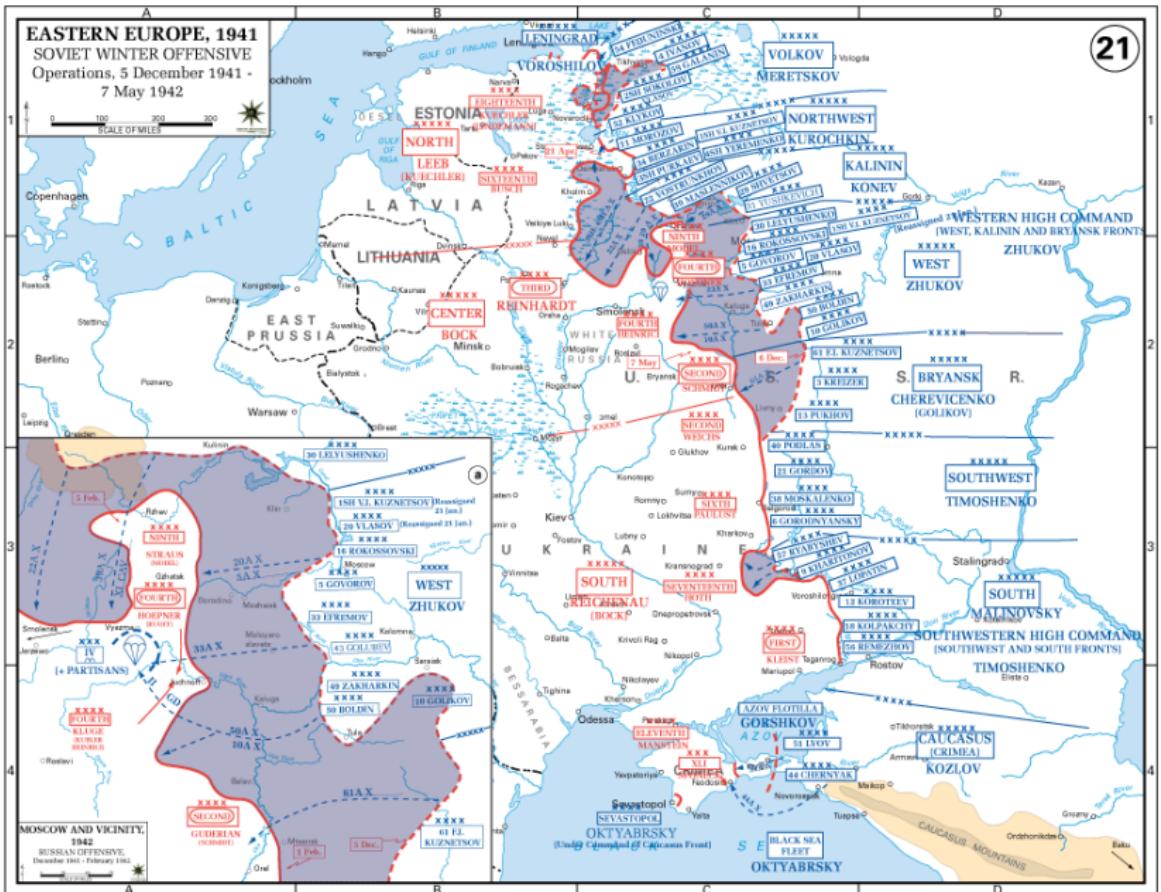
1. Numbers
 - a) 2.3-2.7M troops
 - b) 3,700 tanks
 - c) 1,700 aircraft
2. Force structure (45 divisions)
 - a) 6 armored divisions
 - b) 4 mechanized divisions
 - c) 35 infantry divisions
 - d) organized into 5 Fronts
 - Voronezh
 - Stalingrad
 - South (Kuban')
 - North Caucasus
 - Transcaucasus
 -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

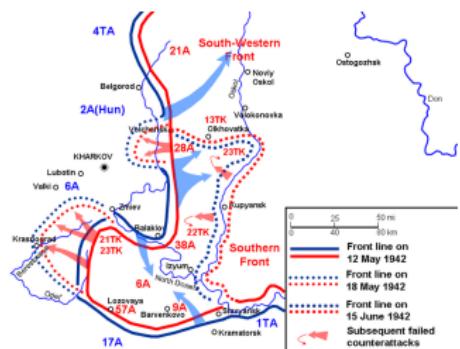
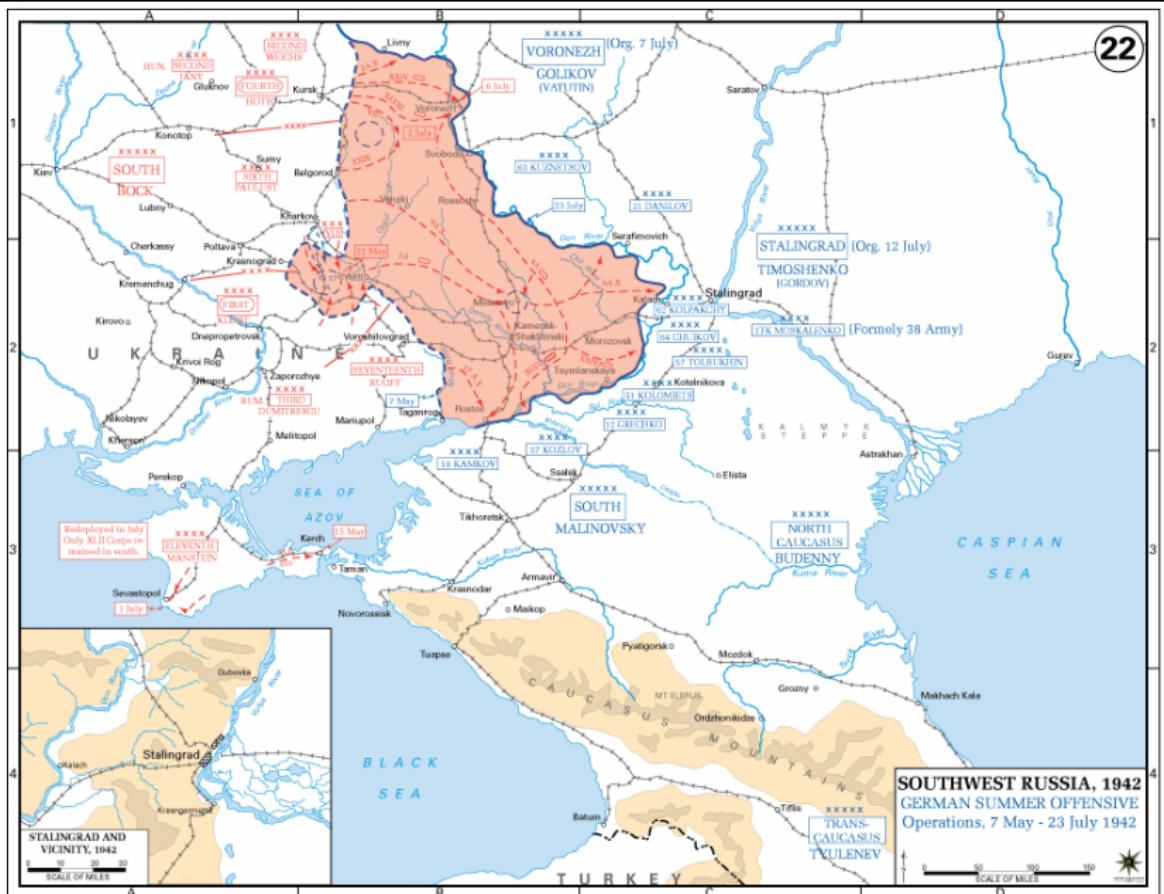


Figure 11: Kharkiv debacle

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)

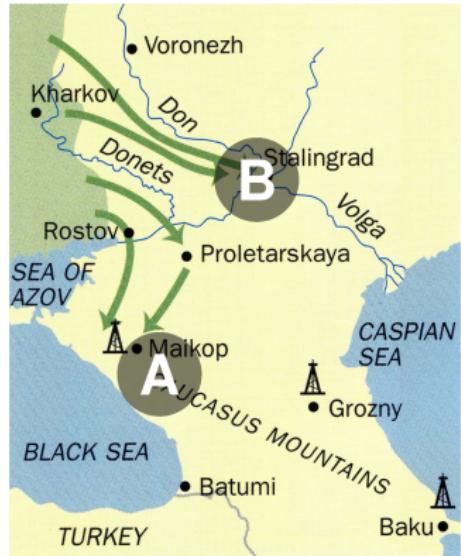


Figure 13: Two steps at once

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

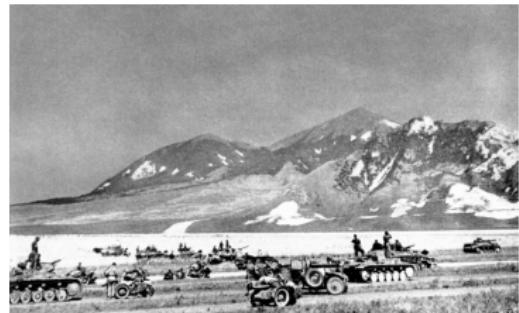


Figure 16: Far from home

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

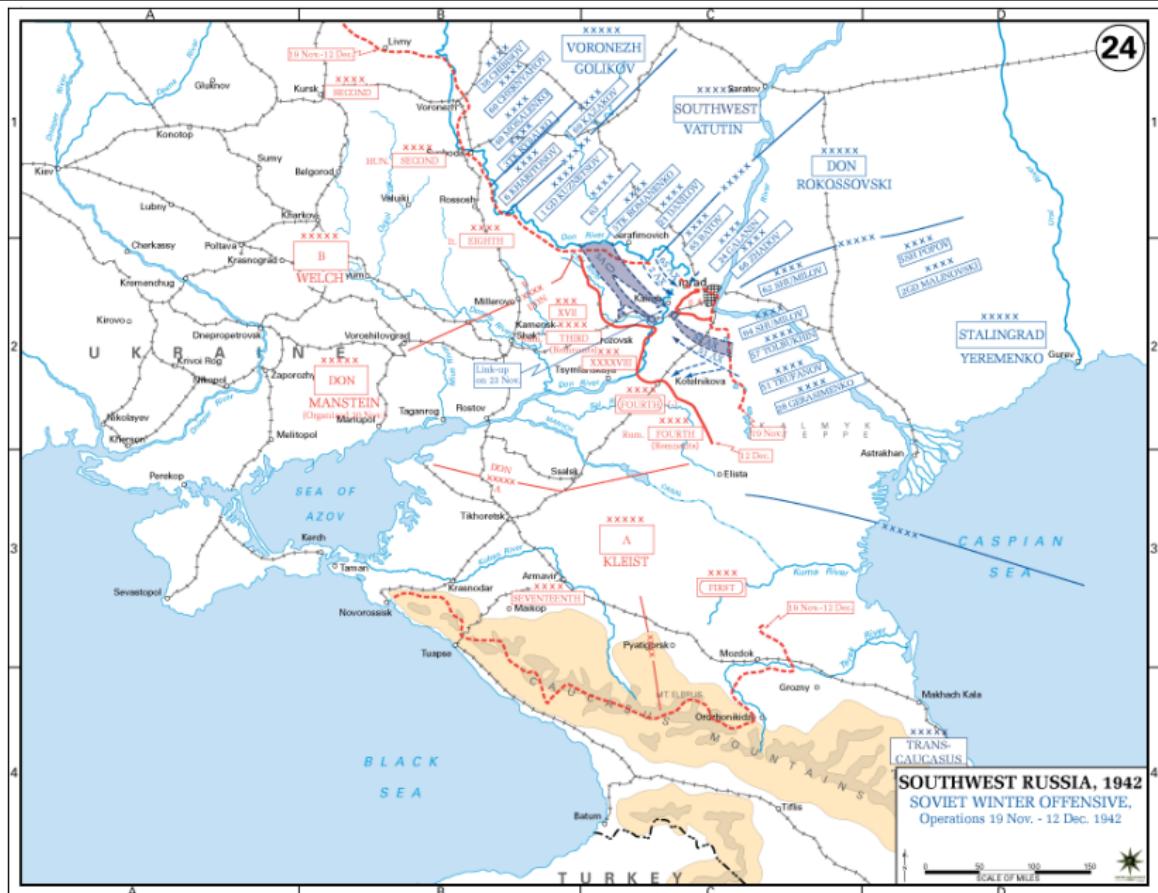


Figure 20: MVP?

Plan B
Into the Cauldron

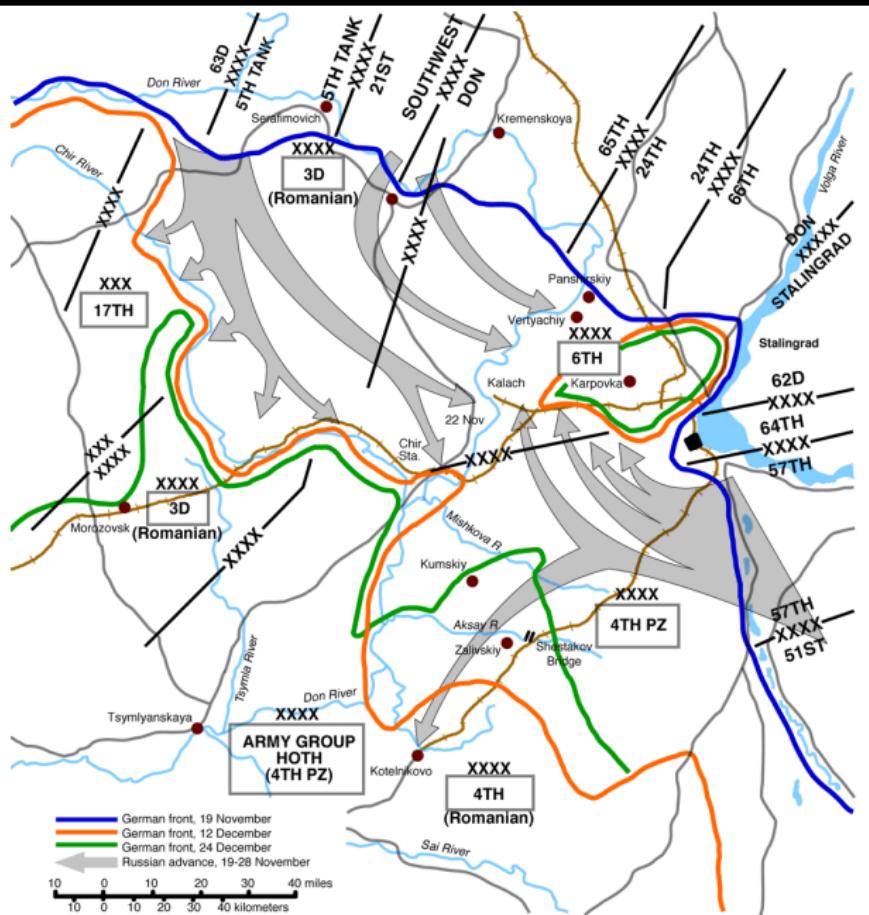
Turning point
What if?

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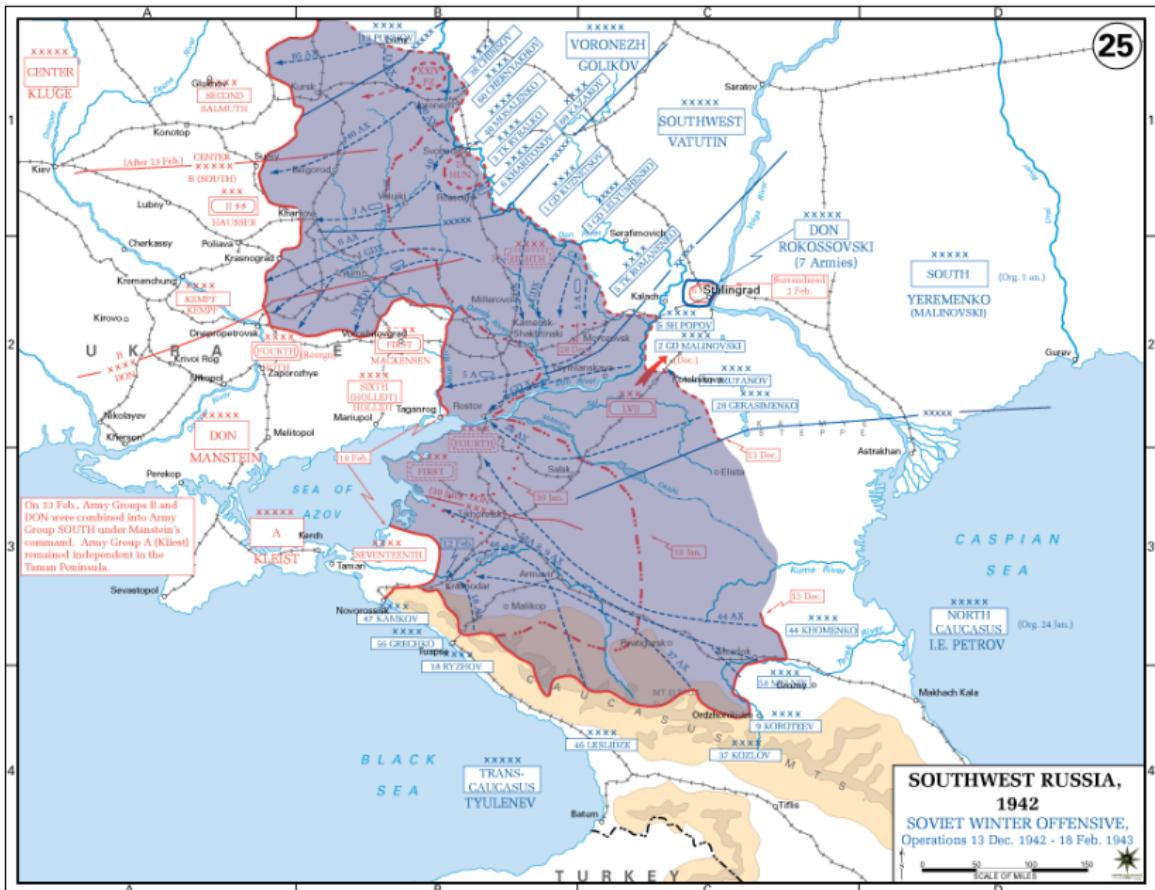


Plan B
Into the Cauldron

Turning point
What if?



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

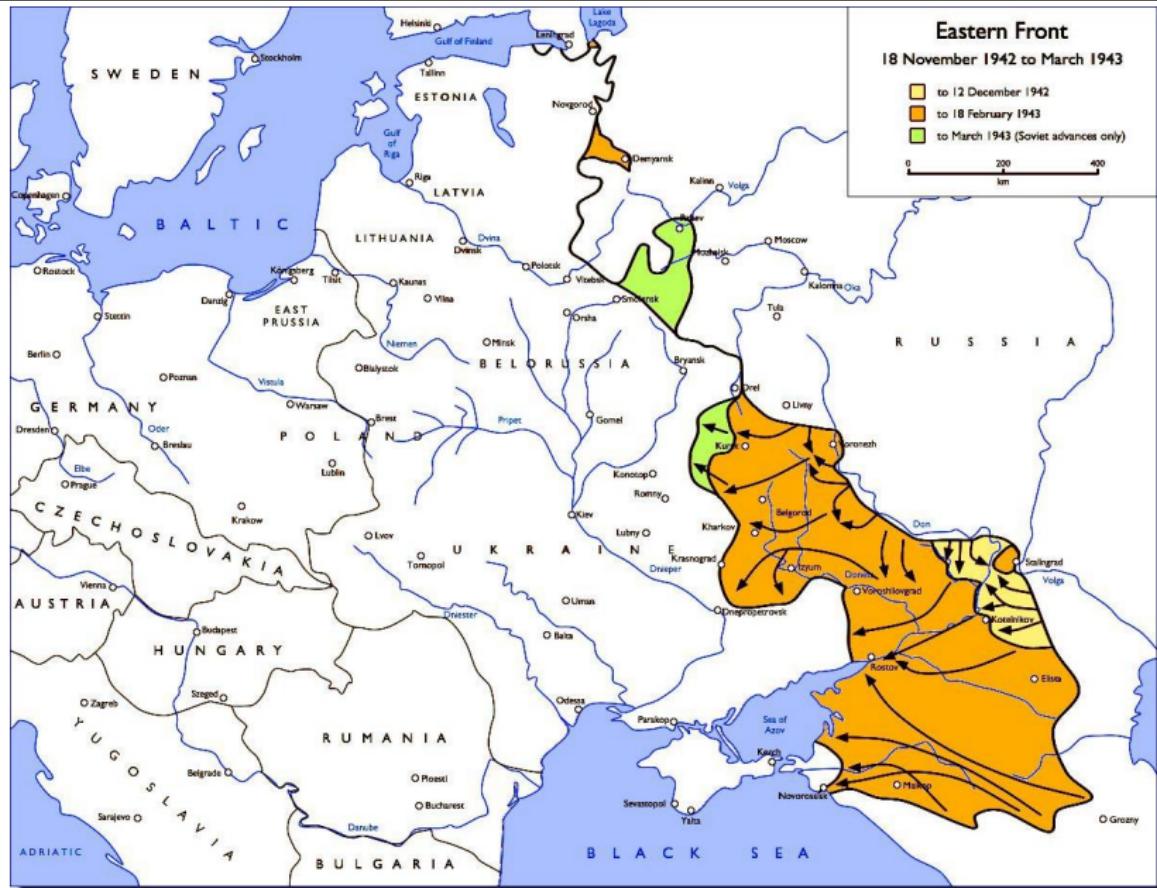
2. *Strategic bombing option*

- 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 Turning point Into the Cauldron What if?



Plan B
Into the Cauldron
Turning point
What if?



Plan B Turning point Into the Cauldron What if?



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?

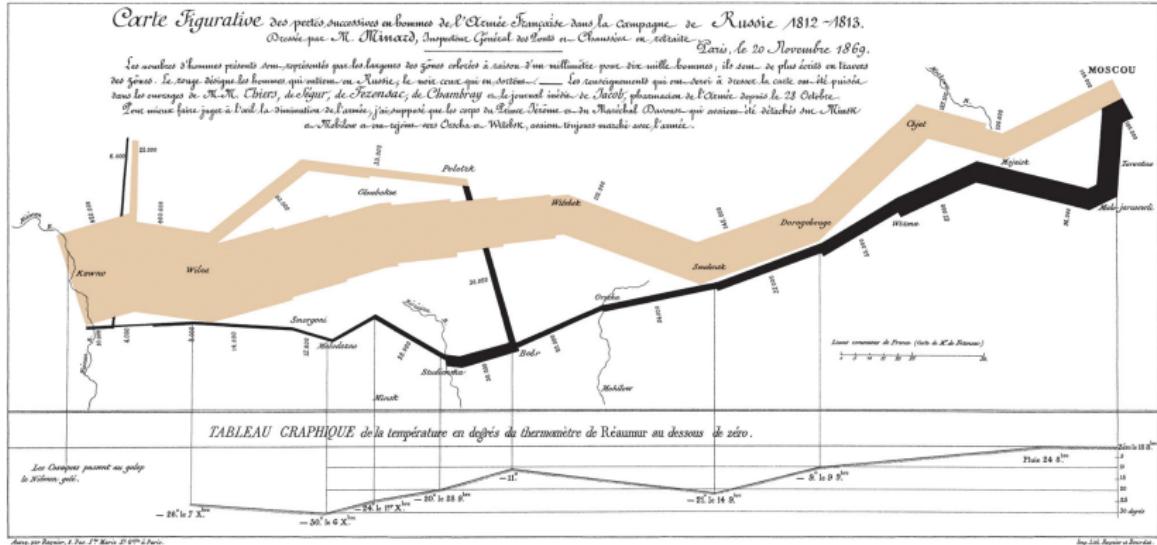


Figure 34: Remember this?

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?